



If this is Freedom: a novel by Gloria Ann Wesley

About the author:

Gloria Ann Wesley is an African Nova Scotian writer who published her first book of poetry, *To My Someday Child* in 1975. She later published *Woman, Sing* (2002) and *Burlap and Lace* (2007). Her first young adult fiction, *Chasing Freedom*, was published in 2011.

Wesley's poetry appears in three Canadian anthologies: *Canada in Us Now* (Harold Head, 1976), *Other Voices: Writings by Blacks in Canada* (Lorris Elliott, 1985) and *Fire on the Water* (George Elliott Clarke, 1992). Gloria Wesley holds the distinction of being the first published Black Nova Scotian poet (by Resolution of the Nova Scotia Legislature, 5 April 2007).

Source: Roseway Publishing, an imprint of Fern Publishing

<https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/if-this-is-freedom>

About this book:

If This Is Freedom continues the story of struggle for Loyalist settlers in Nova Scotia after the American Revolutionary War. In the black settlement of Birchtown, times are especially hard for the former slaves. They face the difficulties of a hardscrabble existence and continued discrimination from their white counterparts.

Like many desperate Birchtowners, Sarah Redmond has signed an indenture agreement, a work contract meant to protect her rights and ensure a living wage. Sarah's employers, the Blyes, do not honour the agreement, and Sarah and her family are all but shattered when Sarah takes a wrong step – one she will come to

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regret as it sets off a chain of unusual events that put her under further pressure. With her faith in the settlement running dry and the Birchtowners abandoning the settlement, Sarah is perplexed and soon faces the taxing option of whether to hold on to the only real life she has ever known or let go. At once a stand-alone story and a companion to Gloria Ann Wesley's previous novel, *Chasing Freedom*, this story about moral courage and the enduring strength of dreams shares history with us in a way that is both honest and emotional.

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Discussion Questions:

1. What part did the British military play in the beginning of the Black settlement in Nova Scotia in 1783?
2. Divide into small groups to generate a list of tools and provisions needed to settle in a new land. Prioritize the list of tools and provisions and explain why some items are more important and necessary.
3. Which of the tools listed would not have been invented or available to Black Loyalists as they settled on the land? What alternatives can students suggest to accomplish the work each machine or tool would have made easier or possible? What work would have been impossible or next to impossible to complete?
4. What types of shelter did people of African descent live in before building their own homes?
5. What difficulties did the Black Loyalists face when they first arrived in Nova Scotia?

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6. What provisions did the settlers receive?
7. What preparations would settlers need to make in the fall for winter?
8. What industries would you start in the community to aid the new residents?
9. How did land grants affect where Black settlements were started?
10. How were land grants for white and Black Loyalists of 1783 different?
11. What did each group receive in land grants? How do you explain any differences in the distribution of land grants?
12. Who was in charge in the Black community? What title was the person given and what role did he/she play in the community?
13. How was schooling different in 1783 from today?
14. What, in your opinion, has changed, and what has remained the same, for Blacks in Nova Scotia? What evidence can you find on the Internet to support your claim.

Source: Roseway Publishing, an imprint of Fern publishing

<https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/files/Chasing%20Freedom%20Teachers%20Guide.pdf>

Other formats available at Halifax Public Libraries:

- Ebook

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