



## Red Water: A novel

By Judith Freeman

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**Red Water: A novel** By Judith Freeman

*Red Water* takes you into a territory and culture that will haunt you long after the last page is turned. The story is fascinating, the language and style is incredible, and the characters are as varied and memorable as a Utah sunset. Judith Freeman proves once again that she is as gifted a writer as we have in this country.

--James Welch, author of *Fools Crow*

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## Red Water: A novel By Judith Freeman Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In 1857, in a field in southern Utah, a party of Mormons and Native Americans slaughtered more than a hundred men, women and children who were traveling to California. Only one man was ever tried, and executed, for the horror that became known as the Mountain Meadows Massacre John D. Lee. This well-told novel by Freeman (*The Chinchilla Farm*) presents Lee's story from the point of view of three of his 19 wives: Emma, his "English bride," who recognizes that the man she loves is made up of equal parts tenderness and savagery; Ann, a child-bride of 13, who is hardened and wise beyond her years; and Rachel, the faithful, older wife, who remains devoted to Lee even after his excommunication and eventual execution. Freeman's novel is well researched (drawing heavily upon the work of historian Juanita Brooks), and her nuanced, perceptive portrayal of Mormon life stands in stark contrast to other Mormon-themed fiction (particularly the recent novels of Brigham Bybee). The book's descriptions are memorable, evoking the bleak but stunning landscape of the region. The motif of the red scenery reflects the raw bloodiness of the massacre, a metaphor that is often brilliant but occasionally overdone ("The very atmosphere of this brute red world seemed impregnated with sorrow and evil, colored by all the innocent blood shed that day"). Rachel's deeply pious character is remote and slightly underdeveloped; her section is the shortest and the last. Overall, Freeman has crafted a novel that is historically faithful, character-driven and deeply poignant. 9-city author tour.

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From [The New Yorker](#)

Unlike most historical novels, this one, which opens with a man's execution, doesn't pander to contemporary values. The condemned is a charismatic Mormon leader who participated in the massacre of a hundred and twenty Gentile pioneers in 1857, and Freeman describes the crime through the reactions of three of his nineteen wives. Rachel, the eldest, remains dislikably faithful to his memory. Emma, however, comes to see her husband as self-serving, and his youngest wife, Ann, who married him at the age of thirteen, becomes Emma's unlikely emancipator. With Ann's story—that of a young woman living in the Utah wilderness with a profound sense of her own worth—the narrative soars. Readers may want to shrug off all that makes these devout women endure their existence of farmwork, housework, repeated pregnancies, jealousies, and little to call their own, but Freeman's novel makes astute points about the almost indistinguishable similarities between faith and love.

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From [Booklist](#)

Freeman weaves a tale of rare passion and color as she revisits the darkest crime in early Mormon Utah, teasing her narrative out of the lives of three of the wives of a man excommunicated by the church and, eventually, executed by the state for his role in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Shrewd use of multiple perspectives allows Freeman to capture many of the ambiguities surrounding the sinister figure of John Lee, who led a band of fanatical Mormons and angry Paiutes in a murderous attack on a wagon train passing through their frontier territory. The subtle narrative strategy also enables Freeman to probe the tensions inherent in the Mormons' nineteenth-century practice of polygamy. But artistic sophistication does not guarantee historical veracity, so even readers deeply impressed by Freeman's literary gifts may wish to consult nonfiction sources for other perspectives on historical events still shrouded in obscurity and controversy. Freeman's vivid and dramatic story, which implicates even Brigham Young in the horrid deeds, deserves high praise for its artistry but deep dubiety as to its reliability. *Bryce Christensen*

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### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Gerald Dews:**

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#### **Ernie Swisher:**

Precisely why? Because this Red Water: A novel is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap that but latter it will surprise you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such remarkable way makes the content interior easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book possess such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold off having that book? If I were you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

#### **George Pinard:**

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#### **Mary Kerr:**

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