

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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—LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON, author of *Speak*

safekeeping

A NOVEL OF TOMORROW
BY NEWBERY MEDALIST

karen hesse

WITH HER PHOTOGRAPHS



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Grades 7 and up

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Feiwei and Friends

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ABOUT THE BOOK

The assassination of the president of the United States sets chaos in motion as the new government takes power; vigilante groups are running the streets, the economy is failing, food is scarce, travel is difficult, and no one is safe. Radley has no idea how dismal life in the United States is when she returns from Haiti, but she soon finds out. Radley's parents do not meet her plane, her cell phone is dead, her credit cards don't work, she has no cash and no travel papers—nothing to do but walk home, a journey that will take her weeks. And so she begins...but what she discovers when she arrives home is worse than any nightmare. Soon she flees to Canada, on foot, hiding from everyone until she meets Celia. Together these two girls become true friends, bonding and supporting each other on their arduous trek of unexpected obstacles and challenges.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Discuss with students the viability of walking 250 miles. Ask them to determine how many hours it would take to cover the distance. Based on walking eight to ten hours a day, how many days would it take for someone to walk 250 miles? Ask students to search the Internet and to find someone who has walked at least 250 miles. Have them share the story with the class.

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS: QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- When Radley returns home and her parents aren't there, why does she assume they are in jail?
- What does Radley miss most about her parents?
- What regrets does Radley have concerning her actions toward her parents?
- What is the difference between Radley's and Celia's ideas of family? How have their families molded their beliefs about family?
- Why does Radley consider the orphans in Haiti her family?
- How does Celia's "new" family help her overcome the pain of her past?

FRIENDSHIP

- What is friendship? What role does it play in the lives of each of the characters?
- When Radley returns home, the one person she seeks out is her friend, Janine, but she doesn't consider contacting Julian. How does Julian prove his friendship to Radley?
- How do Radley and Celia become friends? What helps them bond?
- How could Jerry Lee be considered a friend?

KINDNESS

- How does Our Lady of the Barn help Radley and Celia?
- What kindnesses are shown to Radley as she travels to and from her home in Vermont?
- How do Radley and Celia repay the kindness that is shown to them?
- What role does Julian play in Radley and Celia's adventure?

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

- How does the title of the book relate to the theme of overcoming challenges?
- What are the challenges that Radley and Celia overcome?
- What challenges does the society in general face?
- What challenges does Celia's pregnancy add to the story?

TRUST

- Why is Celia so unwilling to trust Radley when they first meet?
- When Radley discovers a boy asleep in her bedroom, she instinctively knows she can trust him. What is it about Julian that she trusts?
- Why does Radley begin to trust and depend on Our Lady of the Barn?
- What steps will the government need to take in order to regain the people's trust and confidence in their decisions and leadership?

GRIEF AND LOSS

- How does Celia cope with the loss of her innocence?
- What emotions does Radley experience as she grieves the loss of her parents?
- Radley’s way of life changes as a result of the government downfall. What steps does she take to ensure her future will be positive and full of love?
- How does Julian also suffer loss and grief?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

VOCABULARY

Ask students to locate the following words and to determine their meaning from the context clues. Then have students create a cartoon panel(s) with caption(s) illustrating the meanings of the word. Students may use scenes from the book or other original ideas to create the drawings. Have students share their cartoons with the class.

scrutiny (page 5)	conspicuous (page 45)
frenzied (page 6)	cowering (page 90)
hoisting (page 11)	exhilarated (page 103)
conduit (page 21)	desiccated (page 117)

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS TALL TALES—A STORY FOR EVERY DATE

On page 217, Radley and Celia play a game telling stories. Using the same idea, ask students to select a date and to write a story about what happens on that day. Students can select a date that a special event occurred and use their imagination and exaggeration to stretch the truth to enhance the story. Have students practice and use storytelling skills to share their stories with the class.

“TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED” LIST

Radley learns much about herself as she experiences life with Celia and without her parents, as does Celia. Ask students to create a “Top Ten Lessons Learned” list from either Radley’s or Celia’s point of view based on the lessons the character learns, a specific experience the character has, or an emotion the character feels during the ordeal. Students can share their lists and then place them in a book as a classroom collection.

POEMS FOR TWO CHARACTERS

Radley loved the “conversations in profile” she had with her mother (page 226). Ask students to select a partner and to write a poem in two voices from the point of view of any two characters in the novel following the model of the “conversations in profile.” Have partners present their poems to the class.

SOCIAL STUDIES

CRISIS IN THE POLITICAL ARENA

In this futuristic novel, the assassination of the president of the United States (page 10) leads to the chaos that is the setting for *Safekeeping*. With a partner, ask students to investigate countries around the world which are currently in economic or political crisis such as Greece, Iran, Egypt, or China. Ask students to work with a partner to create a time line on poster board tracing the beginning of the crisis to one or more events. Then ask students to share their time line of the events that led to the crisis in the country they are investigating.

