



**SIMON PULSE**

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## A LEARNING GUIDE FOR

Aligned with the  
Common Core Standards

# Compulsion

By Martina Boone

## Synopsis

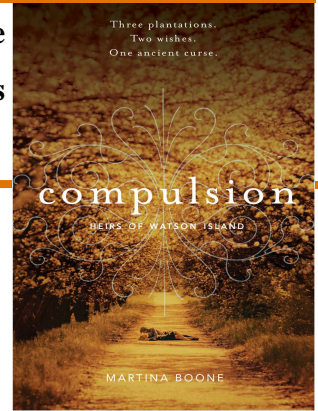
**Three plantations. Two wishes. One ancient curse.**

All her life, Barrie Watson has been a virtual prisoner in the house where she lived with her shut-in mother. When her mother dies, Barrie promises to put some mileage on her stiletto heels. But she finds a new kind of prison at her aunt's South Carolina plantation instead—a prison guarded by an ancient spirit who long ago cursed one of the three founding families of Watson Island and gave the others magical gifts that became compulsions.

Stuck with the ghosts of a generations-old feud and hunted by forces she cannot see, Barrie must find a way to break free of the family legacy. With the help of sun-kissed Eight Beaufort, who knows what Barrie wants before she knows herself, the last Watson heir starts to unravel her family's twisted secrets. What she finds is dangerous: a love she never expected, a river that turns to fire at midnight, a gorgeous cousin who isn't what she seems, and very real enemies who want both Eight and Barrie dead.

## Prereading/Prediction Questions

- ◆ The cover of *Compulsion* shows an image of a couple on a lane running through a grove of trees. What is the atmosphere in this image? Is it romantic? Frightening? Mysterious? Magical? Surreal?
- ◆ The tagline for the book references three plantations, two wishes, and an ancient curse. What sorts of things might the owners of plantations in 1692 have wished for and why? What would you wish for?
- ◆ What do the words *gift* and *curse* mean to you?
- ◆ What do you think the word *Compulsion* means in the title?
- ◆ Do you believe in instant attraction or would you mistrust it?
- ◆ Would you like it if someone seemed to know everything about you?
- ◆ How much of what we know about ourselves is based on the stories passed down within our families?
- ◆ How does what our parents and families *don't* tell us about family history change what how we feel about them?
- ◆ How much does bias, prejudice, and loss of historical information affect our lives and the stories and history that shape who we believe we are?
- ◆ How does how we see ourselves change how other people see us?



## Praise for *Compulsion*

Kansas State Reading Circle Selection

Fall 2014 Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance Okra Pick

“Skillfully blends rich magic and folklore with adventure, sweeping romance, and hidden treasure . . . An impressive start to the Heirs of Watson Island series.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“A little bit *Gone with the Wind*, a little bit *Romeo and Juliet* . . .”

—*School Library Journal*

“Boone's Southern Gothic certainly delivers a compelling mystery about feuding families and buried secrets, not to mention a steamy romance.”

—*Booklist*

“Darkly romantic and steeped in Southern Gothic charm, you'll be compelled to get lost in the Heirs of Watson Island series.”

—#1 *New York Times* bestselling author  
Jennifer L. Armentrout

“A fresh twist on the Southern Gothic—haunting, atmospheric, and absorbing.”

—Claudia Gray, *NYT* bestselling author of *A Thousand Pieces of You* and the *Evernight* and *Spellcaster* series

“*Compulsion* is a stunningly magical debut with a delicious slow burn to be savored. I want to live in this story world!”

—Wendy Higgins, *USA Today* and *NYT* bestselling author of the *Sweet Evil Trilogy*

“Beautifully written, with vivid characters, a generations-old feud, and romance that leaps off the page, this Southern ghost story left me lingering over every word, and yet wanting to race to the compelling finish. Martina Boone's *Compulsion* is not to be missed.”

