



Katerina's Wish

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In this moving debut, an immigrant girl discovers that hard work and determination can make dreams come true.

Katerina has a dream. It's her papa's dream, too. Her family came to America to buy their own farm. But a year later, Papa is still working in the dangerous coal mine. Each day, the farm seems farther away. Then Katerina is reminded of the carp that granted three wishes in an old folktale. When her younger sisters hear the story, they immediately make wishes. Trina doesn't believe in such silliness, but what is she to think when her sisters' wishes come true?

A farm is still too big to wish for. But, with the help of the neighbor's handsome son, Trina starts building her dream with hard work and good sense. Then tragedy strikes, and it seems that nothing Trina wishes for will ever come true again.

With warmth and gentle humor, Jeannie Mobley tells the story of a girl whose determination is as inspiring as her dreams.

Katerina's Wish Details

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Catherine says

[I think Mr.Johnson is evil to have killed Katerina's chickens and ruined her garden. (hide spoiler)]

Wendy says

A sweet, well-written story with a great sense of place. I liked this book best in the first third or so, when it seemed more like magical realism woven into a commonplace historical fiction plot, with plenty of Czech ethnic details and stories; the details of the mining community and the family's real-life struggles were less interesting to me. Katerina's growth during the book is both significant and realistic-seeming, and the romance is sweet without being dumb; I thought the author did a great job with first-love feelings, and also with being realistic about romance in that time and place. Never do Katerina and Marek seem like modern teenagers plopped into 1900. And it flowed naturally that the romance between an almost-fourteen-year-old and a sixteen-year-old would be taken seriously by everyone in the community, which was refreshing.

Recommended for any elementary reader who likes historical fiction.

L.B. Schulman says

I really liked this book. The setting in Colorado's mining country was unique, and I enjoyed zooming in on the fascinating culture of this time. Katerina was such an unusual character. She was spunky, determined, but very grounded. I really enjoy it when I read about characters that have many different sides. The whole time I was reading, I was scared by Katerina's mother's influence on her. It seemed like at any time that Katerina would succumb to the pragmatic philosophy of so many people around her and give up all hope of her dreams. The back and forth between good luck and bad luck, what is magic and what is not, made this a great read. There were a number of twists too. I felt like this book was especially well-plotted. And the author made it clear that farming was not going to be the end-all answer for the family, that it hadn't worked for many, and yet it was OK to dream and strive for that dream, despite the risks involved. I found this book to be very refreshing in so many ways, from the time in history that's explored to the well-developed characters. Even the characters that stood for something were not one-dimensional and were frequently tugged in different directions. This would be a great book to have on a fifth or sixth grade reading list.

Tara says

Quite simply, I adored this book. It reminded me of the very best historical fiction I read as a kid, in that I didn't feel like I was learning a history lesson at all--I just felt totally immersed in the world of the story and invested in the fate of the main character's family as forces beyond their control threatened to crush them.

With skeptical-yet-hopeful Katerina, the author creates a wonderful character to guide us through life in a turn-of-the-century coal camp. She concocts various schemes to try to earn enough money to get her family out of the camp and into possession of a piece of land they can farm. But the powers that be at the camp aren't about to let her have her way so easily.

I hope that this book finds its place both in classrooms and far beyond them, because anyone who enjoys a beautifully-written and tension-filled story will love it.

Laura says

This had such promise: a Czech immigrant family in the Colorado minefields, living in what is clearly a company town, struggles to survive the clash between their dreams of a better life in America and the reality of what they've found, intermixed with classic fairy/folk tales that highlight and illustrate their situation (which is, when you think about it, what fairy/folk tales were supposed to do!). Where this falls apart is the lack of realization about what their situation really is. If farming - even minor growing of a few vegetables and having a chicken or two - had been "approved" by the company, wouldn't more of the families have been doing it? While Trina may not have been that savvy, surely someone else (Old Jan? her mother? a neighbor?) would have said something.

