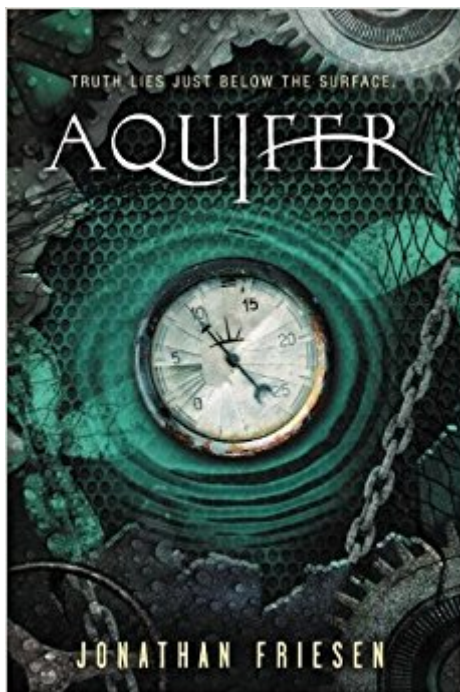


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## Aquifer (Blink)



## Synopsis

Only He Can Bring What They Need to Survive. In the year 2250, water is scarce, and those who control it control everything. Sixteen-year-old Luca has struggled with this truth, and what it means, his entire life. As the son of the Deliverer, he will one day have to descend to the underground Aquifer each year and negotiate with the reportedly ratlike miners who harvest the world's fresh water. But he has learned the true control rests with the Council aboveground, a group that has people following without hesitation, and which has forbidden all emotion and art in the name of keeping the peace. And this Council has broken his father's spirit, while also forcing Luca to hide every feeling that rules his heart. But when Luca's father goes missing, everything shifts. Luca is forced underground, and discovers secrets, lies, and mysteries that cause him to reevaluate who he is and the world he serves. Together with his friends and a very alluring girl, Luca seeks to free his people and the Rats from the Council's control. But Luca's mission is not without struggle and loss, as his desire to uncover the truth could have greater consequences than he ever imagined.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Friesen (Aldo's Fantastical Movie Palace) has constructed a future world where fresh water has become exceedingly scarce. Luca is the sixteen-year-old successor to his father, a Deliverer, who makes an annual journey to the underground Rats who control the largest fresh water source: the

Aquifer. Luca struggles with daily existence and also with his emotions; emotional expression is punishable by the formidable Amongus, a kind of thought police run by the Council of Nine who rule the Toppers, the people of the surface. When Luca's father does not return from his journey below, the Amongus hunt Luca, so he flees underground for refuge. There he discovers a massive conspiracy that challenges him to reconsider what he thought was true about the world, his identity, and his purpose. Friesen's world is a morally gray one that fleshes out the motivations and struggles of his characters but gives no easy answers for his readers. Though the magnitude of his philosophical questions sometimes feel bigger than the story, Friesen nonetheless offers an entertaining framework for teenage readers to start asking serious questions about emotional responsibility, acting on faith and intuition, the potential blindness of good intentions, and the nature of freedom. (Aug. 6)

In a futuristic Australia, fresh drinking water is controlled by a group called the Council of Nine. Each year, the Deliverer must travel to the Aquifer, the water source, bearing gifts of light to a devolved race known as Water Rats to ensure that water will continue to be given. As the Deliverer's son, Luca is well aware of his future duty, and when his father fails to return after a mission, Luca begins to uncover a conspiracy brewing as well as secrets about his own family. Some world-building aspects of this dystopian adventure are not fully fleshed out, and the plot suffers from some pacing issues, though patient readers will be rewarded with late revelations. Luca is an engaging character torn between whom to trust and what to believe, easy material for teen readers to relate to. Subtle religious themes run through the novel but are never overt enough to turn off nonreligious readers. Grades 7-10. --Sarah Bean Thompson