—Megan Shepherd, author of *The Madman's Daughter*



## General Reading & Discussion Questions

(CCRA.R6, RL.9-12.1,2,3,4,5)

- ◆ This is a book that creates a fictional island among the barrier islands of South Carolina and weaves in some actual events and historical facts. Analyze why the author chose not to use one of the real islands for this story. Discuss ways the use of the fictional setting may signal her intent to make the story more of a fantasy than it first appears.
- ◆ The Fire Carrier is a fictional creation based on a Cherokee legend of a witch so terrible that it is never discussed. However, the Fire Carrier was also the term given to the War Priest who carried coals from the sacred fire in a special vessel as part of a war party. Discuss how folklore and terminology can change or mutate over time and how authors and storytellers embellish facts until, sometimes, origins get lost. How have prominent people changed stories they have told over time? Why do stories change? In *Compulsion*, Cassie Colesworth tells Barrie the story of the Fire Carrier. Is she a reliable narrator? What reasons might there be for discounting the story that she told? What portions of the story don't ring true?
- ◆ Mary, the Gullah woman who runs the Watson's Landing tearoom with Pru, has left behind much of her Gullah Geechee heritage, but she still has a fear of "haints" and "plat eyes," and she interprets the *yunwi* of Watson's Landing according to the African-American traditions of the sea islands rather than their Cherokee origins. How does the culture of a particular reader or storyteller factor into their interpretation of the events that they are reading or reporting?
- ◆ Headdresses and paint hold specific functions and meanings in Native American culture, and this was especially true of ancient cultures. The Fire Carrier would have come to Watson Island long before 1692. Barrie sees him wearing a feather cape and headdress, but the headdress is never described apart from saying that the feathers "melded into his long black hair." Discuss how the Fire Carrier's appearance might further the mystery of who the Fire Carrier is and why he is on Watson Island. What kinds of clues might his clothing and headdress provide to his identity, role, and standing within his society? How do *you* visualize this headdress? How does your interpretation play into the stereotypes of Native Americans?
- ◆ Emmett, the father of Pru and Lula, deliberately kept them from using the Watson gift by telling them it was evil and that the Fire Carrier, likewise, was evil. Discuss the judgment of good or evil in stories. Why did Emmett say this to his daughters? Why did his daughters believe him when they were younger? Why did Lula stop believing him long before Pru? How might the interpretation of good and evil change according to the intent of someone who tells or writes a story? How might the perception of what is good and what is evil vary from reader to reader?
- ◆ Eight Beaufort tells Barrie a story about the "Scalping Tree," which is general local knowledge, but when Barrie questions him about the story, he considers it and realizes it is probably false. Is there bias displayed in his description? How are we, as a modern society, gradually reinterpreting stories and even phrases and word choices that have been passed down to us? How has the terminology for Native American or Indian American people changed? For African or Black Americans?
- ◆ Barrie's godfather Mark, an African-American man, likes to wear women's clothing and once performed in a drag show as a female entertainer, but he still identifies himself as male. His sexual orientation is not discussed except as it relates to his confliction, but questions of gender identity alienated him from his parents when he was young, and his choices continued to be questioned both by members of the straight and LGBTQ communities while Barrie was growing up. Discuss the questions raised in the book about Mark's view of himself, and discuss whether there is any one right way of being straight or LGBTQ. How would the resources available to him and his perception of his place in society have changed since 1988 when he was fourteen? How do our definitions, understanding, and acceptance of people unlike ourselves continue to evolve?
- ◆ Barrie has had little life experience, but having Mark as her primary caregiver and person she loves most in the world has made her very sensitive to judging other people. At the same time, never having had a sister or close friend, she is eager to be friends with Cassie. Discuss the role this plays in the plot of the story. What choices does this lead to? How is Barrie's behavior in itself an example of bias and judgment? What are the advantages of placing trust in people? The disadvantages?
- ◆ Emmett Watson mistreated both his daughters. His controlling nature, fear that someone might discover the murder he had committed, and the "binding" associated with the Watson gift all contributed to keeping both Pru and Lula isolated most of their lives. Despite the small town propensity for everyone to know everyone's business, no one seemed to notice the problem with Pru enough to help her, and in San Francisco the only one who helped Lula was Mark. Discuss some ways that modern society contributes to loneliness and isolation and turns a blind eye to cruelty or bullying. Have you ever felt bullied? Lonely? Isolated? Do you think you would know if your neighbor or best friend was the victim of physical or emotional abuse?



