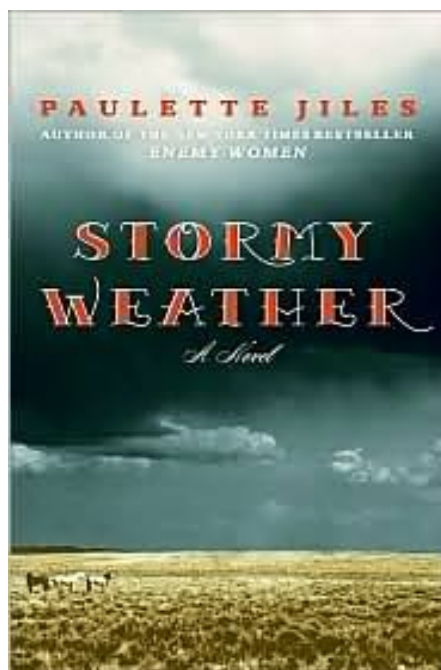




Stormy Weather

Paulette Jiles

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From Paulette Jiles, the acclaimed *New York Times* bestselling author of *Enemy Women*, comes a poignant and unforgettable story of hardship, sacrifice, and strength in a tragic time—and of a desperate dream born of an undying faith in the arrival of a better day

Oil is king of East Texas during the darkest years of the Great Depression. The Stoddard girls—responsible Mayme, whip-smart tomboy Jeanine, and bookish Bea—know no life but an itinerant one, trailing their father from town to town as he searches for work on the pipelines and derricks; that is, when he's not spending his meager earnings at gambling joints, race tracks, and dance halls. And in every small town in which the windblown family settles, mother Elizabeth does her level best to make each sparse, temporary house they inhabit a home.

But the fall of 1937 ushers in a year of devastating drought and dust storms, and the family's fortunes sink further than they ever anticipated when a questionable "accident" leaves Elizabeth and her girls alone to confront the cruelest hardships of these hardest of times. With no choice left to them, they return to the abandoned family farm.

It is Jeanine, proud and stubborn, who single-mindedly devotes herself to rebuilding the farm and their lives. But hard work and good intentions won't make ends meet or pay the back taxes they owe on their land. In desperation, the Stoddard women place their last hopes for salvation in a wildcat oil well that eats up what little they have left . . . and on the back of late patriarch Jack's one true legacy, a dangerous racehorse named Smoky Joe. And Jeanine, the fatherless "daddy's girl," must decide if she will gamble it all . . . on love.

Stormy Weather Details

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From Reader Review Stormy Weather for online ebook

Ashley says

This is an easy read that has good characters and good writing. Paulette Jiles used to be a poet, and I thought most of the imagery and over-all story-telling was very pretty--and I loved the dialogue. It is set in Texas during the Depression and involves a family of three sisters and their mother overcoming the odds and making a life for themselves on the old family farm. It's not an original story, but it gave me a good sense of what the Depression might have been like. I liked reading about the quarter horse match races and being a sap for love stories, I liked the romance between the main character Jeanine Stoddard and the rancher Ross Everett. Most of all, I just liked Jeanine--she was brave, determined, she loved horses, and she was good at sewing--the image of her zebra-striped flour sack dress is one of my favorites. Also, in a time when too many recently published novels are either blatantly violent and sexual or just plain weird and disturbing (and the writing much too self-important and all too aware of its own profundity) it's refreshing to read something that isn't.

Alisa says

I read this during lunch at my desk at work, and it held my interest quite well considering the fragmented attention it received. I wasn't excited to read another horse racing novel, but it turned out it was not this at all. It was more of a portrait of life in dusty Texas during the Great Depression. I enjoyed Jeanine and her family's persistence in carving a life out of hard times. I am puzzled by those who called this book depressing. I don't think it was, instead the lucky strikes (in oil, horses, and love) were more luck than most people could hope for.

Beth says

An interesting take on the Dust Bowl, the Depression, and the state of rural Southern America leading up to WWII. I like the fact the author chose to focus primarily on the middle child of a family--not a typical choice. I was pleased with how she centered much of the story around female characters and their experiences as women, especially in times when women were at the mercy of men who had trouble finding jobs and of society, which expected them to stifle their ambitions and take care of their husbands, children, and homes without any real thought for themselves. A subtle feminism permeates the book--quite well handled--even if the story does end somewhat conventionally.

