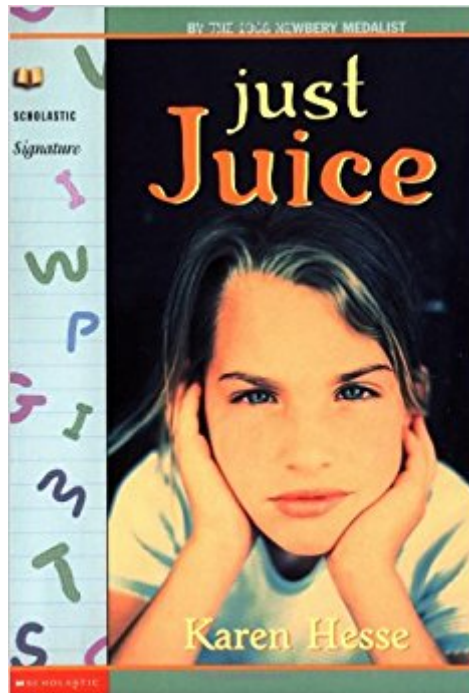




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Just Juice (Scholastic Signature)



Synopsis

Letters and numbers still don't make sense to Juice Faulstich. She'd rather skip school and spend the day at home in the North Carolina hills, anyway. But when the bank threatens to repossess her family's home, Juice faces her first life-sized problem.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Newbery Medal-winning novelist Karen Hesse--known for her painterly ability to re-create historical worlds for young readers--turns her attention this time to a contemporary family that lives as if in another era. The engrossing, eight-member Faulstich family, residents of an Appalachian hill village perhaps in Kentucky or West Virginia, has learned to endure impoverished conditions ever since Pa got laid off from the mine. Only the children are guaranteed a "sandwich" each day (bread spread so thin with jelly "you can hardly find the purple"); there are no regular doctor or dentist visits, even for Ma, who is carrying another baby; and the only surprise presents at Christmas are the ones the older girls make at school. Smack in the middle of this brood is the narrator, 9-year-old Juice Faulstich, a sweet, resilient tomboy who likes to explore and learn. She gets along well with her big

and little sisters, has talent as an apprentice metalworker in her Pa's makeshift shop, and forgets every worry when she's dancing to fiddle music. She's so capable, in fact, she's the family member all the little ones look up to the most. Yet it turns out that the highly skilled Juice, who can handle everything from power tools to her Pa's depression ("We all look out for him. But I look out for him best, even Ma says so") is plagued by an inability to understand letters and reading. "No one believes me. No one believes how hard I try. No matter what I do, it's never enough," she explains. With wonderfully gentle narrative pacing, *Just Juice* weaves together a compelling plot that involves Juice's learning challenges, Ma's suddenly difficult pregnancy, and a pending foreclosure on the family house due to unpaid taxes. It may sound bleak, yet in Hesse's able hands the Faulstich clan remains hopeful, creative, and kind with one another throughout--almost even more so when things seem the darkest. This fine book abounds with memorable and true images of family love, personal perseverance, and unexpected, effervescent breakthroughs. (Ages 8 and older) --Jean Lenihan

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Like her Newbery Award-winning *Out of the Dust*, Hesse once again celebrates a child's ability to extract beauty, pleasure and even signs of hope from her harsh surroundings. The opening image of Ma "spreading grape jelly so thin on the sliced white bread you can hardly find the purple" gives readers an immediate, vivid impression of the Faulstich family's poverty level. The simple, honest narrative of nine-year-old Justus ("Juice") Faulstich matter-of-factly expresses her plethora of concerns: Pa is out of work again; Ma is pregnant and keeps having dizzy spells; and she herself has to repeat third grade because no matter how hard she tries, she simply can't learn to read. On top of that, the family must come up with back taxes amounting to \$1000. The outside world may be cold and cruel ("Poor as Job's turkey, that's what the church ladies say we are"), but Juice doesn't let it overshadow the warmth of her home: "We might not belong to anyone else in this whole world. But us Faulstiches, we belong to each other." Hesse's poignant story of a family faced with seemingly insurmountable hurdles is filled with small triumphs and momentary insights. Juice's resourcefulness and faith in her father set him onto a vocational path, but also lead her to the realization that, as she learns to read, she may have to leave him behind: "Pa and me, we've been careful tiptoeing around this particular secret. But I can't let Pa's half of the secret keep me from doing something about mine." This brave heroine will pass the torch to readers everywhere; her courage is infectious. Ages 8-10. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

extremely pleased, thanks!

