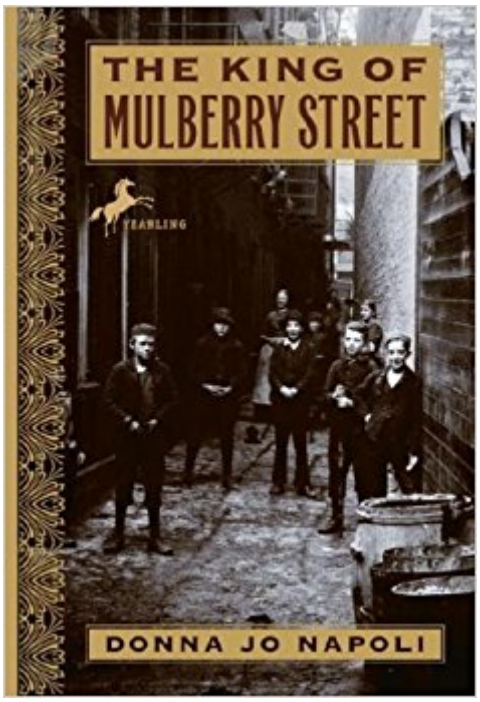
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The King Of Mulberry Street



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Synopsis

In 1892, nine-year-old DomÃ¢â ¬â„¢s mother puts him on a ship leaving Italy, bound for America. He is a stowaway, traveling alone and with nothing of value except for a new pair of shoes from his mother. In the turbulent world of homeless children in ManhattanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Five Points, Dom learns street smarts, and not only survives, but thrives by starting his own business. A vivid, fascinating story of an exceptional boy, based in part on the authorÃ¢â ¬â„¢s grandfather.From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Grade 5-8Ã¢â ¬â œWhen Beniamino, a nine-year-old Jewish boy from Napoli, is smuggled aboard a cargo ship heading to America in 1892, he assumes his mother is onboard, too. Soon realizing that Mamma isn't with him, he makes the best of his plight, but his goal is to return home as soon as possible. Landing at Ellis Island, he evades good-hearted people who would send him to an orphanage and patrones who would put him to work begging on street corners. Assuming the name Dom Napoli, he sleeps in barrels and under bushes, and he quickly learns the lessons of the street: think fast, watch what's going on, and find friends who will help you. With the aid of two other streetwise urchins, he sets up a profitable sandwich business and eventually realizes that he likes

New York and that his mother sent him there to make a better life for himself. The major characters are believable, and the minor onesÃ¢â ¬â œespecially Mamma, landlady Signora Esposito, and grocer GrandinettiÃ¢â ¬â œare also wonderfully drawn, adding liveliness to the book. Though Napoli is an expert at gripping readers' emotions, which she does with consummate skill in this tale, the story occasionally lags as the boys figure out how to be successful in their chosen enterprise. Still, this richly imagined tale, based loosely on the author's family history, paints a vivid picture of the struggle many children faced when they first came to America.Ã¢â ¬â œBarbara Scotto, Michael Driscoll School, Brookline, MA Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gr. 6-9. Drawing on her grandfather's experience, Napoli dramatizes a seldom-told bit of American history in this story of Italian Jewish young people in the 1890s. Beniamino, who lives in Napoli, is only nine years old when his beloved, poverty-stricken Mama bribes someone to hide him away on a cargo ship to America. His lively, immediate first-person narrative recalls the trauma of separation and the brutal struggle on the New York streets, where, renamed "Dom," he makes two Italian friends, and they start a business selling sandwiches. He keeps his Jewish identity secret, even as he tries to follow kosher rules. Always his dream is to return home. The characters are drawn with depth, especially the three kids, and the unsentimental story is honest about the grinding poverty and the prejudice among various immigrant groups. Most moving is the story of letting go, as Dom confronts the fact that Mama sent him away, and America is now his home. Connect this with Mary Auch's Ashes of Roses (2002), about Irish kids left alone in New York. Hazel RochmanCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

There have been plenty of books written about Jewish families escaping from Western Europe and making the grueling journey to America. In homeschooling my children I have seen a definite lack in children's fiction telling the story of immigration from other Jewish communities around the world. The King of Mulberry Street is the story of Biniamino, a young boy from Napoli, who is sent to America as a stowaway on a Cargo ship. Abandoned and alone, Biniamino wants nothing more than to return home to his family. He survives in the poverty stricken area of Five Points in Manhattan only due to his wits and his ability to make, and keep, friends. At the advice of his mother he keeps his Judaism a secret and observes his religion as best as he can.Napoli writes well and it

is easy to see the world from young Biniamino's eyes. Even in the poverty of his life in Napoli he is, at heart, a happy boy who loves his family. The trauma of being sent away is something he cannot face until the end of the book and he insists that it is all a mistake. He clings to the ethical and spiritual teaching from his Nonna (grandmother) and tries as hard as he can to keep the laws of Kashrut. As the book progresses, he grows and comes to accept that his mother may have meant to send him away and where he is may just be where he wants to be.The book is not perfect. Large swaths of the second half are spent discussing the mathematical calculations of the boys as they begin their own sandwich business - buying cheap in Five Points and selling dear on Wall Street. This does become dull after a while. Also, the end of the book has an extremely violent encounter with a Padrone. Napoli rushes through this episode when it is probably the most traumatic in the book.However, one topic she touches on that I found very important, is how Biniamino clings to his Judaism but cannot find comfort in participating in the rituals of an Ashkenazi Synagogue. There are definite differences in Sephardic and Ashkenazi customs and Yiddish is incomprehensible to most Sephardic Jews. I wish the author had gone deeper into this but the book is enough to trigger conversation and encourage research into the differences between the traditions within Judaism.I would not recommend this book for any child under 14. Besides the violence and abandonment of the hero, Biniaminos mother also barters her favors to a sailor in exchange for his allowing Beniamino to stowaway. If you are willing to discuss these issues it could be an excellent read for a younger child as well.

A very well written book. My son and I thoroughly enjoyed reading this.

Read this and loved it! Great for Tweens, too.

This is a gritty book for kids. I teach 7th grade, and we read it every year. The kids really like it, but it's intense in some places. It's scary and sad and happy all in one book. It's a legitimately well-written book that has excellent teaching elements on a variety of levels. It's rich in themes, and the plot is really great in the second half. The ending is a real mixed bag, and some kids don't like it, but many do. Overall, I highly recommend it for a 6th or 7th grade class English or Social Studies class.

This is a very gripping, realistic story about a young Italian boy whose mother puts him on a ship to America in 1892. Beniamino thinks his mother is on the ship, in a different part: but she isn't. She

has deliberately sent him off on his own to find a better life. The search for this life turns out to be difficult as Beniamino learns to live on the streets and in the immigrant communities of New York City. One of the things that keeps Beniamino alive is his desire to get back to his mother in Italy. But life in America changes the young boy, and he never returns. The ending is, though sad, realistic and believable in every sense.

Generally I don’t read children’s fiction, and I only got this book to satisfy my adult librarian daughter who suggested I would like it. She was certainly right. I don’t know what I thought authors were putting into children’s books, but I was surprised to find not only excellent writing, but a great story here. I am so glad to know that such books are not watered down to all sunshine and lolly pops. The young boy who finds himself thrust into this country alone in the early twentieth century faces hardships and heartbreak and lives to overcome these trials of life. There are lessons to be learned here and what a find place to get them--in a good book. I highly recommend this one.

if you want to get your son to read - this is the book!! written from a child’s point of view and voice. GREAT BOOK!!!

This book provided a unique immigrant experience. Worth reading and offers great discussion points on immigration, morals, friendship and survival.

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