CRISIS ON THE HOME FRONT

Ask partners to make a list of the government and private industry services that were cancelled, the freedoms that were taken away from the citizens, and the actions taken by individuals to protect themselves after the breakdown of society in *Safekeeping*. Then, as a whole class, have students compare these fictionalized actions to actual steps taken in other countries in political or economic crisis, such as those listed in the previous activity. As a class, ask students to make generalizations based on the discussion. Post classroom generalizations and have students research Internet and newspaper articles that support or refute their generalizations.

GEOGRAPHY

Radley takes quite a journey from Haiti to home in Vermont to Canada and then back to Vermont again. Ask students to look at the map on page 259. Have students select a partner and draw a map of Radley's journey using a variety of mediums. Students can select events to highlight Radley's experiences by writing a brief one- or two-sentence summary of the event and placing summaries in appropriate locations on the map. Display the maps in the classroom.

SCIENCE

Humans are born with hard-wired survival instincts, and both Radley and Celia use these instincts to help them survive. Ask students to identify and define the survival instincts that helped the girls live through their harrowing experiences. Have students find examples of the fight-or-flight instinct and other survival modes the girls experienced during their ordeal. Have each student select one survival instinct to illustrate based on events in the book. Create a classroom bulletin board that spotlights each of the survival instincts with student illustrations.

ART

Ask students to look at the photos in the book, select three or four of their favorites, and then read the corresponding text. Using the photos and text as examples, ask students to take several pictures using a class camera or their own camera and to select their favorite shot. Students can then write a short story or poem based on the photo. The photos can be mounted on poster board and displayed with the text in the classroom or school library.

AN INTERVIEW WITH KAREN HESSE

Q: What prompted you to write *Safekeeping*?

A: The astonishingly rapid rise of the Tea Party set my antennae tingling. I watched the Tea Party rallies with intense interest and wondered “what if,” as writers often do...what if this fledgling party with its passionate but somewhat misguided, not always fully formed, nor entirely accurate, understanding of history and the Constitution, what if representatives from the Tea Party rose to take control of the executive and legislative branches of the United States government? What would happen?

Q: *Safekeeping* is set in the future and you make references to the chaos that could realistically happen. Could you discuss the process you used for your research?

A: Having come to trust an examination of historical precedent to understand contemporary situations, I looked at England and France during World War II. Nella Last’s journals were incredibly illuminating, but I spent most of my research time studying occupied France. What happens in *Safekeeping* is not at all what happened in occupied France and beleaguered England, but it gave me a solid foundation from which my imagination could make the leap into my dystopian scenario.

Q: The photographs add depth to the story and help the reader “see” the events. What inspired you to use the photographs? Did the idea of Radley’s mom being a photographer come first or your desire to use your photographs?

A: Photography has been a form of creative recreation for me since the advent of digital cameras. Using photographs to enhance text has been an obsession of mine since discovering the work of Wright Morris. I’ve hinted at wanting to do this sort of photography/text marriage several times to Jean Feiwel [my editor], but we were never able to find the right project. Actually, I’d given up asking when Jean, without any prompting from me, suggested we use my photographs in *Safekeeping*. I can’t tell you how thrilled I was. I immediately embraced her suggestion.

Q: Where did the idea for the title, *Safekeeping*, come from?

A: After a book has gone through many, many drafts, titles start suggesting themselves. When I’m coming close to a finished manuscript, one revision is dedicated to combing through the text carefully, searching for words or phrases that might distill the essence of the story for the reader and serve as a title. Once that list is compiled, I also do a brain-storming session, usually with my husband, for other ideas for titles not directly drawn from the wording in the book itself. Some ideas are hilarious, some groan-worthy dreadful. Others seem more plausible, but finally, after a long week or two of deliberating, a winner usually surfaces (rarely does it come from the brainstorming, though that does help me crystallize my ideas). *Safekeeping* was not the first title the book carried, but it seemed to work on many levels and in the end, it is the title that will carry the book out into the world.

Q: Is there a particular idea or concept in *Safekeeping* that you want your readers to take away with them when they turn the last page?

A: Being an informed voter is critical to the future success of our country. Compassion for the “other” is critical to the future of humanity.

Q: What did you learn from writing *Safekeeping*? How will you use what you learned on future books?

A: I learned that walking for days in the rain (I did a good part of Radley’s walk, always in an orange, reflective vest) is not fun. It is very hard on cameras and on old bones. In the future, I will endeavor to keep my camera out of downpours. I also learned that drivers often steer toward what they see, which meant that often, as I walked, cars and trucks seemed to be aiming right for me. It was only after my heart had really started pounding that the drivers (most of them) corrected their paths. Some overcompensated by heading off into the other lane. Some simply directed their cars straight down the middle of their own lane. Occasionally, one would come so close that the buffeting of

wind it created as it passed would blow off my rain-hood or lift me off my feet. I also discovered how much we miss in our environment when we zoom past it at 50 miles an hour. Can any of this be applied to future books? I doubt it. But it certainly adds to my understanding of the world. And that WILL benefit any future books I write.