It is hard to imagine a world where fresh water is not only in short supply, it is almost completely gone, save for one tightly controlled aquifer. In Jonathan Friesen's dystopia, the world will do anything to get the fresh water it needs to stay alive. Luca knows his fate will eventually make him an Other. As the only son of the Deliverer, he will one day have to take over for his father and travel underground to barter for water from the aquifer. His father doesn't tell him anything about what lies underground, but the rumors of the Rat men are enough to terrify him. While he is a "normal" kid now, once he descends, the community will always think of him as an other: necessary to bring them water, but still disconnected from their own lives. He doesn't look forward to that day, but he knows he must accept his lot in life. When his father goes missing, supposed to be Undone, Luca's entire life falls apart. He knows his father hid books in their house, and Luca's own desire for the

books he can't even read is just as dangerous. But the Amongus aren't just concerned with a boy who has found contraband books. They want the aquifer. Despite generations of negotiations between the Rat men and the Deliverers, they are determined to find the path to the Aquifer even though the knowledge of the journey is only passed from one Deliverer to his replacement. And you should never underestimate people who have nothing left to lose. First, I must admit I finally gave up on this story and put it away after weeks of trying to finish it. I read over 200 pages of a 300 paged book and just couldn't go on any longer. It's not that the story itself was uninteresting, it's just that the characters weren't terribly likable and the story was so confusing with tons of different elements that I just couldn't invest in it. For instance, on the surface, there is a whole layer of the Council installing these meter-type things that calculate how much emotion a person is exerting. If you are too emotional, you could be undone. This whole element is confusing and intricate, but by the time Luca goes underground, it is also completely unnecessary. So why include it? Add to that all the different people who have different, hidden identities. Then the "secret" of what is underground. Finally, ask yourself why no one tried to get to the aquifer without the Deliverer before now. I mean, really? Generations go by and no one thought to follow him or blast the crap out of the mountain to get at it? Then there are the books. This whole description about why books aren't allowed, but it really didn't matter to the story. All these different elements leave the reader confused and uninterested (at least it did to me). Most importantly, I never cared about Luca. Sure, I felt for the guy occasionally, but he was just not the type of main character I could get behind. In truth, he was uninteresting and flat. Even his interactions with other characters like Seward and Wren fell flat for me. And finally, when he was underground, I thought to myself, "Oh why don't you just drown yourself in the bloody aquifer you ineffectual, personality-less toad!" I got so annoyed with Luca that nothing else in the story really mattered to me. So, I gave up. The story had potential, but it was too bogged down by extraneous elements to really come together and the main character was too wishy washy to get behind. I simply couldn't go on any longer!

I read through some of the reviews on goodreads, surprised to see anything under a three star rating. It's funny to me how involved and deadly readers can be dissecting a plot, taking it to a level that is really unnecessary...they remove all the excitement and uniqueness and pick on the abstract of details that yeah, maybe could have been addressed...however, if they had been would have made it an entirely different story. Who really cares about the rest of the planet, this was one cities story...and it was a good one. I personally couldn't put the book down. I will admit the beginning was a bit vague and a little confusing, I had to re-read for a moment to get on track, however, once it

settled...non stop action and intrigue. The characters were strong, the visual sublime...it reads like a movie. Again, one or two instances of confusion, one being the dials...were they wearing them?... it still was never truly clear to me, however, it just didn't matter, the story was strong enough to not let that deflate it in any way. The water travel in the underworld, a bit unclear, however, again, it just didn't lessen the story for me. I read this book in less than three days, forcing myself to stop and take care of other things in my life...I couldn't wait to get back to it and see how it played out. The ending was...hmm...well, it wasn't what I expected, which is always a good thing...however, it did seem a bit safe on some level, just a small let down. Even though it wasn't my favorite ending, starting from the "song", which seemed almost corny to me, but acceptable, then the final conclusion followed in the same vein, so it made sense...even with all this, I still loved this book and would recommend it to anyone who loves a good dystopian that has something a bit different to offer than the cookie cutter idea of the future world. I bought this book while fumbling around the internet one day and am glad I did. Oh, I almost forgot, one of the best covers ever! Very cool graphic with an embossed water vibe, very cool.

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