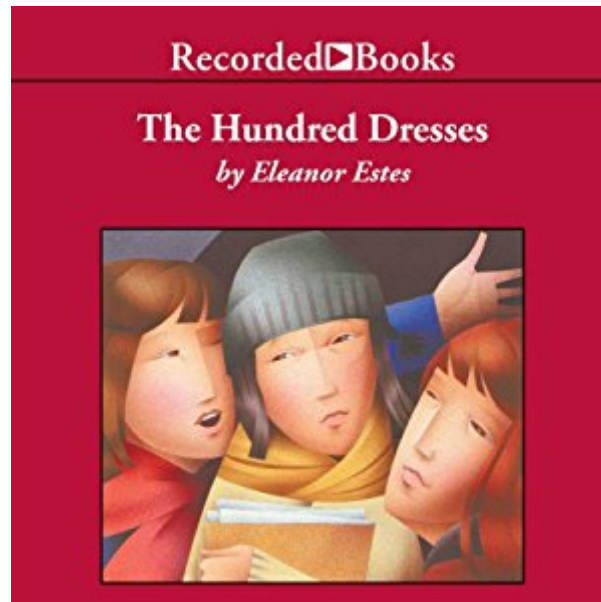


The book was found

The Hundred Dresses



Synopsis

Eleanor Estes's *The Hundred Dresses* won a Newbery Honor in 1945 and has never been out of print since. At the heart of the story is Wanda Petronski, a Polish girl in a Connecticut school who is ridiculed by her classmates for wearing the same faded blue dress every day. Wanda claims she has one hundred dresses at home, but everyone knows she doesn't and bullies her mercilessly. The class feels terrible when Wanda is pulled out of the school, but by that time it's too late for apologies. Maddie, one of Wanda's classmates, ultimately decides that she is "never going to stand by and say nothing again." This powerful, timeless story has been reissued with a new letter from the author's daughter Helena Estes, and with the Caldecott artist Louis Slobodkin's original artwork in beautifully restored color. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 54 minutes

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Whispersync for Voice: Ready

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Customer Reviews

I first read this book as a girl more than 40 years ago, and I still love it. I've noticed something about this book that many reviews (and many of the lesson plans I've read) seem to miss, and I think it's an important point: This isn't the story of Wanda Petronski. It's the story of Maddie, an ordinary person who quietly assents to evil and then must live with her conscience. It's very tough stuff for young readers (and older ones), both deep and dark. I remember my own daughters finding it to be rough going emotionally, because Maddie's epiphany comes when the possibility of redemption is past, leaving her only with regret. This is unusual in children's fiction (and adults'), where the norm is for the central character--the character with whom the reader identifies--to be granted a second chance to make the compassionate choice. Estes quite deliberately, and, I think, properly, gave the

book a real-life ending, where understanding occurs after the moment of truth has irretrievably gone by, and we realize that the next step, the step that occurs after the end of the story, is for the character and, by extension, the reader, to decide how to live her life from that point on. Wanda is not, as far as we know, a Jew, but this is nevertheless a Holocaust story, as well as a Civil Rights story, a story about tolerance and compassion but also a story about how evil flourishes when people of good will do not speak out. Estes is kind enough to her characters to allow Wanda the spirit and determination to rise above the rejection of her classmates, and to allow her to gracefully (but incorrectly) attribute the best of motives to Maddie and Peggy. In a way, though, her nobility makes Maddie's enlightenment even more bitter.

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