This is the first book I have read by Karen Hesse, and it probably won't be the last. I am a sixth-grade reading teacher for struggling readers, many of whom are English language learners. I used this book in the classroom for the first time this semester, and my kids really enjoyed it. The language is approachable without being low, and the tone is sweet and simple without being sappy or emotional. And the plot? Well, we got to the last quarter of the story and the students, who will gripe and complain whenever they have to pick up a book, were on the edges of their seats with anticipation. It was a this-is-why-I'm-a-teacher experience! The story of the *Faulstiches* is told from Juice's perspective: she is the nine-year-old middle child of five sisters, and she has trouble staying in school. Her Ma is pregnant; her Pa is out of work but an excellent machinist. They have very little, but are a happy family. Several challenges to the family's security and happiness come along at once, but in the end, they are all better for it. And the reader is better for having read it. I highly recommend adding this book to your library.

I love this book because it depicts a truly loving family--rare in literature today, without sentimentalizing their economic difficulties and personal problems. The beauty is that the characters accept one another for what and who they really are, while at the same time they help each other to improve. Karen Hesse skillfully avoids the trap that causes many writers to inflict stereotypical "mainstream" goals on their characters, casting the poor or the unprofessional person in an unfavorable light. Juice is a girl secure in her own being, confident in her goal to work as a machinist in her father's shop. Both she and he are illiterate, a problem that will be solved, with the help of an understanding mother and new determination. Literacy, however, will not change the basic goal or the family unity that exists from the introduction of these lovable characters (a mom who takes time to cherish each child and to praise her illiterate, sometimes confused husband as a "business tycoon!"). Literacy will not turn Juice into a doctor or a lawyer; indeed, it will crystalize her personality and enable her to function even better than she already does. The scenes are memorable, the dialogue and narrative in perfect keeping with the setting, and the characters live on long after the story is told.

Came on time and as described

It is an excellent book and one of the few really well written chapter books on the market. A great

read for child's. And families alike.

5 pages were ripped out. Not cool.

Hesse, Karen. (1998). Just Juice. New York: Scholastic Press. Literary Genre: Realistic Fiction (Chapter Book) The Faulstich family is going through a hard time. Pa has difficulty keeping work and is depressed. Ma is pregnant and has gestational diabetes. Juice is in trouble with the truant officer because she does not go to school as she should. Markey and Charleen (Juice's older sisters) worry about Juice. Juice, Markey, and Charleen pitch in to care for the two little ones, Lulu and Turtle. They barely have enough food to eat, so when Pa gets a letter saying they have to pay taxes or lose their house, he keeps it a secret from Ma. It seems like the Faulstich's are doomed. Can Juice get her family through these hard times and deal with her own secret? Hesse successfully captures the essence of a family's bond and love. Throughout all these hardships, the Faulstich's encourage one another, support each other, and remain hopeful that things will get better. The language has some slang that might stump some young readers in the beginning but it allows the reader to visualize the characters. Hesse also does a nice job of addressing the challenges that people with reading disabilities face in their day-to-day lives. My only criticism is that there is not a sequel.

Just Juice was actually a book recommended by an editor at an SCBWI conference long ago. Praised by this editor for its opening line, I purchased the book right away and wasn't disappointed. From the first word to the last, Karen Hesse has created a masterpiece. Watching Ma spread "grape jelly so thin on the sliced white bread you can hardly find the purple," immediately gave insight to the family. The main character, Juice, is a girl who is strong in her ability to hold her family together--she's the rock for her dad, helps Mom run the household, and the sister, though not the oldest, that each of the siblings turn to. Repeating third grade again, Juice cannot make sense of letters and numbers and often ditches school to help Pa with his machinery--a skill that comes easily for her. With the family in danger of losing their house, Mom's difficult pregnancy, and the truant officer threatening to fine her parents, Juice steps up and realizes what she has to do. This book is brimming with beautiful language and small triumphs throughout that allow us to fall in love with the Faulstich family. So much, in fact, I found myself wishing I could be a Faulstich, too.--Reviewed By Kerry O'Malley Cerra

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