Trina's relationship with Mark/Marek was also a little odd. It was completely realistic that she'd had a crush on him while in school, and that she'd still want to mull a future with him. It was also realistic that she'd have this dream of the farm and wanting to leave the mine town. But Mark/Marek's insistence that this was the only possible life for him was not realistic - he was so good as a woodworker, why didn't someone suggest that as a way to make money?

Copy provided by publisher.

S. says

The saddest thing about this book is that it ended. I started out planning to 'savor' it and read it a little at a time. However, that did not happen. Once the action started, I just could not put it down. The characters drew me in and kept me interested. The story line was well done, showing that the author put much thought into development as well as obvious research on the project overall.

The hope is, there will be a sequel! The story starts off slowly (but don't confuse that with boredom!) as we get to know the characters involved. It did not take long to get drawn into the lives of those living in the mining town, the hardships they faced everyday, and the courage it took to get through. I loved the 'old stories' that were shared, how they wove themselves throughout the story and became lessons of growth. An amazing story about wishes and dreams. OH, and a magic fish. ;-) Highly recommend this book to those who enjoy good and well-written young adult fiction, with a bit of well placed history that does not overwhelm.

More, please, Ms Mobley.

Cynthia Levinson says

An exquisite debut novel that manages to encompass all of America and its dreams in Katerina, a thoughtful, clever, hard-working and honorable thirteen-year-old living in a coal miners camp in 1900.

Cynthia Egbert says

I don't remember who recommended this one to me but I do thank them for a sweet little read. There were a few things that didn't add up for me as someone who knows Colorado very well but they were not deal breakers. The characters were real and multi faceted and I always appreciate that in a YA novel. It is a novel that offers timely reminders that hard work, service, and community can overcome even great odds.

Mila says

Such a cute tale about a family who left Bohemia for Colorado in 1900. The "Czechy" family as they preferred to be known as (instead of Greek ha ha) overcame their hardships with the help of their amazingly clever daughter. What a gal! Magical realism and Czech fairy tales (which are similar to Grimm's Fairy tales but before Disney got to them.) Also, the graphic of a dandelion clock that begins each chapter, with the removal of one more seed each time, is really delightful.

Roxie -?he ?eader says

*****SPOILER ALERTS*****

As I finished the last chapter of this book I felt mixed emotions, I adored the story, most of the characters, the setting but there were also areas which grew to irritate me too.

I love the way the author has intertwined a real meaning into such a magical read, that with hard work, true belief and determination you can make a dream become reality.

It truly was a heartwarming tale, a real spin on what someone can perceive to be magic.

From Aneshka getting her wish of plum dumplings, due to unforeseen circumstances and obtaining cans of plums from Mr Torentino for \$1 per can. To Holena finding her Momma's old forgotton hair ribbons. Then there is Trina, who happens to stumble upon a field of Mexican farmers whilst fishing one day, she offers them 6 fish for a handful of seeds and plants her seeds in her back yard, then on her next visit to the farm she offers money for three chickens (the start of what eventually becomes the whole family's dream their own farm which Mr Johnson destroys out of spite due to fear of competition), of course, whilst all the good things are happening (before that occurs), the younger sisters, Aneshka and Holena believe this is purely due to the carp and the wishes they made.

I wnjoyed the almost mind games of well did that actually happen because of the so called magical carp or did that just happen because of a lucky circumstance, whilst they all undeniably somehow end up in relation to the wishes and them eventually coming true.

There was an array of intriguing characters some more lovable than others and some that just made my fist clench! Mark (Merek) was one of those who I loved but grew to hate (okay hate is a strong word) whilst I

initially thought he was loving and kind to Trina and generally would have done almost anything for her in truth he could not bring himself to move on a farm which Trina's Papa ends up leasing after Mr Torentino helps him find, instead he makes he give back the wire ring he gave her and threw back the rock she gave him in the dirt and just came across as selfish near the end, I don't want to live on a farm that's it, you can either live in the town policed by the Pinkertons, the coal mine and Mr Johnson and their unlawful ways, leave your family all behind to live on that lovely farm you've been dreaming about for pretty much the whole duration of your life in America and be happy with living my dream instead. WELL NO, NO MARK SHE WON'T!!! (yes it annoyed me a little).