## Historical Discussion Questions

(CCR.R.1, CCR.W.2, CCR.W.7)

- ◆ Charles Towne, the first settlement in the area that is now called Charleston, SC, was named after King Charles II. Having just regained power from Oliver Cromwell, the new king rewarded eight former generals by giving them the Carolina colony, and they brought settlers from Bermuda in 1670 to settle on the west bank of the Ashley River and subsequently at its current location at the tip of the Ashley and Cooper Rivers. It became the most important city in the South through the Civil War, playing key roles in the Continental Congress and the American Revolution. As the capital of South Carolina, it led the way as the state became the first to secede from the Union. The first shots of the Civil War were fired by Confederate forces trying to take Fort Sumter. Discuss the role that Charleston played in the development of the South and in the early history of the United States. Why was a port in that location important? Why was the original Charles Towne settlement moved? Was the reward that King Charles gave to his generals a profitable one?

- ◆ The marker that is Barrie's first introduction to the history of Watson's Landing reads:

*Watson's Landing Plantation was established in 1692 by a grant to Thomas Watson, captain of the privateer vessel Loyal Jamaica, and has remained in the Watson family without interruption. It is one of the oldest rice plantations on the Santisto River, and the original house, constructed of locally made brick, remains intact.*

- ◆ The *Loyal Jamaica* was an actual privateer vessel, and among the crew and passengers required to provide recognizances (bail) as a guarantee of good behavior were several men who went on to become prominent merchants and plantation owners in the area. These included Thomas Pinckney, whose son Charles Cotesworth Pinckney was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention and twice ran for President of the new United States. Records differ widely about the *Loyal Jamaica*, what became of her, and whether the men aboard were privateers or pirates. (Thomas Pinckney's affidavit from 1692 admits to helping to capture a French vessel.) Discuss the narrow and shifting line between piracy and privateering according to the state of war and alliances of captors and captives. Why might the records of the *Loyal Jamaica's* status vary? Could the Pinckney family's prominence or the prominence of other families have played a role in that? How do historical records get lost or reinterpreted over time?
- ◆ The Cherokee, one of the "Five Civilized Tribes" of Native Americans encountered by the Colonists who settled the eastern portion of what is now the United States, are descendants of the Mississippian Culture. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the *Aniyunwia*, the Principal People, were an agrarian society who lived in towns with streets and public areas. Their houses were mainly wattle and daub structure, and they studied and cultivated plants, developing a productive strain of corn similar to that grown today. They had two separate forms of government, a peacetime government, and a separate government in times of war. Cherokee were among the tribes encountered by Spanish Captain Pedro de Salaza, who arrived in Beaufort, SC, in 1514, and a short time later by Hernando de Soto as he came up from Florida looking for treasure and Native captives to enslave. Discuss some of the pressures that the arrival of the Spanish, French, and subsequently the English placed on the Native tribes in the area and how these led to upheavals and migrations. Look up the Yamassee War of 1715 to 1717 and discuss the Cherokee role and the methods of warfare used by both sides. *Compulsion* mentions that the Fire Carrier isn't originally local to Watson Island. Where might he have come from? How many times and in how many ways were the Cherokee displaced? What were the reasons for those displacements?
- ◆ Cassie's story mentions that the Fire Carrier was captured for Thomas Watson, Robert Beaufort, and John Colesworth by one of John's slaves, a voodoo priest from the West Indies. Barrie does not know enough to question this portion of the story yet in *Compulsion*. Discuss the origin of slaves brought to the Carolinas in the late seventeenth century. Where in the West Indies and Africa did they come from? What religions and belief systems might they have brought with them? What evidence of those belief systems still exists today?
- ◆ Charleston and the Lowcountry area has a rich history. Research one aspect of this history and write at least a two-page report. Possible topics could include the history of Charles Towne Landing; a biography of Thomas Pinckney, who came to Charleston on the privateer vessel *Loyal Jamaica*; his descendant, Charles Pinckney, South Carolina's representative at the Constitutional Convention; or Eliza Lucas Pinckney, who at the age of seventeen, oversaw three rice plantations for her father and founded the American indigo industry. Other topics of interest might include the history of Gullah culture and its survival and revival, the history of rice or indigo plantations in South Carolina; the old Cherokee trading trail to Charleston; South Carolina's (and Charleston's) role in the start of the Civil War; or Sherman's march from Savannah to Columbia.

