



Letters from Rifka

By Karen Hesse

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From Newbery media winner Karen Hesse comes an unforgettable story of an immigrant family's journey to America.

*"America," the girl repeated. "What will you do there?"
I was silent for a little time.
"I will do everything there," I answered.*

Rifka knows nothing about America when she flees from Russia with her family in 1919. But she dreams that in the new country she will at last be safe from the Russian soldiers and their harsh treatment of the Jews. Throughout her journey, Rifka carries with her a cherished volume of poetry by Alexander Pushkin. In it, she records her observations and experiences in the form of letters to Tovah, the beloved cousin she has left behind.

Strong-hearted and determined, Rifka must endure a great deal: humiliating examinations by doctors and soldiers, deadly typhus, separation from all she has ever known and loved, murderous storms at sea, detainment on Ellis Island--and is if this is not enough, the loss of her glorious golden hair.

Based on a true story from the author's family, *Letters from Rifka* presents a real-life heroine with an uncommon courage and unsinkable spirit.

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Letters from Rifka By Karen Hesse Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Twelve-year-old Rifka's journey from a Jewish community in the Ukraine to Ellis Island is anything but smooth sailing. Modeled on the author's great-aunt, Rifka surmounts one obstacle after another in this riveting novel. First she outwits a band of Russian soldiers, enabling her family to escape to Poland. There the family is struck with typhus. Everyone recovers, but Rifka catches ringworm on the next stage of the journey--and is denied passage to America ("If the child arrives . . . with this disease," explains the steamship's doctor, "the Americans will turn her around and send her right back to Poland"). Rifka's family must leave without her, and she is billeted in Belgium for an agreeable if lengthy recovery. Further trials, including a deadly storm at sea and a quarantine, do not faze this resourceful girl. Told in the form of "letters" written by Rifka in the margins of a volume of Pushkin's verse and addressed to a Russian relative, Hesse's vivacious tale colorfully and convincingly refreshes the immigrant experience. Ages 9-12. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From School Library Journal

Grade 4-7. Refused passage in 1919 because she has ringworm, a young Jewish girl from Russia battles supercilious officials and yards of red tape before she is finally reunited with her family in America. Historical fiction with a memorable heroine, a vivid sense of place, and a happily-ever-after ending. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Kirkus Reviews

Beginning in Russia in 1919, this epistolary novel, based on experiences of the author's great-aunt, tells how 12-year-old Rifka Nebrot and her family fled the anti-Semitism of post-revolutionary Russia and emigrated to the US. The letters, each prefaced by a few telling lines of Pushkin, tell of the fear, indignities, privation, and disease endured as they traveled through Poland and into Belgium, where Rifka had to be left behind for several months because she was unacceptable as a steamship passenger: she had ringworm. Finally reaching Ellis Island, she was held in quarantine because the ringworm had left her bald--making her an undesirable immigrant because it was thought that she'd be unable to find a husband to support her. Eventually, Rifka talked her way into the country; her energy, cleverness, and flair for languages convinced officials that she wouldn't become a ward of the state. Told with unusual grace and simplicity, an unforgettable picture of immigrant courage, ingenuity, and perseverance. (Fiction. 10+) -- *Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Freida Gilbert:

Nowadays reading books be a little more than want or need but also become a life style. This reading routine give you lot of advantages. Associate programs you got of course the knowledge your information inside the book that will improve your knowledge and information. The knowledge you get based on what kind of book you read, if you want have more knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want sense happy read one along with theme for entertaining such as comic or novel. Often the Letters from Rifka is kind of book which is giving the reader unforeseen experience.

Joshua Molina:

Hey guys, do you would like to finds a new book you just read? May be the book with the concept Letters from Rifka suitable to you? The book was written by renowned writer in this era. The book untitled Letters from Rifkais the one of several books that everyone read now. That book was inspired many people in the world. When you read this publication you will enter the new shape that you ever know prior to. The author explained their idea in the simple way, thus all of people can easily to comprehend the core of this guide. This book will give you a lot of information about this world now. So you can see the represented of the world in this book.

Thomas Hawkins:

The book untitled Letters from Rifka is the publication that recommended to you to learn. You can see the quality of the reserve content that will be shown to anyone. The language that writer use to explained their ideas are easily to understand. The article author was did a lot of exploration when write the book, and so the information that they share for you is absolutely accurate. You also can get the e-book of Letters from Rifka from the publisher to make you considerably more enjoy free time.

Ada Peterson:

As a scholar exactly feel bored to help reading. If their teacher expected them to go to the library or even make summary for some book, they are complained. Just little students that has reading's spirit or real their pastime. They just do what the instructor want, like asked to the library. They go to right now there but nothing reading seriously. Any students feel that reading is not important, boring and can't see colorful pictures on there. Yeah, it is being complicated. Book is very important for yourself. As we know that on this era, many ways to get whatever you want. Likewise word says, ways to reach Chinese's country. Therefore this Letters from Rifka can make you sense more interested to read.

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