Momma who I felt overpowered Trina with her own broken dreams and tried to crush her attempts of achieving her own at every hurdle, I really did feel for Trina always trying to please her Momma but always falling short. I equally feel like she may just be a beaten down house wife fed up of what seems like a never ending nightmare to her.

Mr Johnson who is a nasty piece of work, I grew to hate him quickly, he is arrogant with his judgements, an outright bully, greedy and his lust for power creates a monster of a man.

Aneshka, whilst I know she is a child I just found her to be annoyingly bratty and unreasonable and arrogant but at the same time she has another side where she is thoughtful, a little naive and incredibly determined, Holena who is just so bloody adorable I just wanted to keep her safe from the harshness of the real world around her, Old Jan one of Papas dear friend and his sons Mark (Merek) and Karel all who too came from Bohemia to America for a better life are each lovable in their own way. Old Jan with his never ending hidden meaning stories he tells and his heart felt advice and caring nature and pure dedication and love for his sons and friends make him one of my favourite characters in the book along with Trina of course.

Anyway wrapping up because this was supposed to be short I swear!

It is a beautiful story, warm and inviting, one for the dreamers of the world. I love the relationship between Trina and her Papa it felt so loving, I felt his presence through every page of the book and that everything that they went through was okay because they had one another and more so there faith in there Papa's dream even though they lost almost everything to gain it.

It is defiantly a book that I will read again eventually.

Still there are some negatives. I felt the ending seemed a little rushed and I felt all the build up, the arguments and struggles between Mr Johnson and the coal mine etc led to just an okay ending. Yes it was nice that they ended up with their dream farm in the end which they all so deserved, but something just didn't feel right with me I felt like it just needed something a little more, what happened when they got to the farm? Did it work out as they planned? I would have liked to have seen a glimpse into how it turned out for them after all they went through.

Kita says

My 9-year-old daughter and I loved this middle grade historical fiction novel by local author Jeannie Mobley. The storyline had us turning the pages, and I loved that Lucy was learning about mining and farming in southern Colorado in the early 1900s.

Mike Cooney says

My students are each reading a historical fiction novel in January. Out of the 23 books that have been chosen, I haven't read 16 of them, so my challenge this month is to read them all to have better discussions with them.

In other words, I never would have chosen this book on my own, but I'm glad I read it. I loved how the author weaved folk tales into the story as a way to make the message of the novel more direct for younger readers. Most of the characters were believable, too. Definitely a little "romantic" for most/some of my fifth graders-- teenagers were proposing marriage to each other -- but it was a sign of the times, I guess!

Sharon Lawler says

Historical fiction based in the Colorado mining camps, and focused on immigrants who left their homeland in the hope that they would have a better life in the US. Great use of folktales to enhance the story, especially the carp and three wishes. Reminded me of a softer, easier version of The Jungle, and the story is relevant today. This is the author's first novel.

Barbara says

Thirteen-year-old Czech Katerina hates living in the Colorado mining town where her family tries to eke out a living. Her dearest wish is to return home while her father longs for a farm of his own rather than the dangerous mining job he has taken in order to provide for the family. But Katerina decides to do what she can to help her father's wish come true. (After hearing a folktale about a magical carp that granted three wishes, she happened to see a carp in a nearby stream.) Good luck seems to come to Katerina's family as she plants a garden and buys chickens and then later comes up with a scheme to earn money while also helping her neighbors. Her two younger sisters are convinced that it is the power of her wish that makes all the good things happen, and maybe it is. But she also works hard for everything good that happens. I really enjoyed Katerina's determination and persistence and the way the author described the control that the mining company had over its workers. The conflict between her own goals and those of her suitor, Marek, is interesting to consider as well. I'm pretty sure Katerina would succeed no matter where she ended up.

Jeanne says

A beautiful story of determination, community and big dreams. Katerina, whose family immigrates to the U.S. from Bohemia around 1900, uses wits, hard work and determination in her quest to help her family escape from the drudgery (and danger) of living in a coal-mine town. This charming story includes folktales, a twisting plot and romance. Katerina is a strong female character who I fell in love with.