# Chapter-by-Chapter Discussion/Journal Questions

## Chapters 1—2 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3)

Working with a partner, and using the text, write the name of each character introduced in a notebook and what you know about them. Leave space to add more details as you read the book.

Barrie mentions that she has the Watson gift for finding things and experiences pressure in her head when something is nearby that needs to be found. Do you think people have “gifts” that are innate? Why/why not?

What do you know about Watson’s Landing Plantation?

## Chapters 3—4 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2, CCR.R.3)

What does Pru learn about her twin sister from Barrie that she didn’t know before?

What does Barrie learn about the history behind the Watsons and the Colesworths?

## Chapters 5—6 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3)

What reasoning does Barrie use to justify not telling her aunt Pru that she will be meeting her Colesworth cousins? Do you think she is making the right decision? Why or why not?

At midnight, Barrie hears drums beating, and sees the river burning and a ghostly figure that make her think she’s crazy. How does she know she didn’t dream it?

What are the conflicting feelings Barrie has about Eight?

What does Barrie lose and can’t find, even though she feels Finding “pulls”?

## Chapters 7—8 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3, CCR.R.4)

What is the evidence in the text that everyone in the town seems interested in Barrie? Cite at least three examples.

What does Eight tell Barrie about the Colesworth family history and what Wyatt Colesworth does now that is illegal? What is some evidence from the text that he is someone to be feared?

Barrie and Eight go to the beach to see the loggerheads hatch? Using clues from the text, what is a loggerhead? (p. 83—85)

What is Barrie’s impression of Cassie? What do you think of her? Should Barrie be suspicious of her? Why or why not?

What does Julie tell Barrie about?

## Chapters 9—10 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3, CCR.R.6)

Barrie feels a “pull” from a locked desk drawer. What could be in there that she needs to find?

The author uses foreshadowing about a gift that Eight has. Can you find the clues to what the gift might be?

Eight and Barrie view Cassie and her motives very differently. Why do they have different points of view?

## Chapter 11 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2, CCR.R.3)

Add Wyatt Colesworth and a description of him to your character page.

Summarize the story Cassie tells Barrie about Robert Beaufort, Thomas Watson, and John Colesworth. What makes Barrie think that Cassie is telling the truth?

## Chapter 12 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2)

What does Pru tell Barrie about the Watson gift and her mother, Lula?

Barrie is debating with herself whether she should help Cassie find the hidden treasure. Give her reasons why she should and why she should not. What would you do?

### Teaching Tip (CCR.SL.1)

*Have students talk to a partner before writing their responses to the questions or sharing them orally.*

## Chapters 13—14 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2, CCR.R.3)

What does Pru believe the *yunwi* are doing to the house and the garden?

Barrie’s pull to the woods is strong, but Pru and Eight keep warning her against going there, just like Lula’s daddy forbade Lula to go there. What might happen if Barrie went there? What might be pulling her there that she needs to find?

Why is Eight going to college to play baseball instead of becoming a lawyer like his father?

What does Barrie learn about her family from the old school teacher, Mrs. Price?

## Chapters 15—16 (CCR.R.2, CCR.R.3, CCR.R.7)

Pru explains to Barrie why she hasn’t left Watson Landing. She says doing something different “seems impossible until it’s over, but then it turns out not to have been so hard, and facing the next challenge becomes a little easier.” Describe an experience when you did something difficult. Did facing the next challenge become easier?

What happened between Emmett, his brother, Luke, and Twila Beaufort?

What did Eight find out about the *yunwi* from the Internet—what makes them torment people or bring people good fortune?

