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## A BOOK CLUB GUIDE FOR

# 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.

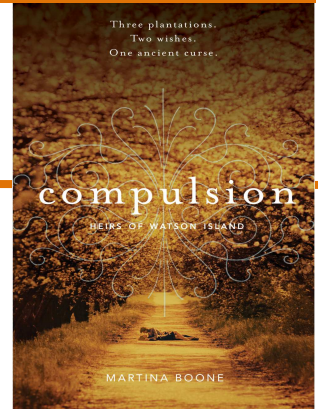
Stuck with the ghosts of a generations-old feud and hunted by forces she cannot see, Barrie must find a way to break free of the family legacy. With the help of sun-kissed Eight Beaufort, who knows what Barrie wants before she knows herself, the last Watson heir starts to unravel her family's twisted 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.

## Welcome Activity

In *Compulsion*, Barrie Watson has a gift for finding lost things, and Eight tells her that, "Treasure hunting is practically a Southern pastime." For a fun event tie-in, try having a Treasure Hunt to kick off your book club gathering!

As guests arrive, pass out clues to hidden items similar to those Barrie found in the book: keys, hair clips, a cell phone, a sketchbook or notebook, letters, etc. Or hunt for fun treasures that they can keep.

Want a fun prize to "search" for? Email us and let us know you'll be doing a book club treasure hunt. We'll send you bookmarks and additional goodies! Contact [CompulsionForReading@gmail.com](mailto:CompulsionForReading@gmail.com) and put Book Club in the subject line.



## 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*



## Prereading 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 do you think that means?
- ◆ 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?
- ◆ Do you believe in ghosts? Have you ever had a supernatural experience before? Would you be frightened of the experience or welcome it?

## Discussion Questions

- ◆ 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. How might the use of the fictional setting may signal her intent to make the story more of a fantasy than it first appears?
- ◆ What character did you relate to most in the story? What do you think made that connection for you?
- ◆ Would you want a gift like the ones in *Compulsion*? If you had to have one, which would you rather have, Eight's or Barrie's? Why?
- ◆ If you could ask for a small magic or a wish, what would it be?
- ◆ Do you believe in "curses" or do people determine by their actions what happens to them? Was the Colesworth family the only family with a "curse"? Why or why not?
- ◆ Barrie had an unusual upbringing and relationship with her mother Lula. What does Barrie learn at Watson's Landing that challenges how she's always seen her mother?
- ◆ What did Barrie do differently from Lula or Pru to change the course of her life and her relationship with Watson's Landing and the gift? Would you welcome what happened to her, or would you fight it?
- ◆ Barrie fights her attraction to Eight both because he's leaving Watson Island and because his gift makes her wonder if she likes him because he knows the right things to say to her. How much do you think the gifts play into their relationship?
- ◆ Eight says he was attracted to Barrie because she was 'interesting, unpredictable and a little big magic.' Do you think this is true of most romantic relationships? Why or why not?
- ◆ Pru says that love is made of "memory and hope and heartache that weave themselves into the very core of who you are." How was this true for Barrie? Is it true in your life?



## More Discussion Questions

- ◆ 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 her 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?
- ◆ Emmett, the father of Pru and Lula, kept them from using the Watson gift by telling them it was evil and that the Fire Carrier, likewise, was evil. Why did he 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 local story about the "Scalping Tree," but when Barrie questions him about the story, he 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? Should historic place names and stories be changed to reflect modern sensibilities?
- ◆ 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?

# Immerse Yourself in a Southern Beach Party

Encourage your guests to dress in beach clothing and have a cookout! 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 guests come with their own favorite toppings and a creative name for their own concoction. Serve sweet potato fries and Southern-style sweet tea or lemonade to complete the menu.

## Southern Sweet Tea

Serve your guests sweet tea and cookies just like in the Watson Landing tearoom. Here's a recipe for southern sweet tea. Just add your favorite cookies to compliment the beverage. (Recipe adapted from food.com.)



### Ingredients:

6 regular tea bags  
1/8 tsp. baking soda  
2 cups boiling water  
1 1/2—2 cups sugar  
6 cups cold water  
Fresh fruit (if desired)

### Directions:

1. In a large glass measuring cup, place the tea bags and the baking soda and pour the boiling water over them.
2. Cover and steep for 15 minutes, remove bags gently and discard.
3. Pour the tea into a 2 quart pitcher, add sugar, and stir to dissolve.
4. Pour the tea into a 2 quart pitcher and add the sugar.
5. Add in the cold water and chill in the refrigerator.
6. Serve over ice. Add cut up fresh fruit, if desired.

## Share Family History

All of us have family stories from either our ancestors or present day families, but it's easy to lose information. Consider getting your guests started on recording their family histories by asking them to share an anecdote and giving them a blank geneology chart to fill in with their family names. (Get one at <http://www.genealogysearch.org/free/forms.html>.)

## 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, Auggie the Wonder Dog, and a backyard visited frequently by a variety of wild animals.

## Did you know?

Charles Towne Landing, which became Charleston, has a truly fascinating history, including an incident with Blackbeard and his pirates blockading the harbor and the shipwreck of the privateer vessel Loyal Jamaica, whose manifest contains several names, including Pinckney and Fenwick, that came to be associated with the founding plantations in the area. The history of Fenwick Hall and that of Thomas Pinckney and his family became Martina Boone's inspiration for much of the fictional history of Watson Island and the Beaufort, Colesworth, and Watson families in

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Guide created by Kristin Werk - [kwerk@pittsburg.k12.ca.us](mailto:kwerk@pittsburg.k12.ca.us)