

Letters from Rifka

by Karen Hesse

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.



Read Aloud Video

What's It About?

With Nazis bombing London every night, it's time for thirteen-year-old Ken to escape. He suspects his stepmother is glad to see him go, but his dad says he's one of the lucky ones—one of ninety boys and girls to ship out aboard the SS City of Benares to safety in Canada. Life aboard the luxury ship is grand—nine-course meals, new friends, and a life far from the bombs, rations, and his stepmum's glare. And after five days at sea, the ship's officers announce that they're out of danger. They're wrong. Late that night, an explosion hurls Ken from his bunk. They've been hit. Torpedoed! The Benares is sinking fast. Terrified, Ken scrambles aboard Lifeboat 12 with five other boys. Will they get away? Will they survive?

A Junior Library Guild Selection
The 2019 Golden Kite Middle Grade Fiction Award Winner
A 2019 ALSC Notable Children's Book
The 2019–2020 Lectoria Book Award Winner
The 2020–2021 Florida Sunshine State Young Readers Award List
The 2020 Oklahoma Library Association's Children's Sequoyah Book Award Winner
The Connecticut Book Award Winner

AR Reading Level: 4.2

Who Wrote It?

I was born in 1952, in Baltimore, Maryland. I lived in a brick, row house in the city and my neighborhood brimmed with children my age. Summers were spent flying in and out of each other's homes. We were generally unsupervised, playing from early morning until late in the evening when our parents came out on their porches and called us home. We played everything from jacks to hopscotch, jump rope to 'swinging statues', 'talent show' to 'mothers and babies'. There was a park about 5 blocks from my house in one direction and a public library about the same distance in the other direction and I loved going to both. I graduated from high school when I was sixteen and attended Towson State College for one year as a theater major, then the University of Maryland for three more years where I graduated with a B.A. in English with double minors in Psychology and Anthropology. I've



lived in Vermont since 1976 where, with my husband, I've raised two amazing daughters. I love to knit dolls, go hiking, take photographs, read, write little tunes for the piano, paint, sing, and cook.

Lexile Level: 660L

I want to read this book: YES / NO



WHAT I THINK



