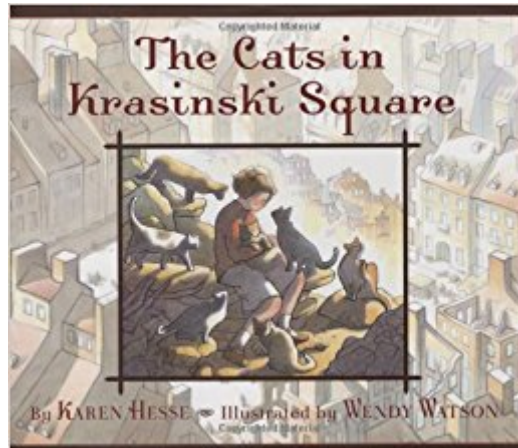




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# The Cats In Krasinski Square



## Synopsis

Newbery medalist Karen Hesse tells a harrowing, true story about life in the Warsaw Ghetto during WWII. When Karen Hesse came upon a short article about cats out-foxing the Gestapo at the train station in Warsaw during WWII, she couldn't get the story out of her mind. The result is this stirring account of a Jewish girl's involvement in the Resistance. At once terrifying and soulful, this fictional account, borne of meticulous research, is a testament to history and to our passionate will to survive, as only Newbery Medalist Karen Hesse can write it.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 990L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Scholastic Press; First Edition edition (September 1, 2004)

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ISBN-10: 0439435404

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Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 12.2 x 10.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 34 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #205,087 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 in [Books > Children's](#)

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Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

## Customer Reviews

Grade 3-5  
Set in Warsaw in 1942, this picture book brings to life a little-known incident of Jewish resistance. A young girl who has escaped the Ghetto lives with her older sister who, with friends, plans to smuggle food to those still there. Somehow the Gestapo has heard of the plan and has designs of its own—dogs to sniff out the bundles of food arriving with the resisters on a train. With quick thinking, the friends gather all of the cats living in Krasinski Square into baskets and head for the station. Just as the train pulls in, the felines are let loose, the dogs chase the cats, chaos erupts, and eventually the contraband is passed through the chinks in the Ghetto wall.

Illustrated by Watson in an arresting departure from her usual style in muted tans, browns, and oranges, the cats, the people, the buildings of Warsaw, and even the snarling dogs are bathed in a warm yellow light—a kind of innocent luminescence of hope that belies the evil that is being

done. The play of light and the naturalness of the cats' poses are almost a comfort in a story that adults sense as keenly distressing, and that beckons for adult interpretation or guidance. What is clear is the immediate poignancy of these cats and the author's evocative language in describing them: "They belonged once to someone. They slept on sofa cushions— they purred— nuzzling the chins of their beloveds." They could be the Polish Jewry of the Warsaw Ghetto.

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**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 2-5. In luminous free verse, Hesse's latest picture book tells a powerful story of a young Jewish girl who, together with her older sister, ingeniously fights the Nazi occupation of Warsaw. After escaping from the Jewish ghetto, the girl avoids detection: "I wear my Polish look, / I walk my Polish walk. / Polish words float from my lips / and I am almost safe, / almost invisible." She finds joy in playing with the city's abandoned cats, who show her holes in the ghetto wall, which the girl's older sister and their resistance friends will use to pass supplies shipped by train to Warsaw. The Gestapo learns of the scheme, and soldiers wait at the train station with dogs. Luckily, the cats inspire a solution; they distract the dogs and protect the supplies. It's an empowering story about the bravery and impact of young people, and Hesse's clear, spare poetry, from the girl's viewpoint, refers to the hardships suffered without didacticism. In bold, black lines and washes of smoky gray and ochre, Watson's arresting images echo the pared-down language as well as the hope that shines like the glints of sunlight on Krasinski Square. An author's note references the true events and heartbreaking history that inspired this stirring, expertly crafted story. Gillian Engberg

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This is a lovely story to introduce children to a dark time in history in a way that shows hope and courage in the face of overwhelming odds. I'm using this book for my third-graders in our study on WWII. There is nothing graphic or disturbing either in the illustrations or the content. The author deals with the Warsaw Ghetto in a sensitive way by highlighting one story of courage and resistance in the face of Nazi evil. I highly recommend it.

It can be very hard to write about the Holocaust for children. Either you water down the subject so much that you trivialize it, or you give them nightmares for a year and a day. This goes doubly or triply for picture books, where the young age of your readers has to be taken into account. And of course you want a story with a hero, not just victims, if at all possible. (The truth is that there isn't

much to say about the Holocaust that you can say to kids. It boils down to "It was a terrible time, and a lot of people died".) This book manages to convey the appropriate emotions of hiding and fear ("I wear my Polish look and my Polish walk, Polish words float from my lips") without showing too strongly any actual brutality. The author doesn't shy away from the hard, and pertinent, issue of hunger; and we can see the soldiers on nearly every page, but we don't explicitly see any violence either. And the book ends on a relatively high note - they outsmart the Germans and their dogs, and get food into the Ghetto, including a special bundle for her friend who is inside, despite the danger of the location. Younger children will pick up on the accomplishment, older ones will understand (or begin to ask) about why this happened. The afterword is particularly informative.

This is a wonderful story, it appealed to me as a social studies teacher. I bought it for my grandcat who is a therapy cat. It might be nice to have a senior citizen read this book to the cat, at a nursing home visit, to start an interesting conversation about World War II!

Love the book!

This is a great story, and I appreciate the history at the end of the book. I use this to supplement a unit on the Holocaust for 6th grade students.

I brought this book to my Developmental Reading Class (certification/graduate) and it was received as a great book that deals with prejudice, religious acceptance, and the resourcefulness of one little girl in Poland who successfully diverted Nazi soldiers with cats while she snuck food to a starving Jewish family. What a clever way to outsmart the enemy and how caring this child was to risk her life to save another from starvation.

Beautiful book filled with content! I use it grades 6-12 as a Read Aloud in World History classes to introduce the Russian Revolution.

This is just what I ordered. This is just what I wanted and I was lucky and happy to find it available from at a good price and brought right to my door!

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