## Chapters 17—18 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2, CCR.R.3)

Summarize what happens between Wyatt, Cassie, and Barrie at the play. Do you feel sorry for Cassie? Why or why not?

## Chapters 19—20 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2, CCR.R.3)

What does Barrie learn from the letters that she finds? What questions does she still have?

Describe the encounter Barrie has with the *yunwi*.

## Chapters 21—22 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3)

What is significant about the *yunwi* acting up after Lula died?

Cassie convinces Barrie to look for the treasure again by saying, “if we could find the treasure, they would finally see us like we matter . . . we wouldn’t always have to feel like we aren’t good enough.” Do you think Cassie is right? Why or why not?

## Chapters 23—24 (CCR.R.1)

Mark tells Barrie: “The things I regret . . . aren’t the ones that left me hurt. I regret all the things I never had the courage to do.” Do you agree with Mark? Why or why not?

## Chapters 25—26 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2)

Eight tells Barrie that he’s interested in her because she’s interesting, unpredictable, and a little bit magic. Do you think that’s true of most people—that we like people who “shake things up” (as Eight puts it)? Why or why not?

What does Barrie discover that makes her distrust Cassie?

## Chapters 27—28 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2, CCR.R.3, CCR.R.7)

Barrie sees Twila’s ghost being murdered. Who do you think killed her and why?

Speaking of Watson’s Landing, Barrie says, “This place doesn’t own me,” and if she was going to stay, it was going to be on her terms. How is this attitude different than Pru’s or Lula’s?

## Chapters 29—30 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3)

What makes Barrie sure that it was Emmett who killed Twila and Luke? Explain the connection between Lula and the murders.

## Chapters 31—33 (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2, CCR.R.3)

Barrie learns that Wyatt was the one responsible for nearly killing her mother. What was his motivation?

Who comes to help Barrie escape from Wyatt?

Pru says that love is made of “memory and hope and heartache that weave themselves into the very core of who you are.” How is that true for Barrie?

## Concluding Questions (CCR.R.1, CCR.R.2, CCR.R.3, CCR.R.5, CCR.W.1)

If you could have a gift like Barrie or Eight, what would it be? Why?

Some of the characters in this book thought that what happened to them was because of a curse or gifts. In your opinion, how much of our destiny is predetermined and how much do we control our own destiny by the choices we make?

What did Barrie do differently to change the course of direction for herself?

How has Barrie changed through her experiences at Watson Landing? What can you also learn from them?



# Curriculum Connections

## Teaching Tip

*Students can feel a new connection to Compulsion by doing a project that correlates with the setting, plot, or characters in the book. Have the students pick one or more of the projects below to do either while they are reading the book or as a culminating project after finishing the novel. The idea is to have them choose something that interests them and for having fun! These can be completed at school or at home. When the projects are finished, have the students share them with the class. They could also be shared at a parents' night, open house, or a southern beach party (see next page).*

## History

(CCR.R.1, CCR.W.2, CCR.W.7, RH9-10.7)

The Lowcountry of the Carolinas has a unique blend of cultures. Researchers now believe that at the turn of the eighteenth century, 30 to 50 percent of the slaves in the Carolinas were Native American, and enslaved Native Americans were exported to the Northern colonies as well as to the West Indies. In turn, enslaved Africans and slaves of African origin who had previously been forced to labor on plantations in the West Indies were brought into the port of Charleston through the infamous Middle Passage. Read about and map the slave routes into the area and out of the area, and research how the blend of Native American and African-American cultures intersected on the plantations of the Lowcountry. How did this contribute to the Gullah Geechee culture that still exists today among the descendants of former slaves along the coasts of North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida?

## Genealogy

(CCR.W.7, CCR.SL.4)

Barrie witnesses and learns about her own family's history as well as the Beaufort and Colesworth families' histories going back several generations. There is a pedigree chart of the three families on page 59. Research the genealogy of your own family and fill out a pedigree chart up to four generations. (Go to <http://www.genealogysearch.org/free/forms.html> for a blank pedigree chart.) Pick one ancestor on your chart to research. Write down some of their history, then share it with your class.

