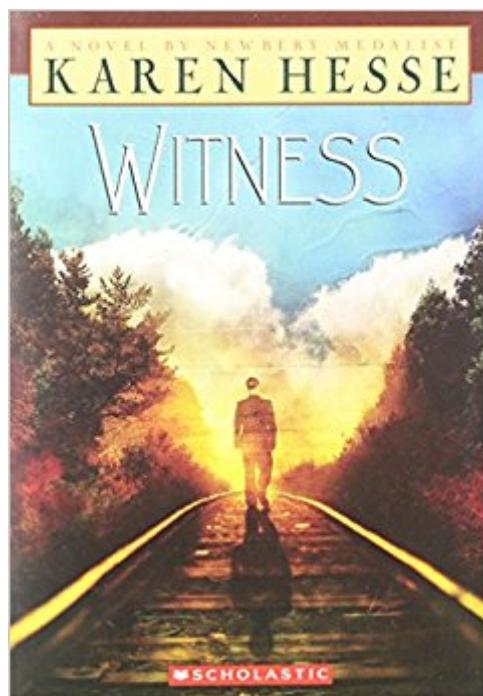


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# Witness



## **Synopsis**

Leanora Sutter. Esther Hirsh. Merlin Van Tornhout. Johnny Reeves . . . These characters are among the unforgettable cast inhabiting a small Vermont town in 1924. A town that turns against its own when the Ku Klux Klan moves in. No one is safe, especially the two youngest, twelve-year-old Leanora, an African-American girl, and six-year-old Esther, who is Jewish. In this story of a community on the brink of disaster, told through the haunting and impassioned voices of its inhabitants, Newbery Award winner Karen Hesse takes readers into the hearts and minds of those who bear witness.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 176 pages

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## **Customer Reviews**

It is 1924, and a small Vermont town finds itself under siege--by the Ku Klux Klan. Using free verse, Newbery Medal-winning author Karen Hesse (Out of the Dust) allows 11 unique and memorable voices to relate the story of the Klan's steady infiltration into the conscience of a small, Prohibition-era community. The Klan's "all-American" philosophy is at first embraced by several of the town's influential men, including Constable Parcell Johnson and retailer Harvey Pettibone. But Harvey's sensible wife, Viola, and independent restaurant owner Iris Weaver suspect from the beginning that the Klan's arrival heralds trouble. As the only African Americans in town, 12-year old Leonora Sutter and her father try to escape Klan scrutiny, while 6-year-old, city-born Esther Hirsch remains blissfully unaware of the Klan's prejudice against Jews as she enjoys the Vermont

countryside. And Sara Chickering, the lady farmer who has opened her home to Esther and her father, is torn between her own hidden biases and her growing love for Esther. All, however, are galvanized towards action when a shadowy figure shoots at Esther and her father right through Sara's front door. Who would commit such an evil act? And is it too late to remove the poison that has insidiously leaked into their once tight-knit community? Part mystery, part social commentary, Hesse's historically accurate chronicle is a riveting catalyst for discussion that thoughtfully explores race and identity from every possible point of view. The free verse format and distinct characterizations also make *Witness* a perfect choice for library or classroom reader's theater productions. (Ages 12 and older) --Jennifer Hubert --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Hesse's (Out of the Dust) powerful, history-inspired novel about the Ku Klux Klan's encroachment on a small town in 1924 Vermont becomes a riveting audiobook as performed by a stellar cast. The story told in poetry, in the voices of 11 characters is surprisingly easy to follow; listeners are introduced to each distinctive character voice at the outset and are soon caught up in the strong narrative rhythm, able to discern who's who. Fine showings from Heather Alicia Simms (When Kambia Elaine Came Down from Neptune) as Leonora Sutter, a 12-year-old African-American girl, and Jenna Lamia in the role of six-year-old Esther Hirsh, a Jewish immigrant child, anchor the proceedings and give this production its heart. Colorful supporting characters, some with evocative New England accents, subtly and effectively draw listeners into Hesse's thought-provoking themes. At program's end, listeners are treated to bonus material: a meaty interview with Hesse conducted by author and children's book historian Leonard S. Marcus. Hesse reveals, among other things, her inspiration for the book and her research methods. Ages 12-up. Simultaneous release with the Scholastic hardcover, reviewed in Children's Forecasts, Aug. 20. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I purchased this for my grandson. It was on his summer reading list. The set up is different in that it has a different speaker on just about every page and it is presented in a poetic manner. The message is powerful and I'm sure that this will lead to interesting discussion in his 7th grade English class.

I only read this book as my 12 year old grandson was assigned to read it and remembered the day before it was due, so he ordered it on my Kindle. I liked the pictures in the front. I found the book a

little confusing as it went back and forth between characters. I actually read it twice, which was a good thing. I felt it was pretty high level reading for a 12 year old. The topic was interesting. I had no idea that there was a Klan in Vermont. It had some excellent insights into human character.

Love this book. Great for teaching point of view.

Happenings in a small Vermont town in 1924 from the perspective of a kaleidoscope of very human characters. Could be incredible as a staged reading.

I was expecting more of a punch from this story, especially considering some of Hesse's other works. I enjoyed the New England, rural setting and different characters' perspectives, but was waiting for more of an impact from the action. This would be a good text to use for learning more about points-of-view, inferring, and characters, and also to show racial tension in places other than the Civil-War South.

Would love to see this performed..... Loved all the characters. Good and bad.... Aren't we all a little of both? I wonder if people could see the parallels to what is happening in the world today?

great book with deep meaning

I read this book a few years ago, and from what i can remember it is very interesting.

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