

## Opinion: What Have Other People Thought About *Out of the Dust*?



**W**hat do you write when your assignment is to review *Out of the Dust*? Lots of good things! Ted Hipple from the magazine *The ALAN Review* loved *Out of the Dust* so much that he wrote, “Please read this book.” A reviewer from *The Five Owls* magazine called the novel “a literary groundbreaker as stunning as Oklahoma’s dust bowl recovery.”

What makes *Out of the Dust* so special? Many people point to Billie Jo’s character. Ted Hipple called Billie Jo “as memorable a heroine as you will meet in YA [young adult] literature.”

Others think it’s the use of free-verse poetry that makes *Out of the Dust* stand out. (See page 37 for more information about free verse.) Susan Dove Lempke from the magazine *Booklist* called the use of poetry “a superb choice.”

Karen Hesse’s descriptions of hardship, sadness, and hope have also won praise. Susan Dove Lempke wrote, “The story is bleak, but Hesse’s writing transcends [rises above] the gloom and transforms it into a powerfully compelling tale of a girl with enormous strength, courage, and love.”

*Out of the Dust* didn’t just earn good reviews. It won awards, too. Lots of them. Each year, several important groups work hard to

create lists of the best books that were published that year. *Out of the Dust* won a place on many of those lists. It was a *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year, a *Booklist* Editors' Choice, and an ALA (American Library Association) Notable Children's Book, to name just a few.

*Out of the Dust* also won the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction in 1998. This award is presented to one outstanding work of historical fiction each year. The book that is honored must be set in the "New World" and published in the United States.

Another award won by *Out of the Dust* was HUGE. It's the John Newbery Medal. Look for the gold medal printed on the front of your copy of *Out of the Dust*. The American Library Association awards the Newbery Medal once a year to the author who has made "the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children." The Newbery Medal earned *Out of the Dust* and Karen Hesse a great deal of attention.

### **Thinking about what others think of *Out of the Dust***

- Do you agree that Billie Jo is a memorable character? How does she compare with the characters in other books you've read?
- One *Out of the Dust* reviewer wrote, "Please read this book." Would you tell a friend to read *Out of the Dust*? Why or why not?

## Glossary



**H**ere are some important words and terms used in *Out of the Dust*. Understanding these words will make it easier to read the novel.

**etrothal** a mutual promise to marry

**CCC** Civilian Conservation Corps, a government program started in 1933. It was created to find jobs for young men ages seventeen to twenty-seven. The men worked in national parks and forests for nine months at a time.

**Dionne Quintuplets** the world's first-known healthy set of quintuplets. The five babies were born in Ontario, Canada, on May 28, 1934, and became world famous. They were taken from their parents and raised by their doctor until 1943, when they were returned to their parents.

**diversification** a variety of methods, as in planting different crops

**divining** a technique used to discover something by instinct, magic, or guessing

**dunes** sand hills made by the wind

**dust pneumonia** a serious infection of the lungs caused by dust

**FERA** Federal Emergency Relief Administration, a U.S. government program created to give money to city and state agencies to aid people who needed financial help

**festered** rotted, showing pus

**infantile paralysis** polio, an infectious viral disease that attacks the brain and spinal cord. Polio occurs mainly in children. In serious cases, it can cause paralysis. The disease is now easily prevented by a vaccine. Polio is short for poliomyelitis.

**maggoty** full of maggots, the larvae of certain flies. Maggots are found in decaying animal matter.

**migrant** to do with someone who moves around doing seasonal work

**mottled** If something is mottled, it is covered with patches of different colors.

**octave** the eight-note gap in a musical scale between a note and the next note of the same name above or below it.

**parched** very dry

**rabbit drive** In the 1930s, thousands of hungry jackrabbits that couldn't find food in the wild wandered into Dust Bowl towns. They fed on grass and crops. During rabbit drives, rabbits were herded into a fenced area to keep them from causing more damage.

**rag** a song, usually written in the ragtime style of music

**rapscallions** rascals

**riled** annoyed or irritated

**sod** the top layer of soil and the grass attached to it

**union suit** a one-piece undergarment once worn by men that is similar to long underwear

**whittled** reduced bit by bit

**writhe** to twist and turn around, as in pain