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# Keesha's House (Michael L. Printz Honor Book (Awards))



## Synopsis

An unforgettable narrative collage told in poemsKeesha has found a safe place to live, and other kids gravitate to her house when they just can't make it on their own. They are Stephie, pregnant, trying to make the right decisions for herself and those she cares about; Jason, Stephie's boyfriend, torn between his responsibility to Stephie and the baby and the promise of a college basketball career; Dontay, in foster care while his parents are in prison, feeling unwanted both inside and outside the system; Carmen, arrested on a DUI charge, waiting in a juvenile detention center for a judge to hear her case; Harris, disowned by his father after disclosing that he's gay, living in his car, and taking care of himself; Katie, angry at her mother's loyalty to an abusive stepfather, losing herself in long hours of work and school. Stretching the boundaries of traditional poetic forms, Keesha's House is a 2004 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

## Book Information

Series: Michael L. Printz Honor Book (Awards)

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up-Frost has taken the poem-story to a new level with well-crafted sestinas and sonnets, leading readers into the souls and psyches of her teen protagonists. The house in the title isn't really Keesha's; it belongs to Joe. His aunt took him in when he was 12, and now that he's an adult and the owner of the place, he is helping out kids in the same situation. Keesha needs a safe place to stay-her mother is dead; her father gets mean when he drinks, and he drinks a lot. She wants to stay in school, all these teens do, and Keesha lets them know they can stay at Joe's. There's Stephie, pregnant at 16, and terrified to tell anyone except her boyfriend. Harris's father threw him out when his son confided that he is gay. Katie's stepfather has taken to coming into her room late at night, and her mother refuses to believe her when she tells. Carmen's parents have run off, and she's been put into juvie for a DUI. Dontay is a foster kid with two parents in jail. Readers also hear from the adults in these young people's lives: teachers, parents, grandparents, and Joe. It sounds like a soap opera, but the poems that recount these stories unfold realistically. Revealing heartbreak and hope, these poems could stand alone, but work best as a story collection. Teens may read this engaging novel without even realizing they are reading poetry. Angela J. Reynolds, Washington County Cooperative Library Services, Hillsboro, OR Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Gr. 6-10. Like Virginia Euwer Wolff's *True Believer* (2001) and much contemporary YA fiction, this moving first novel tells the story in a series of dramatic monologues that are personal, poetic, and immediate, with lots of line breaks that make for easy reading, alone or in readers' theater. Keesha finds shelter in a house in her inner-city neighborhood and helps other troubled teens find home and family there ("like finding a sister when I'm old / enough to pick a good one"). Stephie is pregnant, and she's heartbroken that her boyfriend doesn't want the baby. Harris is gay; his dad has thrown him out. Carmen is fighting addiction. Dontay's parents are in jail, and he doesn't feel comfortable in his latest foster home. Interwoven with the angry, desperate teen voices are those of the adults in their lives: caring, helpless, abusive, indifferent. In a long note, Frost talks about the poetic forms she has used, the sestina and the sonnet. But most readers will be less interested in that framework than in the characters, drawn with aching realism, who speak poetry in ordinary words and make connections. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Several teenage protagonists are in various stages of self-discovery, confusion, and conflict: a girl and her reluctant boyfriend deal with her pregnancy; a boy reveals his homosexuality to his parents and is subsequently thrown out of his home; and other parents of the characters are imprisoned, abusive, or deceased. Joe is a young man who owns his aunt's home. Because she took him in

when he was twelve-years-old, he now wants to help troubled youth. Even though it's Joe's house, local kids refer to it as Keesha's place. Keesha's mother is dead, her father is an alcoholic, and she stays with Joe. Knowing what it's like to be lost and alone, Keesha informs other young people that there's room at Joe's house if they need a safe haven. Not only do the teenagers come across with their problems, but there are passages featuring the points of view of the adults who are involved with them. There's a lot of pain, but also hope for them. Written in poetic form, this is a heartrending novel about young people at crossroads in their lives.

I was expecting a story with a bit more plot development and less inner monologue; however, the book itself is still interesting and the plot can be inferred, more or less, from the thoughts of the characters. If you are looking for a book with a strong, navigable story line regarding adolescent issues, this may not be precisely the type of book you are looking for. This book is well-suited to discussion of issues and exploration of personal connections to the lives at hand, but not the most gripping narrative. The sestina format does take some getting used to. I found the form somewhat unnatural, especially as the lines broke in some strange places due to the strictures of the form.

A good read use this book as part of a class project in 2008 it's a great story for teens.

A little too simplified for my taste it covers a WIDE range of problems faced by children living in poverty with out much depth given to any one.

A very moving book, made me connect with situations that are real. Loved every page of it, almost made me wish I was in grade school and see pictures.

great quality book

Quick delivery and very friendly, efficient staff. I ended up not needing the books because the school I work for already had a classroom set. But they were very quick in responding to my email and helping me get the books sent back to them. I am, however, still waiting on my refund.

My son had to have this book for a school project. He reports that he loves the book and even recommended that I read it. Lol. He is starting his first year of high school this year.

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