



Brooklyn Bridge: A Novel

By Karen Hesse

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It's the summer of 1903 in Brooklyn and all fourteen-year-old Joseph Michtom wants is to experience the thrill, the grandeur, and the electricity of the new amusement park at Coney Island. But that doesn't seem likely. Ever since his parents' Russian immigrants' invented the stuffed Teddy Bear five months ago, Joseph's life has turned upside down. No longer do the Michtom's gather family and friends around the kitchen table to talk. No longer is Joseph at leisure to play stickball with the guys. Now, Joseph works. And complains. And falls in love. And argues with Mama and Papa. And falls out of love. And hopes. Joseph hopes he'll see Coney Island soon. He hopes that everything will turn right-side up again. He hopes his luck hasn't run out?because you never know.

Through all the warmth, the sadness, the frustration, and the laughter of one big, colorful family, Newbery Medalist Karen Hesse builds a stunning story of the lucky, the unlucky, and those in between, and reminds us that our lives?all our lives?are fragile, precious, and connected.

Brooklyn Bridge is a 2009 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 6–9—In 1903, school lets out for summer vacation, and Joseph Michtom dreams of visiting Coney Island. But the 14-year-old's plans have to be placed on hold while he helps out in his father's toy-making business. The family stumbles on an idea that leads to the creation of the first teddy bear and achieves financial success. Set in Brooklyn and narrated by Joseph, the novel portrays the joys and heartaches in the lives of Russian-Jewish immigrants at the turn of the 20th century. Alternating with this story line is a parallel narrative devoted to abandoned children who forge a life for themselves under the shelter of the Brooklyn Bridge. Readers will have a hard time putting down this compelling story.—*Caryl Soriano, New York Public Library*

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From [Booklist](#)

Rooted in the Jewish immigrant experience in early-twentieth-century New York City, this story weaves together one boy's immediate personal narrative with a community's historical struggles. As the first natural-born American in his family, Joe, 14, always hears about the hell his parents escaped from in Russia. But what are the family secrets no one talks about here in America? Why won't his aunts cross the bridge to his home in Brooklyn? Alternating with Joe's narrative are chapters that focus on a community of vagrant kids. Joe's dad has wild success manufacturing America's first teddy bears, and a fascinating final note fills in historical facts about the toys. It all makes for a much denser story than Hesse's spare Newbery winner *Out of the Dust* (1997), but just when things seem too bogged down in cultural detail, suddenly the plot reveals intricate connections, up to the very last chapter, that will make readers return to the beginning of this gripping story and see everything in a new way. Grades 7-12. --Hazel Rochman

Review

"This well-told tale--about a Jewish immigrant family in New York in the early 1900s--is fascinating and full of suspense." ?*The Washington Post*

"Alternating with this story line is a parallel narrative devoted to abandoned children who forge a life for themselves under the shelter of the Brooklyn Bridge. Readers will have a hard time putting down this compelling story." ?*School Library Journal*

"The narrative includes tightly interwoven elements of multiple genres--adventure, romance, comedy, ghost story, and family drama--without ever compromising the authenticity of the plot or the characters." ?*The Horn Book*

"Rooted in the Jewish immigrant experience in early-twentieth-century New York City, this story weaves together one boy's immediate personal narrative with a community's historical struggles. . . . the plot reveals intricate connections, up to the very last chapter, that will make readers return to the beginning of this gripping story and see everything in a new way." ?*Booklist*

"It's such a relief to be able to count on an author time and time again." ?*School Library Journal*

"In this tale of Dickensian contrasts in kindness and cruelty, Brooklyn comes alive with the details of time and place, but it is the shadow of pain and transcendence cast symbolically by the bridge that haunts and compels. Another work of enduring excellence from Hesse." ?*Kirkus Reviews, Starred Review*

“This intimate novel, written in stanza form, poetically conveys the heat, dust and wind of Oklahoma. With each meticulously arranged entry Hesse paints a vivid picture of her heroine's emotions.” *?Publishers Weekly, Starred Review for Out of the Dust*

“What Copeland created with music, and Hopper created with paint, Hesse deftly and unerringly creates with words: the iconography of Americana, carefully researched, beautifully written, and profoundly honest.” *?Kirkus Reviews, Starred Review for Witness*

“Deep, literary, and soulful, Ms. Hesse once again holds us in her spell as she reconstructs the past at an intense time in United States history. . . . The tapestry of plot and subplot is woven with brilliant craftsmanship.” *?Children's Literature for A Light in the Storm: The Civil War Diary of Amelia Martin*

“Sparkling with humor, poignancy and adventure . . . Hesse's impeccable research buttresses the narrative with a wealth of detail. . . . an author's note and extensive glossary round out this compelling volume.” *?Publishers Weekly, Starred Review for Stowaway*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kimberly Rubio:

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