



**Title:** Blood Water Paint  
**Author:** Joy McCullough  
**Imprint:** Dutton  
**Publisher:** Penguin Young Readers  
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**ISBN:** 9780735232136  
**Format:** Paperback  
**Age Range\*:** 14 and up  
**Grade Range:** Gr 9 Up

# BOOK RESUME: BLOOD WATER PAINT

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

Her mother died when she was twelve, and suddenly Artemisia Gentileschi had a stark choice: a life as a nun in a convent or a life grinding pigment for her father's paint.

She chose paint.

By the time she was seventeen, Artemisia did more than grind pigment. She was one of Rome's most talented painters, even if no one knew her name. But Rome in 1610 was a city where men took what they wanted from women, and in the aftermath of rape Artemisia faced another terrible choice: a life of silence or a life of truth, no matter the cost.

*He will not consume  
 my every thought.  
 I am a painter.  
 I will paint.*

Joy McCullough's bold novel in verse is a portrait of an artist as a young woman, filled with the soaring highs of creative inspiration and the devastating setbacks of a system built to break her. McCullough weaves Artemisia's heartbreaking story with the stories of the ancient heroines, Susanna and Judith, who become not only the subjects of two of Artemisia's most famous paintings but sources of strength as she battles to paint a woman's timeless truth in the face of unspeakable and all-too-familiar violence.

*I will show you  
 what a woman can do.*

## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★"McCullough has managed to vividly capture a singularly brave, resilient feminist who became an icon during a time when women had almost no agency. Her story and the stunning verse through which it is told will resonate just as strongly with readers today. A captivating and impressive debut about a timeless heroine." —*Booklist*, starred review

★"McCullough's beautifully crafted text will inspire upper-middle/high school readers to research the true story upon which this powerful piece of historical fiction is based. The poetry is clear and revelatory, exploring Artemisia's passion for both art and life. The expression of her intense feelings is gripping and her complexity of character make her a force to be reckoned with, both in her times

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and in ours.”—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★”A haunting, stirring depiction of an unforgettable woman, Artemisia’s story will resonate deeply with readers today and beyond.”—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★”Luminous.”—Shelf Awareness, starred review

“Haunting ... *Blood Water Paint* does not read like historical fiction. It teems with raw emotion, and McCullough deftly captures the experience of learning to behave in a male-driven society and then breaking outside of it.”  
—*The New Yorker*

“An impassioned, lushly described account of a young woman who refuses to dwell in secret shame. *Blood Water Paint* fits smoothly into the current conversation surrounding the #MeToo movement.”—*Chicago Tribune*

“McCullough’s stunning, immersive debut tells a timely story that’s sure to stay with you long after you finish.”—Buzzfeed

“Timeless and, alas, all too timely.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“[W]ill resonate with modern feminists.”—*BookPage*

“McCullough’s debut novel is one of a kind. ... [A] truly inspiring and impactful story.”—*Romatic Times*

“Filled with hope and an important message that women’s voices cannot be silenced.”—Book Riot

“For lovers of writers like Laurie Halse Anderson and An Na.”—Bustle

“A stunning portrait.”—Bitch

“Can be inhaled in a day.”—Paste

“Deeply moving...”—Brit & Co

“This intensely passionate and powerful exploration of women’s lives, stories, truths, and power is a masterpiece.” —Teen Librarian Toolbox

#### **AWARDS AND ACCOLADES**

- A Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Finalist
- A William C. Morris Award Finalist

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- A YALSA Teens Top Ten selection
- A YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults selection
- A CCBC Choices selection
- A NCSS Notable Trade Books selection
- A Michigan Great Lakes Great Books Award selection
- A New Jersey Garden State Teen Book Award selection
- An Oregon Battle of the Books selection
- A Tennessee Volunteer State Book Award selection
- A Texas TAYSHAS Reading List selection
- The Lion and the Unicorn Award Honor Book

#### **MEDIA AND RESOURCES**

- [TeachingBooks.net Resources](#)
- [Discussion Guide](#)
- [School Library Journal article: Joy McCullugh on Reclaiming the Female Body and “Blood Water Paint”](#)

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