Robert says

Stormy Weather follows a family in Texas during the dust bowl. Paulette Jiles style is a little jarring at first, but I soon got used to it. It jumps from topic to topic mid-paragraph.

Life during that era was very difficult for a lot of people. It's hard to believe that that was only 70 years ago. Times have sure changed. We hear talk of "recession" now, and how hard life is. No way. We have it so well in America.

I couldn't decide whether the focus was supposed to be on the characters or the period. I didn't care a whole lot about the characters, but there wasn't a whole lot of background information about *why* the characters went through what they did. Three stars.

Rachel Walden says

This is the first book in a long time that I couldn't put down and day-dreamed about almost every moment that I wasn't able to read it. Author Paulette Jiles drops you into a different time and place with wonderful, precise detail that I thoroughly enjoyed. I will also be thinking about the Texas-style romance between main characters Jeanine and Ross for some time to come--it's so restrained yet filled with the kind of just-under-the-surface passion that plants deep roots into one's imagination. I'm definitely having book withdrawals from this one....

Karleen Koen says

Again, such a good writer.

Chrissie says

I don't want to criticize this book, really I don't! The problem for me is that it is a cute, feel-good tale of romance. Forty years ago, sure, I probably would have sopped it up.

It has humor. A pinch of history is thrown in. Details are accurate, albeit not explored in depth. It is set during the Depression and the years leading up to the Second World War. We experience the extreme drought and dust storms of Texas, discovery of oil and the exaltation that can be found in horse racing. Yet the story is so darn predictable!

I listened to the audiobook narrated by Colleen Delany. She does a good job, even if in the beginning it annoyed me that she seemed to sing the lines. I liked her male intonations; yeah, they made me smile. We are supposed to fall in love with one big, strong, handsome guy. If you want to be carried along, well then you'll eat it up. Except that there then turns up another man who sounds exactly, I mean **exactly** the same; this sort of destroys the dazzle of Mr. Wonderful! There is a guy that stutters. Delany's intonation for him was very good. I was dying to help him out. Those listeners who want dramatization in a book's reading will be pleased.

I cannot give this more stars. In a month I will have forgotten it, but sure if you are looking for a feel-good romance you'll probably love it.

Map says

What a lovely, lovely book. Paulette Jiles beautifully evokes Depression-era America in Dustbowl Texas, witnessed through the lives of four women—a mother and her three wonderfully compelling daughters. As

she illuminates the desperation of families struggling with poverty and deprivation, she also captures the bonds of community, friendship, and family that helped them through such terrible times. If you like historical fiction on an intimate, personal scale, a novel that transcends typical "women's fiction," you should give Stormy Weather a try.

Mary says

A sort of female Grapes of Wrath, this is a story of deep, unrelenting poverty and the daily struggle for survival during the depression and dustbowl years. After a nomadic lifestyle with a hard-drinking, heavy-gambling father; Jeannie, her mother and two sisters return to their deserted, run-down ancestral Texas ranch after his death. Jeannie, at the age of 20, takes on the challenge of scraping a life from the hard-baked earth and unrelenting drought, as she tries to figure out what her own future holds.

I enjoyed the prose-style which is sparse and direct. It complimented the frugality and pragmatic nature of the times. No waste, no excess, and no need for flowery sentimentality, these were hard times and most people didn't mess around but said what they meant, worked hard, and had little. The prose let me feel rather than read about the chemistry between Ross and Jeannie, the guilt and frailty of Elizabeth (the mother), the longing of Mayme, and the drive pushing Jeannie. It was really an involving story and a fascinating peak into the lives of Americans during a very distant, unique time in the American economy...Hmm..wait a minute; global warming-hurricanes, floods, major snowstorms; the housing crisis, recessions, falling markets...maybe not so unique and distant after all. Ah, if only I had a crazy race horse and shares in a wildcat oil well!

Mauoijenn ~ *Mouthy Jenn* ~ says

Good book. Great character development. I'm going to look into this authors other books.

Jennifer says

I was actually caught up in the strength of the young girls who did what had to be done to get through - modern-day pioneers.

This is a story that takes place in the late 1930's. A family of three girls who lose their father to a deadly gas accident while working the oil fields of Texas. I've heard stories of the Great Depression from my parents - a time that certainly tried men's soles, and then add on the Dust Bowl to the mid-westerners on top of everything else they were having to do to survive, with WW II looming. A great description of a dust storm that you could nearly feel the grit.

