

Title: Keesha's House
Author: Helen Frost
Date: 2003
Publisher: Frances Foster Books
Ages: 8th - 11th grades
Genre: Poetry/Verse Novel
Book talker: Stacey DiRenzo

About the author:

Helen Frost is a writing teacher in group homes and juvenile detentions. Keesha's House was her first novel for young adult readers. This book is an honor book for the Michael Printz award for excellence in young adult literature.

Notes:

This booktalk will be given as a PowerPoint presentation and while I am asking the questions in the beginning there will be pictures on the overhead screen of everyday teenagers. I will also explain to the students how this book is written in the many different poetic forms.

Book talk:

How many of you know someone who has become pregnant or gotten someone pregnant while they were still in school? If you do then you might know how scared and worried they were about their future.

How many of you know someone who is or was confused about their sexuality? Who can they tell? What will everyone think of them? Will their parents be supportive?

Although the characters in these poems are fictional, everything that happens to them has happened to someone, somewhere.

In the book Stephanie is a young girl who has just found out that she is pregnant and is scared to tell her parents. Jason is Stephanie's boyfriend and he is confused about what he is feeling for her and about giving up his opportunity to play basketball in college to raise a baby. These two teens are faced with hard decisions and consequences for their actions. Stephanie decides to runaway and stays with Keesha. Will she find the answers she needs at Keesha's house?

Harris has been trying to find a way to tell his parents that he is gay, but the words just do not seem to come out right. Harris was not ready for what would happen when his father found out the news. He has been disowned by his father and not allowed back in the house. Where would you go if you could not go home? Harris stays in his car for awhile then finds a home at Keesha's.

These are just a few experiences that are faced by seven teenagers in this book. Find out what happens to Katie who leaves her mothers home when her stepfather becomes abusive to her. Or Carmen who has been arrested again, this time for drinking and driving. And who is Keesha? Does Keesha live in a happy home that all these teenagers tend to run to when in trouble, or does Keesha have her own problems just like these teenagers?

Curriculum Connection:

This would be a great book to use during a poetry unit in English class. It is a quick read and most of it could be read as a read aloud in class. Many students are going to be able to relate to the issues that are faced by these teenagers. This will make the fact that the book is written in poetic form more appealing to the students

Another class that I would suggest this book for is a Health class. The book can be used as a prior reading to introduce the students into topics like teen pregnancy, sexuality issues, and abuse. In my school district the health teacher reads aloud to the class the first 10-15 minutes of the class, this would be a great book to read aloud.