



# Witness

*By Karen Hesse*

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**Witness** By Karen Hesse

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.

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## Witness By Karen Hesse Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

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*

### From Publishers Weekly

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.

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### From School Library Journal

Grade 6&Up--This full cast production greatly enhances and dramatizes Karen Hesse's quietly moving, powerful novel (Scholastic, 2001) about a small town in Vermont after the arrival of the Ku Klux Klan. Set in 1924, the cast of 11 characters tells a story of racism and bigotry based on actual events. As each character speaks, the tale builds like a courtroom drama in which it becomes apparent that the families of 12-year-old Leonora Sutter, an African-American girl, and 6-year-old Esther Hirsh, daughter of a Jewish shoe salesman, are among the victims of Klan activities. Each voice is distinguished by differing opinions and simple language, such as the speech of Leonora and young Esther. Community leaders (a doctor and newspaper editor), adult townspeople who oppose the Klan, and Klan supporters themselves complete the portrait of the

town. The presentation concludes with a fascinating interview between historian and critic Leonard Marcus and Karen Hesse in which she discusses her work and how she came to write her latest novel in verse. Pair this powerful novel with Caroline Cooney's *Burning Up* (Delacorte, 1999) or Virginia Euwer Wolff's *Bat 6* (Scholastic, 1998), and watch the sparks fly. What will surely follow is a lively discussion on small town life, hate groups, and prejudice.

*Celeste Steward, Contra Costa County Library, Clayton, CA*

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Rachel Robertson:**

The particular book *Witness* will bring one to the new experience of reading any book. The author style to elucidate the idea is very unique. In the event you try to find new book to see, this book very ideal to you. The book *Witness* is much recommended to you to see. You can also get the e-book in the official web site, so you can more readily to read the book.

#### **Alex Levey:**

This *Witness* is great book for you because the content which can be full of information for you who all always deal with world and have to make decision every minute. This kind of book reveal it info accurately using great plan word or we can state no rambling sentences inside it. So if you are read the idea hurriedly you can have whole facts in it. Doesn't mean it only offers you straight forward sentences but challenging core information with lovely delivering sentences. Having *Witness* in your hand like obtaining the world in your arm, information in it is not ridiculous one particular. We can say that no reserve that offer you world with ten or fifteen tiny right but this reserve already do that. So , this can be good reading book. Hi Mr. and Mrs. occupied do you still doubt that?

#### **Jessie Taylor:**

In this time globalization it is important to someone to get information. The information will make a professional understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information quicker to share. You can find a lot of referrals to get information example: internet, classifieds, book, and soon. You will observe that now, a lot of publisher in which print many kinds of book. The actual book that recommended for your requirements is *Witness* this e-book consist a lot of the information with the condition of this world now. This book was represented how does the world has grown up. The vocabulary styles that writer use to explain it is easy to understand. The particular writer made some investigation when he makes this book. That's why this book suitable all of you.

**Gregory McCormick:**

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