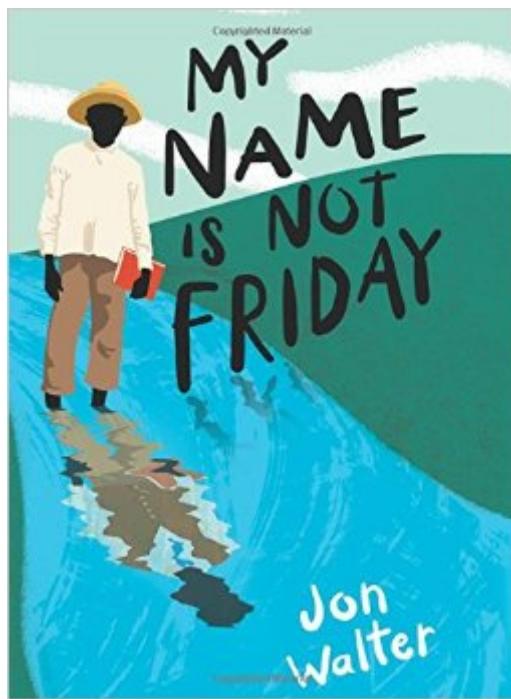


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# My Name Is Not Friday



## Synopsis

Well-mannered Samuel and his mischievous younger brother Joshua are free black boys living in an orphanage during the end of the Civil War. Samuel takes the blame for Joshua's latest prank, and the consequence is worse than he could ever imagine. He's taken from the orphanage to the South, given a new name -- Friday -- and sold into slavery. What follows is a heartbreakingly hopeful account of Samuel's journey from freedom, to captivity, and back again.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 840 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 384 pages

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Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 1.4 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #114,291 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 inÂ  Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > Civil War Period #84 inÂ  Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Prejudice & Racism #125 inÂ  Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Siblings

Age Range: 12 - 15 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Walter admits that he didn't set out to write a story about enslavement, but this is where the character's voice led him. I like that he didn't hold his character an arm's length away as too many whites do when writing enslaved blacks. Rather, he embraces him and writes him with care. I like that his portrayal of enslavement is complex and multilayered and that Walter did his research. This isn't a perfect book, but it is a good one. I've read several reviews of *My Name is Not Friday* that refer to the story as being brutal. Please rid yourself of the notion of smiling slaves. Please. My friends, this is a story of enslavement, a story where one group of humans forces domination over another based upon their skin color. Walter understands this and does not shy away from the inhumanity of this institution. He communicates the humanity of

the enslaved as well as of the enslaver and the most honest way he can do this is by creating opportunities to show the inconsistencies of this system, the exact inhumanity of enslavement.

Even though it is just the start of 2016, I believe that we will find the superb *MY NAME IS NOT FRIDAY* on many 2016 best books lists. This historical fiction novel features 13-year-old Samuel, an African-American boy who has spent half his life in an orphanage run by Father Mosely (his mother died giving birth to his baby brother, Joshua). Considering that Samuel is alive during the height of slavery, his life in the orphanage isn't a terrible fate --- he and the other boys are fed twice a day and have even been taught to read. Samuel and Joshua are polar opposites. Joshua is described as, "a thief who won't even learn to spell his own name" (p. 11) while Samuel is described as, "a saint, the very brightest and the best I've had the pleasure to teach" (p. 11). When Joshua commits his most egregious offense yet, Samuel steps in and takes the blame in order to protect his brother from further punishment. However, Samuel's selfless act has unimagined consequences that will change the entire course of his life, because as punishment for his actions, Samuel is sold to a slave trader. Gloucester, the slave trader, takes Samuel down south to a slave auction, but before he is given over to the auctioneer, he is renamed Friday and presented with forged papers. Friday is paraded before the audience and the bidding begins; his fate is quickly decided. "This boy has bought me. This white boy who doesn't even look as old as I am. He owns me body and soul, and my worth has been set at six hundred dollars" (p. 49). Gerald, the boy who bought Friday, is the heir to the cotton plantation in Mississippi where Friday is destined to spend the rest of his days, splitting his time between working in the house and working in the fields. But more than another slave, Gerald was looking for a friend when he bought Friday, so Friday must navigate their complicated relationship in addition to adjusting to his new life. As Friday wasn't raised in or around slavery, many of the rules of the institution are new and shocking to him. Viewing slavery through Friday's eyes allows the reader to reconsider this institution in a naive and innocent way that only serves to highlight its horrors. In this way, it reminds me of *THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PAJAMAS* by John Boyne, which provided an innocent perspective on WWII and the Holocaust. As a literacy professional, one of my favorite parts of *MY NAME IS NOT FRIDAY* is its focus on the power of literacy. As it is commonly known, it was illegal for slaves to learn to read and write; this was just one of the many ways slaves were oppressed and one of the means of continuing the institution of slavery for so long. However, as Friday was raised in an orphanage for free colored children, he was taught to read

