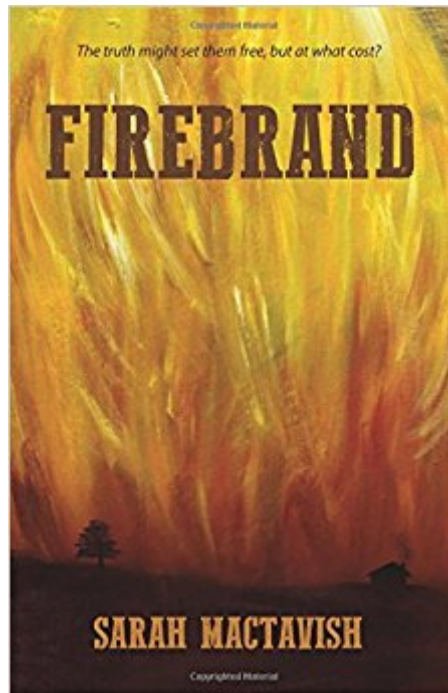




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Firebrand (Volume 1)



Synopsis

In the summer of 1860, when slavery ruled the heart of America, two young abolitionists discover how dangerous it can be to believe in freedom for all. Saoirse Callahan's family is broken. Hunger forced them out of Ireland and they still struggle to survive in their new home, where scorching Texas droughts threaten their small farm. Then, on one blazing Sunday afternoon, a series of mysterious fires devastates the region. Whispered rumors of a slave rebellion soon flame into a statewide panic. Vigilantes scour the countryside for arsonists, targeting foreigners and slaves in a bloodthirsty witch-hunt. Saoirse is determined to find out how the fires really started, but the more questions she asks, the more she puts her family and friends in danger. And the truth may be more than she can handle. Meanwhile, safe in Pennsylvania, Westleigh Kavanagh can call himself an abolitionist with little fear. But when he realizes his father's new boarder is actually a runaway slave, he must keep the wanted man's identity a secret. Because Westleigh's father is the sheriff, and bound by law to help capture fugitives, whether he believes in slavery or not. Westleigh wants to protect his father from the truth, but the longer he lies, the greater chance they will all be caught. Then Westleigh makes his own discovery--an old forbidden journal that holds secrets of his father's past. Secrets that lead to the Callahans. Secrets that, if unraveled, could destroy both families.

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Customer Reviews

"MacTavish has taken a very interesting and entertaining approach with this novel. Though historical fiction, it doesn't read like an historical narrative, but like a contemporary young

adult novel. History does have a way of repeating itself, and so the book transports the reader to a time that seems all too plausible for today's contentious world. For those who want a young adult novel in a unique setting with emotionally high stakes, *Firebrand* is a moving, expertly written, and entertaining work of young adult fiction." Self-Publishing Review,

Sarah MacTavish is a small-town Texan with Yankee roots and a heart that belongs in Ireland. In addition to being a writer she is also a teen librarian, incurable Star Wars nerd, and proud Hufflepuff. *Firebrand* is her first novel.

This was a great read! I ended up reading the whole thing over the course of a lazy afternoon because I couldn't put it down. What really impressed me about this book was the sharp dialogue - what usually turns me off of most historical fiction books is cheesy, overdone dialogue that doesn't advance the plot or add anything to the character, but that certainly cannot be said of *Firebrand*. This book has a wealth of characters, including a fiesty young female protagonist you will grow to love, and action-packed scenes in every chapter that come alive through the dialogue. While the book tackles some heavy themes like the consequences of slavery and the tragedies faced by 19th century American immigrants, it's essentially a story about families, neighbors, and relationships, and because of the rich character development, there's something here that everyone can relate to.

MacTavish has done an amazing thing. YA book that doesn't feel YA. Historical fiction that rolls with the more comfortable fluidity of contemporary fiction. Characters so believable that I didn't even like the main female character for the first part of the book, her teen angst so real it was almost too hard to see past it. But, true to nature, she hits a time of such raw emotion I don't know if I could read it again, and she was slammed with so much pain and humility, my heart totally went out to and I "got" her. Switching between points of view is a risky venture, but MacTavish pulls it off admirably. I enjoyed both voices, and the short chapters moved the book along almost too quickly. I respect the amount of cultural and historical research which made the book believable and authentic. My only complaint is the fact that it's book one in a series and, although several parts of the story were tied up enough to be satisfying, there was enough of a cliffhanging twist at the end to make me hope MacTavish is at the keyboard right now hammering away at part 2. I'll be pre-purchasing that one as soon as it's available.

A wonderful historical novel following the lives of a few young people during the period before the Civil War. I love how the two stories throughout the novel begin to intertwine!

I honestly have no idea where to start with writing this review. This is a wonderful debut novel! I will say that I am not a big history genre reader but I absolutely love Firebrand. I was pulled in right from chapter one and made myself go slow so I could savor the story and the wonderful characters. There is a lot going on but under it all is one common thread that links all the characters. I'm not going to give away any plot in my review, please read the blurb for that. It's written in two POVs, in two different parts of the U.S. so you can see how the parts are different yet similar. The characters are beautifully written and developed, the way they see the events around them is amazing. I honestly think this would be a great read for any YA or YA at heart. I can see this being read in English or History class in high school. Wonderful job and I look forward to reading more from Sarah MacTavish. Review by Raychel

Historical fiction is a genre I don't hit often, but since I've been taking an interest in this time period lately, I thought I'd give this one a try. I'm more than glad I did. Sarah MacTavish does a marvelous job of bringing the past to life. This is told from two different points of view, one from a character living in the North, and one from the South. Each has a very different perspective on the world around them, which grants the entire plot a broadness not usually found in stories set during the abolitionist time period. But it's not only these two characters which draw in, rather there's a rich cast. So many people, each with their own experiences, desires, fears and troubles. This is a book which grabs on many levels and builds a realistic world. What I really loved about this was the refreshing dialogue. Although set in the past, the characters never feel rusty, flowered or forced. The exchanges, thoughts and feelings come across naturally, over-stepping the feeling of being from the past. The fears and troubles come to life, making it clear how difficult it was to stand up for what was right. After reading this, the abolitionists take on a new dimension and earned respect. In other words--although historical, this is by no means a dry story. There is so much life and action, tension and emotions, that I believe it's something many YAers will have no trouble diving into and devouring every page. Best of all, when the last page is done, the story and characters don't disappear but remain filed away as a part of this time period and change how the reader looks back at it. I received a complimentary copy in exchange for an honest review.

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