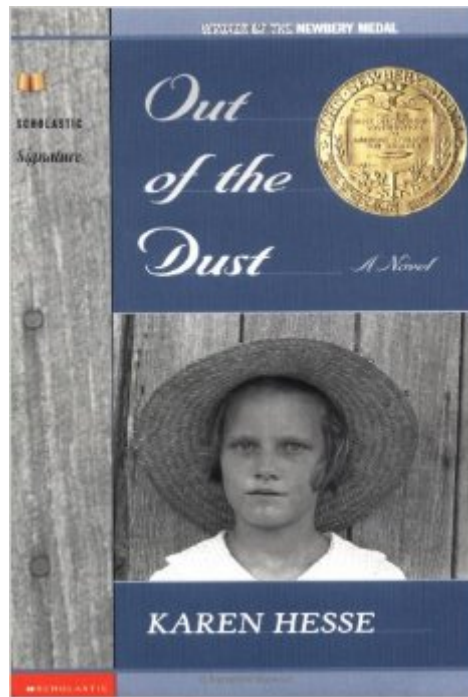


The book was found

Out Of The Dust



Synopsis

This gripping story, written in sparse first-person, free-verse poems, is the compelling tale of Billie Jo's struggle to survive during the dust bowl years of the Depression. With stoic courage, she learns to cope with the loss of her mother and her grieving father's slow deterioration. There is hope at the end when Billie Jo's badly burned hands are healed, and she is able to play her beloved piano again. The 1998 Newbery Medal winner.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (1,071 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I am a middle school student and I must admit that I loved this book. I loved it a lot because it was in a kid's perspective, not an adult's. I never actually heard of "The Dust Bowl" until this book. Every other book on the Dust Bowl that I came across was in an ADULTS point of view. I had to read "Out of the Dust" for school and I won't lie, I thought that would be just another boring/bad book like always. But it wasn't, I really liked it. It seemed so real, and I could actually understand what Billie Jo was going through even though I've never been in something so tragic. I had to give this book the review it deserved. The form it was in was so unique, nothing like any other. It was in a poem form but at the same time like a diary entry. I thought it was really stupid and pointless, but it actually helped me get what was going on in some strange way. I honestly do give this book 5 stars, major thumbs up :)

"Out of the Dust," written as a series of spare free-verse poems from the viewpoint of a Texas

teenager during the 1930s, won the Newbery Award for 1998. My own reading of the book convinced me that the award was well-deserved. Billie Jo's poems span a period of years filled with difficult experiences: poverty, unemployment, her mother's death in an accident, her own maiming in the same accident, her trouble communicating with her father. Her life is certainly not easy, her path almost never smooth. Yet, the poems radiate such a hope, even a joy at times, that the book never becomes depressing. I think some of the images of this book will stick with me for a long time -- the family chewing their dust-laden milk, her mother's tent of pain, her father's smile at the dance, Billie Jo's first concert after recovering from her burns. Billie Jo is a survivor whose story is both thought-provoking and uplifting.

This is a wonderful book and I would encourage anyone of any age to read it. It's about a girl named Billy Joe who plays piano and lives with her family during the "Dust Bowl". The dust is flying everywhere, the wheat won't grow, and they are living in a run down farm house. The only nice thing Billy Joe and her mom have is the piano. When Billy Joe is at the piano there is no dust, it's just her and the keys. The only problem is that she plays a very different tune than her mom. Her mom does not like that style of music and sometimes doesn't let her perform. That's okay to Billy Joe though, because she loves her mom more than anything else. Billy Joe's dad is a quiet guy that is just trying to grow some wheat. But, because of the dust no wheat will grow. Then, to make matters worse, a horrible accident happens. Her dad had left a bucket of kerosene on the stove, which her mom mistook for water. When she begins making coffee with it the pot bursts into flames. Billy Joe's mom quickly runs out of the house screaming for help. Billy Joe throws the kerosene out of the back door and it lands directly onto her mom. This was a complete accident which results in both Billy Joe and her mom being badly burnt. It is a very sad story, but a really good book. I also like how the words are written like a poem. Every one should read this book! I am an 11 year old boy that plays the guitar, piano and baseball, and I love to draw. I would also recommend *The Giver*, *Number the Stars*, and *The Hatchet*.

Reading an award-winner is tricky business. This book won the Newbery Medal in 1998. I have read nearly all of the Newbery winners and my rule of thumb for these (unlike some other, less worthy prizes) is that you can expect to read a very good book. This one is no exception. Of course, not even Newbery winners are all created equal. Some are truly great and some are kind of average. This one falls in the middle of this range--let's call it the "not quite truly great" category. Let me say first off that I personally found this to be a wonderful book. I think it is interesting and moving.

Though not generally a fan of the free verse/prose poem style Hesse uses in this "novel," I found that her words generated an emotional response that straight prose might have lessened. I was also surprised by how detailed this world became for me while reading what is a very sparse book. This shows real talent and stylistic strength. On the other hand, though I believe strongly that the best books for children and young adults are equally readable by adults, sometimes an author shoots a little high for the primary readership. Hesse's book is wonderful for adults but a little difficult for younger readers. I was able to let myself be carried away by the beauty of this book because I already have a strong sense about the Depression, life on a farm, the Dust Bowl. A child, however, will struggle with this book because, though strong on feeling, it's short on background. This is not to say that this book is without merit even for younger readers. Its style and emotion are worth a read for anyone, particularly since it is short enough to be read in very little time. In combination with a more historically oriented book or other background on the Depression, a young reader could get even more from this book. Without this, though, many younger readers will struggle with this book.

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