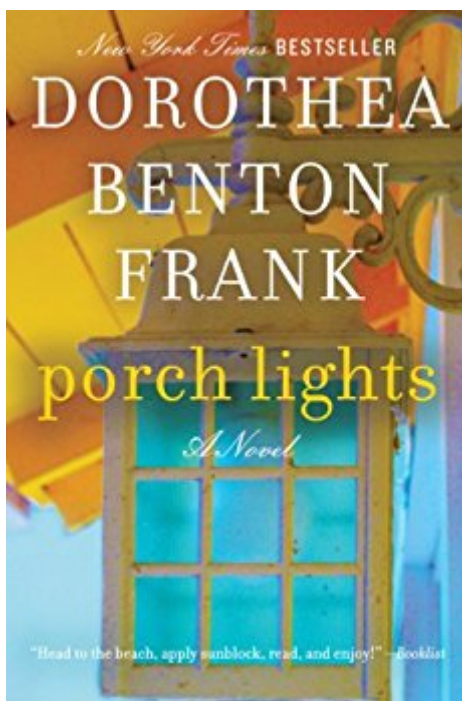


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# Porch Lights: A Novel



## Synopsis

New York Times bestselling author Dorothea Benton Frank is back home in the Carolina lowcountry, spinning a tale that brims with the warmth, charm, heart, and humor that has become her trademark. *Porch Lights* is a stirring, emotionally rich multigenerational story—a poignant tale of life, love, and transformation—as a nurse, returning to Sullivans Island from the Afghanistan War, finds her life has been irrevocably altered by tragedy—and now must rediscover love and purpose with the help of her son and aging mother. An evocative visit to enchanting Sullivans Island with its unique pluff mud beaches, palmetto trees, and colorful local lore—a novel filled with unforgettable characters, and enlivened by tales of the notorious Blackbeard and his bloodthirsty pirate crew and eerie Edgar Allan Poe stories—*Porch Lights* stands tall among the very best works of not only Dottie Frank, but Anne Rivers Siddons, Rebecca Wells, Pat Conroy, and other masters of the modern Southern novel as well.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I used to LOVE Dorothea Benton Frank. Her early works made me long to live on Pawley's or

Sullivan's Island, feel the sand beneath my bare feet, and be a Geechee girl. But as with most prolific writers, there has been a decline in the quality of her writing, but I was still able to at least finish the last one I read, though I didn't like it. Wanting to give her one more chance, I got *Porch Lights*, and had to stop a third of the way in. The premise is fine, and seeing the POVs of mother and daughter are fine, but the characterization and dialogue were just bad. I didn't like Jackie's constant whining and moaning about how she had lost everything that meant anything to her, that she had nothing etc. Her self pity was a little, or very, hard to take when, though I understand she was mourning her husband, she had her health, a beautiful child, family and friends who loved and supported her, a home, career options, etc. She had a lot more than nothing. I noticed how she begrudged her mother her cornbread pan, comparing that to how the Afghan women had to cook over a campfire, but at no time did she think of herself as a lot more damned fortunate than the Afghan women. I didn't like the grandmother's idiotic flirtations with the man next door, the "competition" with her friend over him like he was an object, and her asking her daughter to look in his laundry hamper to see what kind of underwear he wore was just gross, on several levels. I didn't get the lunch ordering scene either, when the ten year old grandson chooses and orders for her because he is the "man" at the table? Being the "man" means treating women as though they can't speak for themselves? Not in my book. Why couldn't she have the characters talk to each other like real people, instead of being like cartoons?

I have loved the personal touches of Ms Frank's novels over the years; indeed, I can read one of her novels and feel like I'm a part of the story by clearly seeing what her characters describe, smelling what they cook, etc. This book, to me, resonates even closer to home because of the military theme. I realize that Jackie's military status is not the main thrust of this novel, but it is a major part of Jackie's story and so it colors her actions, her viewpoints, and her emotional state. I also understood and deeply appreciated Annie's thoughts and feelings as Jackie's mother; not only am I married to an active duty military member, but our son enlisted last year and now I'm a military mother, too. This is part of what made me appreciate this story. I realize that this viewpoint does not affect everyone in the same way; this is simply how it affected me. I was impressed that Ms Frank not only correctly detailed parts of what being in Afghanistan is like for our military (the diet, disappearing skivs, bereavement/emergency leave, the Taliban and their evil practices, the attitudes of some non-military people, etc), but she also wrote Jackie as a person with real and very personal problems: Overwhelming grief, being a strong mother, deployments, family problems with her own parents, and the ability to stow all of these potentially overwhelming crises into a foot locker (so to

speak) for future examination. The flaw in this depiction, to me, is that the military provides HOURS of mental health education in order to promote recognition of possible mental distress, so, paired with her being a nurse, I felt some sort of assistance would (or should) have been sought by Jackie for both herself and Charlie.

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