and write. When Friday realizes that no other slave around him can read, he launches on a new path that provides him with a mission and purpose. The results are both inspiring and heartbreaking. If I was forced to name one flaw in *MY NAME IS NOT FRIDAY*, I think it would be the fact that the book ends on a positive note with everything tying together nicely. I have struggled quite a bit with my feelings about this ending as I came to love Samuel/Friday and I wanted everything to turn out for him, but many of the final events seemed too convenient and implausible based upon the rest of the story and the realities of the time period. I highly recommend *MY NAME IS NOT FRIDAY* and think that it adds a new perspective on an institution that has been extensively examined and written about. The author, Jon Walter, is an outsider --- he is British and white --- and I was amazed that he was able to capture this time period in American history with so much depth and texture. I will definitely be on the lookout for future books by Walter as I think that he is an author to watch. Reviewed by Aimee Rogers

I honestly liked this book very much but it was kind of too gruesome for comfort. It vividly described whipping, and all kinds of abuse. Also the language in a certain part in this book really startled me. It was when Friday/Samuel got in a fight with Gerald. I'm not going to give away the whole story but here's the basics. A boy named Samuel got pulled out of an orphanage and sold into slavery because he took the blame for a huge prank that his bratty, mischievous, troublemaker of a brother pulled and he got renamed Friday. He was sold to some white family and was put in the fields, the house, and sometimes Gerald called him to the river for a swim. But there's a war coming, with a special someone named Abe Lincoln leading it. Samuel must find his brother to make sure that he won't get into trouble, but what will he go through to get to him?

In the vein of *Twelve Years a Slave*, this story reveals how the institution of slave trading was continuing in the United States even though, after Jan 1, 1808, slave ships were not longer allowed to bring in their human cargos. Samuel and his younger brother Jonathon are sent to live in an orphanage after both of their parents died. They were free-born and educated and Samuel is very religious. After someone desecrates the altar in the chapel of the orphanage where they live, Samuel thinks his brother did it; so he takes responsibility for the action. The consequences are much more severe than he ever imagined they would be. He is taken by a man who takes him to Mississippi where he is sold in an auction to a cotton-plantation. The owner is off fighting for the South, so his wife and son are in charge. Samuel's name is changed to Friday. For a while he resists using that name, but finally accepts it when others call him Friday. He learns quickly that

slaves aren't supposed to be educated, but the son of the owner begins to "teach him to read." He wants to show his father when he returns that slaves can be taught, and Samuel goes along with it because he sees a way to get some books to read and to teach the other slaves. How he manages to return to the orphanage in the midst of the Civil War, to find his brother, and to learn the real truth about what happened to him makes this a fast-paced, moving story that no one should miss reading. I highly recommend it especially for upper elementary and middle school readers.

Was so glad to be able to pass this book on to my granddaughters....Should be required reading in school

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