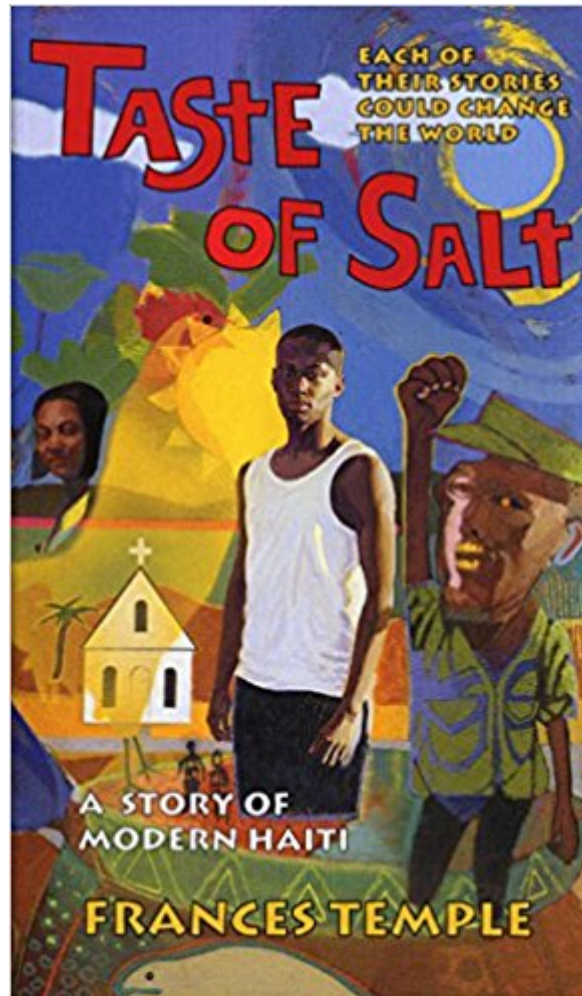




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# Taste Of Salt: A Story Of Modern Haiti



## Synopsis

Every Life Makes a Story Djo has a story: Once he was one of "Titid's boys," a vital member of Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide's election team, fighting to overthrow military dictatorship in Haiti. Now he is barely alive, the victim of a political firebombing. Jeremie has a story: Convent-educated Jeremie can climb out of the slums of Port-au-Prince. But she is torn between her mother's hopes and her own wishes for herself ... and for Haiti. Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide has a story: A dream of a new Haiti, one in which every person would have a decent life ... a house with a roof ... clean water to drink ... a good plate of rice and beans every day ... a field to work in. At Aristide's request, Djo tells his story to Jeremie -- for Titid believes in the power of all of their stories to make change. As Jeremie listens to Djo, and to her own heart, she knows that they will begin a new story, one that is all their own, together.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This arresting first novel presents a powerful fictional portrait of the poverty and oppression in contemporary Haiti. Seventeen-year-old Djo, one of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's bodyguards, has been badly beaten by the macoutes, violent members of Duvalier's private army. While Djo is recovering in the hospital, Fr. Aristide convinces him to dictate his life story to a girl scribe named Jeremie. Djo reveals the key events of his childhood in brutally vivid detail: he left home early because his mother had too many mouths to feed; he taught reading to younger boys at Aristide's shelter; he was kidnapped and sold into slavery as a sugar cane worker. In the person of Djo, Temple has

successfully created a martyr for the people. His narrative contains a smattering of social and political insights as well as excerpts from Aristide's motivational writings and speeches. Djo's and Jeremie's dialect is never cumbersome for the reader--a glossary appears at the end of the book--and lends authenticity to their accounts. Djo's extraordinary experiences and circumstances shed harsh light on a people in crisis. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 8 Up-- Haiti is the setting for this novel of two young people whose growth toward maturity mirrors the same process taking place in their volatile country. Based on real incidents and people, it is the fascinating story of fictional Djo, one of Aristide's boys, street urchins whom the priest gathered together to give an opportunity for a different life and a chance at an education. Jeremie is a young woman educated at a convent school, the only way out of the slums into which she was born. They meet at Djo's hospital bedside where he is near death from a beating at the hands of the Tonton Macoute, the deposed Duvalier's private army of thugs; she is responsible for getting Djo's story on tape. While he is in a coma, she writes her own story. Both of their accounts are full of the grim realities of life in modern Haiti, complete with the sense of hopefulness and helplessness that must fill a country in which politics are a deadly game. Dialect is used throughout, but it is readable, lyrical, and adds authenticity to the narrative. Factual material is integrated extremely well; no background knowledge is needed to become caught up in the drama of the many in this embattled land as related through the eyes of two compelling characters. An excellent first effort. --Kathryn Havris, Mesa Public Library, AZ Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I loaned this to a middle school student who was struggling to find a book that mirrored her own experience. There is simply not a lot of YA fiction that features a Caribbean protagonist. The dual narrative is unusual and allows for a more honest view of the historical events covered. Additionally, the use of the original Creole is great for challenging young readers. The author is careful to explain it in context or through the glossary in the back. For those considering giving it to a student, I wouldn't recommend it for any student under 6th grade. While there is no sexual content, there is some discussion of violence and adult situations.