Q: When you've completed one book, how do you decide what to write next? Is your decision based on what's popular in the marketplace, a file of ideas you keep, or do characters and situations just pop up in your head?

A: If I chased every idea that comes into my head, I'd be racing down a lot of dead ends. All of us are bombarded with images and ideas, tastes and textures, scents and sounds each day. The challenge is to wait. If the story idea refuses to leave me alone, if it resists being ignored and snubbed and pushed aside, then and only then do I begin to consider the fact that it might actually be a viable book idea. When I write, the project usually requires a two-year (or more) commitment. I want to be fairly certain I will be as passionate about the idea at the end of those two years as I am at the beginning. Sometimes I start prematurely, sometimes I get pretty far along on a project before I realize for me it is a stillbirth. I've learned after years of this sort of heartbreak to wait, just wait, until I'm certain I've got a viable idea growing inside me.

Q: Tell us about your writing process for a novel. Do you write for a specified time every day? Where do you write? Do you listen to music or eat snacks while you write?

A: The first year of the process is usually taken up with research. When I've front-loaded enough material to have a fairly firm grasp of the time period in which the book is set, I write a very quick first draft...mostly because I can't wait to find out what happens. Then follows a year of intense revision. I begin at about eight in the morning and continue until about three in the afternoon (with an hour off for lunch), Monday through Friday. On Saturday, I try to take a day off. On Sunday, I answer fan mail. There are times when my writing day goes longer, but usually my brain tires and I get sloppier the later I go. I try to get a walk in each day during which I'm still thinking about the book. The remainder of the day and evening, I continue to research. I'm not a good sleeper, so I tug at the material through most of the restless night. My desk and computer are in the attic of my house and that's where I do most of my active writing. I do, indeed, listen to music while I write...music that has some relationship to the work...music that sets a tone, a mood for my brain. I do not eat at my computer very often, although the occasional Junior Mint has been known to pass in front of my keyboard from time to time.

Q: Do you ask anyone to read and comment on your manuscript before you send it to your editor? Is so, do their comments or suggestions make a difference in the manuscript you submit?

A: Yes! Most of the time I am dabbling in fields I know very little about, and so I have experts in those fields read the manuscript and show me my errors. I also ask other writers who have become close friends to read and critique my manuscripts. My husband also reads and critiques my work, as do my daughters. All of this happens before and during my editor/author sessions (whether by mail, e-mail, phone, or in person). Every reader has a significant impact on the manuscript. I want to make the book as good as I can possibly make it. Writing is such an internal process. It's vital to me to understand how the work is perceived outside of my own brain. In my case, it truly does take a village to write a book, but in the end all the decisions are mine, all the words are mine. For better or worse, I take complete responsibility for them.

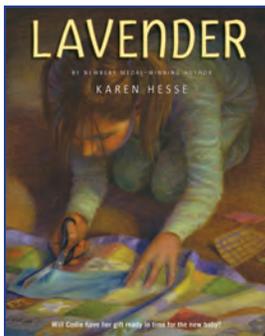
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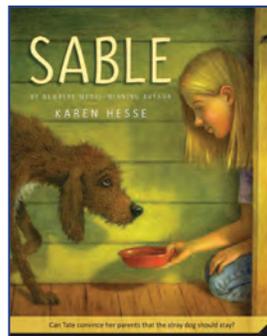
About the Author

Karen Hesse is the author of many books for young people, including *Out of the Dust*, winner of the Newbery Medal, *Letters from Rifka*, *Brooklyn Bridge*, *Phoenix Rising*, *Sable*, and *Lavender*. In addition to the Newbery, she has received honors including the Scott O'Dell Historical Fiction Award, the MacArthur Fellowship "Genius" Award, and the Christopher Award, and won the National Jewish Book Award. Born in Baltimore, Hesse graduated from the University of Maryland. She and her husband, Randy, live in Vermont.

ALSO BY KAREN HESSE



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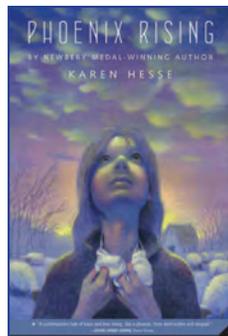
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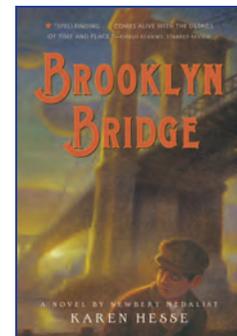
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