## Writing

(CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3, CCR.R.6, CCR.W.4, CCR.W.10)

Barrie found letters that her mother wrote during the years that she lived away from the Watson plantation. Letters written long ago can be a cherished find for our descendants after we are gone. They can be a record of someone's life. If you were Barrie writing to Mark, what would your letters say? Using the text as a guide, write at least five letters from Barrie's point of view to Mark back in San Francisco explaining what is happening and your feelings.

## Art

(CCR.R.1, CCR.R.7)

Barrie is an artist. Her mother also sketched pictures of the Watson plantation. Using the descriptions the author gives in the book, make your own sketch, diorama, or other artistic representation of the three plantations, the river, and the surrounding area.

## Debate

(CCR.R.1, CCR.R.3, CCR.R.6, CCR.R.8, CCR.SL.1, CCR.SL.3, CCR.SL.4, CCR.SL.6)

Even though the Colesworth family was supposedly cursed, and the other two were given gifts, each family had their own positive and negative history, family members, and traits.

With two other classmates, hold a debate. Each person will represent one of the families in the story—Watson, Beaufort, and Colesworth. Using details from the text, each student will present an argument from that family's point of view as to their history and reputation.

## Bonus Activity

### Teaching Tip

*Just like **Barrie and Eight**, have a southern beach party. Invite parents to your final activity. Encourage attendees to wear beach clothing and bring a southern food dish to share (see below for ideas). The curriculum connection activities could be presented for entertainment or a baseball game could be played in honor of **Eight**.*

## Immerse Yourself in a Southern Beach Party

Encourage your guests to dress in beach clothing such as shorts, T-shirts or tanks, beach hats, sundresses, and sandals or flip-flops. Be sure they bring a beach towel too! If you can't go to a real beach, river, or pool setting, make your own by bringing in sand, or just have some water fun with a variety of sprinklers, small wading pools, or water guns on a lawn area. Put out tables for eating with checkered cloths, umbrellas, and buckets of peanuts, just like at Bobby Joe's Beach Dogs.

Have a barbecue to cook up your own gourmet hot dogs with a variety of toppings. The book mentions the Blue Cheese Dog that came topped with blue-cheese slaw and sweet potato mustard; the Hottie Dog with chili, cheese, slaw, and spicy mustard; and the Green Dog which was tofu with mustard, ketchup, and onions. You could also offer the Bikini Dog, which was a plain hot dog. Have your students come up with their own toppings and names for dogs and make your menu from there. You could also serve sweet potato fries and a variety of sodas to complete the menu.



## Sweet Potato Fries

(adapted from *Simply Recipes*)

### Ingredients:

- 2 pounds sweet potatoes (about 3 large ones)
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 1-2 Tbsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp salt
- 1-2 Tbsp of your favorite spice or spice combination (paprika, cajun, pumpkin pie spice, etc.)

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees F.
2. Peel potatoes and cut off the ends. Slice into wedges.
3. Put the wedges and oil into a bowl and mix.
4. Combine sugar, salt, other spices and toss with the potatoes until mixed well.
5. Spread in single on a baking sheet.
6. Bake for 15 minutes on wire rack in oven. Turn over and bake 15 more minutes until well browned.

## About the Author



Martina Boone was born in what is now the Czech Republic and moved to the United States when she was seven. The books she read when she was a teen have stayed with her all of her life. Now she creates new worlds and writes about teen characters who change their worlds.

She is passionate about school safety and literacy, and loves to ski, ride dressage horses, travel, and read beautiful, slightly twisted fiction. She eats Nutella on pretty much anything, adores marzipan, has guilty cravings for stale sugar-free licorice, and drinks chocolate-flavored tea with milk.

Martina and her husband live in Virginia with two kids, a shelter cat, and a backyard visited by hummingbirds, butterflies, rabbits, squirrels, groundhogs, foxes, bald eagles, deer, and even the occasional curious bear. You can visit her at [www.martinaboone.com](http://www.martinaboone.com).

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