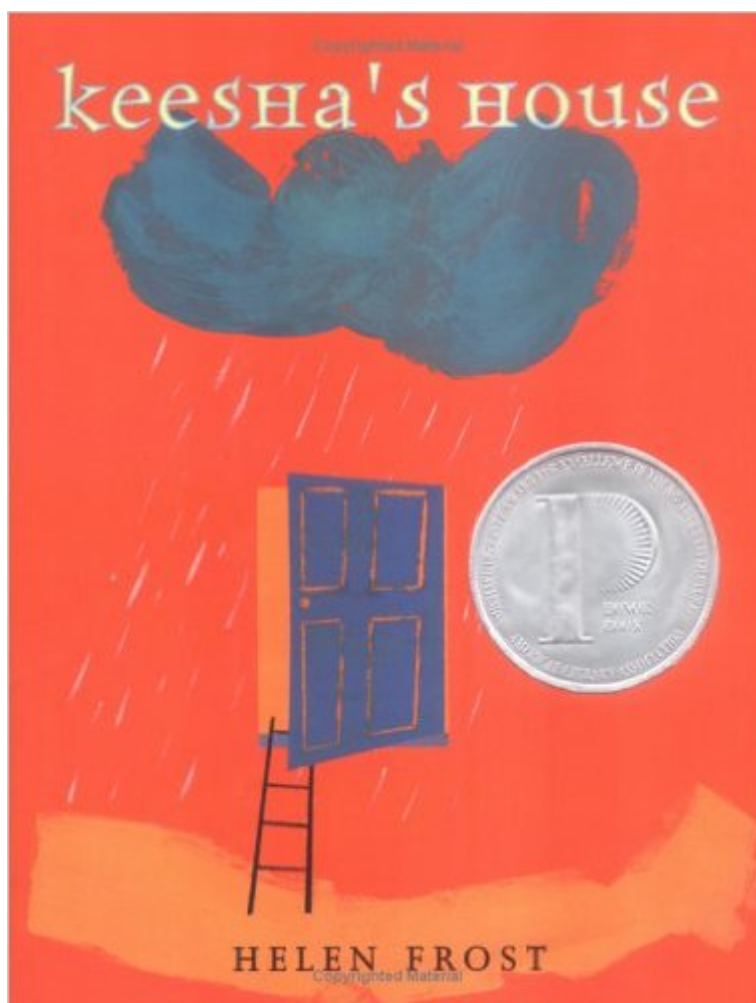


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# Keesha's House (Michael L. Printz Honor Book (Awards))





## Synopsis

An unforgettable narrative collage told in poems Keesha 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 â€” pregnant, trying to make the right decisions for herself and those she cares about; Jason â€” Stephie's boyfriend, torn between his responsibility to Stephie and the baby and the promise of a college basketball career; Dontay â€” in foster care while his parents are in prison, feeling unwanted both inside and outside the system; Carmen â€” arrested on a DUI charge, waiting in a juvenile detention center for a judge to hear her case; Harris â€” disowned by his father after disclosing that he's gay, living in his car, and taking care of himself; Katie â€” 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 â€” sestinas and sonnets â€” Helen Frost's extraordinary debut novel for young adults weaves together the stories of these seven teenagers as they courageously struggle to hold their lives together and overcome their difficulties. Keesha's House is a 2004 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

## Book Information

Series: Michael L. Printz Honor Book (Awards)

Hardcover: 128 pages

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR); 1st edition (April 2, 2003)

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Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.7 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars See all reviews (23 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,012,091 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #126 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Runaways #194 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Runaways #733 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Self Esteem & Reliance

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Years ago, young Keesha ran away from home, from her verbally abusive, alcoholic father. Since



then, she has found comfort in the home of a local resident, Joe, who had a large house and an even larger heart. Joe provided Keesha with a roof over her head and a fresh start in life. Now it's Keesha's turn to give back. As she meets young people in trouble, she invites them to Joe's house, so that they may have a chance to sort out life's problems. Though unconventional and not in line with the state's plans for runaways, Keesha's solution is helping many local teenagers, including Stephanie who is pregnant, Dontay, who is a runaway from foster care, and Harris, a young man whose family will not accept that he is gay. We eventually watch these characters meet and learn from each other. The tragic ending serves to remind us that there's not always a happy ending, but success comes from making the most of your life. Helen Frost has created a wise and thoughtful character in young Keesha; however, she's not perfect, which makes her more believable and more likeable. When Stephanie is accepted back into her parents' home despite her pregnancy, Keesha's comments reflect the jealousy you'd expect from a 14-year-old who always hoped that her own father would come looking for her. All poems in the book are written in sestinas and sonnets, and each contains multicultural references that will connect the readers to the characters and their environment. The situations are real and prevalent in society, and even though they're sometimes uncomfortable to talk about and read about, young readers from ages 15 on up will appreciate each character's candid, poetic narration.

unless you have to read for school which I did. I enjoy reading, and I really enjoy poetry. When I heard the plot for this book I was looking forward to reading it because it sounded interesting and similar to other books I have read and loved. Honestly I found it dull, and as if the author was just trying to stuff in a bunch of characters and not concentrate on them individually. I didn't feel heartache for any of them because I only thought of them as a whole. It was actually sad to me how terribly it portrayed high school because I'm in high school and she exaggerates and is mistaken about how people act. I know it's a book and it has to be exaggerated to be interesting but it seriously reminded me of a more adult Disney movie with the way she wrote it. If you're looking for a similar book, but with more genuine quality, try Ellen Hopkins, whose characters also speak and think in a poetic form. Another touching book with heart wrenching qualities is *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* by Chris Crutcher. I read it twice and could still probably read it again and get more from it. It was phenomenal and so are all the books by Ellen Hopkins. In short this book was a disappointment and there are much better books out there deserving attention.

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.

Now, I am not one who traditionally likes to read poetry, but I checked this book out from the library and finished it by the end of the day, and not only that but I found it to be quite a delight. The only problem is that it seemed the book went too fast and didn't focus enough on each character and their lives at the house, or afterwards for that matter. However, I would still recommend this book to all my friends

In this poem, the lives of six troubled kids entwine. Wrapping around each other like the words to a song, or maybe more like a dance, their words work hard to make everything come out right. The fear of a teen pregnancy and its consequences to both teens, foster care, DUI, being gay, an abusive stepfather, and the words Ms. Frost uses to convey everything are spare and concise and beautiful. Surely a Printz Award contender.

In the book *Keesha's House*, the main character, Keesha, is more than a teenager; she acts like an adult, and she is generous, kind and supportive. The other characters are Katie, Harris, Dontay, Jason, Carmen, Stephie, and Tobias, teenagers who work hard to meet their basic needs. The teenagers who are at Keesha's house have a common situation in their lives; they are neglected by their parents. They spend time at Keesha's house, the only place they trust. Even though there are some conflicts that hold them back, they never miss a day of school or work, and they are kind to each other. Their lives are not great compared to some teenagers who live with their parents but they manage to live. They feel welcome and comfortable at Keesha's house. More mature than their age, they support themselves and comfort each other. Their life experiences orient them to be courageous and more grown up than most teens. I strongly recommend that you read this book.



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