Yes, perhaps a depressing read for some, but I looked at the character building a trial like this could bring on. Some perservered, others couldn't. I enjoyed the book as it showed, if we can endure and perservere, we only get stronger. Perhaps a lesson to the young readers.

Dora says

I really enjoyed this book. I can't remember exactly but one of the quotations on the back said something to the effect of, this book is a view of the past but it is NOT sepia-toned.

I loved this book because it felt so real. The desperation of the Great Depression and dust bowl out in rural Texas felt so palpable. And it was because the desperation felt so real that I completely related to their fears and anxieties. Especially how once things got better, they were so scared to let go of what they had scraped together to build. I just really cared about the characters and I felt transported to that time.

Sam says

This book was just "okay" for me.

The fictional story takes place during the great depression. The main characters of the story is a family who moves from place to place in order to find work. The father is a drunkard who eventually dies in the book. The family then returns to Texas to the home they left earlier in the book. It talks of the hard times they endured during this period in history.

One of the reasons that the story was just "okay" is because I wasn't able to "get into" the characters. Because of the way it was written I didn't really care what happened to them. I have read other books about the great depression that were much better written.

Leo Robillard says

Stormy Weather is the follow-up novel to Paulette Jiles' wildly popular and critically acclaimed first novel, *Enemy Women*. With it, she proves, without a doubt, that her writing has staying power.

Stormy Weather is the story of Jeanine Stoddard, her sisters, and their mother. Deserted and humiliated by their mercurial father and husband, Jack Stoddard, the women must negotiate the uncharted world of East and Central Texas during the Great Depression.

Jeanine, the middle-child, skinny and fierce, leads her mother and sisters out of the oil fields and back to the abandoned Tolliver farm of her mother's childhood. There, they struggle to survive drought, dust storms, back taxes, injury, and the stigma of poverty.

But while the Great Depression and its hardships are common fodder for fiction, Jiles' story of rough and tumble East Texas, its oil fields, its illegal horse racing, and its unforgettable characters is fresh enough.

Her prose, too, is vital, sweeping over vast distances in time and space at one moment, and honing into focus on a single scene the next. It is difficult to shake certain images in this book, such as the blind man who helps Jeanine load her drunken father into the family jalopy. Or the moment she catches her neck-scarf in the gearbox of an ancient tractor. The scene with Jeanine's sister Bea at the well is transfixing, and the night Jeanine last speaks to her father in the family shed is also haunting.

The one problem with this novel might be the end. It cannot be said that Jeanine and her family do not undergo hardship in this story; however, I am wary of stories that end too well. They seem unlikely. And while Jiles does try to temper this fortune, it still smacks a little of Hollywood. Nonetheless, *Stormy Weather* will lead you by the nose. A great read.

Stephanie says

For those who have read and liked Paulette Jiles' "News of the World," it is worth looking back at some of her earlier works, "Stormy Weather" being a good one to pick up. The action takes place during the '30s dust bowl in Texas and concerns the Stoddard family, a mother and three daughters whose stars are hitched to Jack Stoddard, a handsome gambler, drinker and womanizer, who earns his keep by transporting and installing equipment used in the burgeoning oil business.

Their struggles take us deep into the economics of poverty and deprivation. The two oldest girls, Mayme and Jeanine, the father's favorite and main protagonist of the story, take their few dollars into the store at Strawn's crossroads and are confronted with the realities of their situation. "They now knew what was in store for them. A can of trouble, a pound of misery, yards and yards of work to shore that old place up again."

Elizabeth, their mother, is as plucky as her three daughters, as is Bea, the youngest, a would-be writer who never goes anywhere without her Big Chief. The family is working against the dust, the drought and the Depressions. In "Stormy Weather" we get to see all three firsthand. Elizabeth wonders when young women started wearing Levis around the house. Having two large gangling girls who were her daughters was one more confusing event like adultery, widowhood, and the financial collapse of the United States.

The book introduces a number of important secondary characters: Ross Everett, who at 19, already knows a good deal when he sees it and this turns out to be Jeanine. But there is also Milt Brown, the would-be radio announcer with a stutter who courts the reader while amusing Jeanine with his humorous self-deprecation. Jiles provides us with a history lesson in detail and language, much of the vernacular is amusing as in one mother's exclamation that her daughter was "headed for the lakes of fire" with her loose talk. Or that Jeanine should be careful hiring a certain family to work her homestead: "The way they cuss would make your nose bleed."