Unfortunately, Aristide was not the savior of Haiti that his followers thought he might be. But this book is honest and charming though not always happy. It tells a hard story of love and youthful

hope and energy. The story is easily enjoyed by all ages, and serves as an important look into Haitian culture and recent history. I highly recommend it to Haitian children who have been adopted or are in the US as immigrants. It is also fantastic for social studies or as a literature selection.

This is the first book I read that explains Aristide's start. Easy to read you will never look at the sugar in your coffee the same way again.

The book was not exactly what I expected. It was an okay read and certainly eye-opening regarding the problems that Haiti has had for some time.

And, Temple tells it wonderfully! She writes english with the Creole (Kreyol) feel of putting words together, and the research was dead on. I have stood outside of the burned out St. John Bosco, I have walked and worked in CitÃ© Soleil. This book made me cry, and oh so "homesick" for a country that I only met 4 years ago!

How would you react if you saw people getting shot and killed daily? Would you hide? Would you lose hope? This is what Djo, a poverty-stricken 15-year-old, faces every day in *Taste of Salt* by Frances Temple. Temple's characters endure drive-bys, stealing, starvation, thirst, and the Macoutes killing innocent people in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Titid, a Haitian priest, meets Djo, and they become good friends. When Titid decides to run for the president of Haiti, many people are happy, especially Djo because he is part of Titid's election campaign, but others, including the Macoutes, are angry and unhappy. In February, 1992, the Macoutes, who are a private army of thugs working for the dictator, set fire to one of Titid's homeless shelters, where Djo and others that are on Titid's election campaign are sleeping. Djo is very badly burnt and beaten, but he survives. Since Titid is afraid that Djo will die without anybody knowing his story, he hires Jeremie, a poor student at a Catholic girls' school, to allow Djo to tell his story to her, and she will record it. Frances Temple switches points of view between Djo and Jeremie. This technique lets the reader know multiple views. In this novel, she informs the reader that people need hope to stay alive. It also teaches the reader that you need to take risks in your life because, if not, you will be leaving in fear. I liked this book, and I could not put it down. I recommend this historical fiction to all young adults. You can learn a lot about hope, freedom, and courage if you think about Djo's, Jeremie's, and Titid's perspective on these happenings and events.

What would it feel like if you lived in one of the poorest countries in the world? The author of *Taste of Salt*, Francis Temple shows the struggles of the people living in Haiti trying to get their freedom. This book is a very interesting book full of history and what hard times they were and are going through trying to get their freedom. Djo is a tall, strong eighteen-year-old boy. Djo has been living with Titid since he was ten years old. Titid is a priest who is running to be Haiti's president. Djo becomes part of his campaign and is one of his bodyguards. One night when Titid is giving a speech to the people of Haiti, they got attacked by men called the Macoutes. In one moment, Djo's life is changed when he gets injured by a firebombing and then beaten nearly to death. "Titid has invited someone to my bedside to listen to my story... and if I tell my story to the tape recorder man, whoever he be, then I will not die entirely. Titid loves me. Also Titid is a politician. He knows how to make things happen, to make the world change. And I'm Titid's little helper, one of his boys." Jeremie is hired by Titid to listen to Djo's story. She is a very shy girl, and is afraid of Djo because of the firebombing. She stays in school and gets perfect grades until Djo comes into her life. Francis Temple writes this historical fiction in such an interesting way that one feels like one is a character in the book. If you are interested in a book that is full of suspense and has a lot of culture and politics, I would definitely recommend *Taste of Salt*.

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