



★ **Kate's Ring**

Donna Grassby

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In Donna Grassby's moving debut, *Kate's Ring*, a thirteen-year-old girl tries to hold her family together through hardships and tragedy.

Kate is the oldest of six siblings. Her mother suffers from tuberculosis; her father is loving, but he is an alcoholic. Kate and her siblings are often neglected by their parents, and though their extended family tries to help, Kate still ends up taking on the role of her family's primary caretaker. It is a position that is far too much for a young girl to handle, even if she is willing to sacrifice her own hopes and dreams for her family.

Set in Nova Scotia in 1925, the book is brought to life with details about the local industries and the influence of the Catholic Church. Kate's maternal family lives in town, while her paternal family is in the country; the differences between their environments are vivid. Such differences help Kate learn that there can be more than one right way to do something and more than one right way to live. It is a crucial lesson that helps her mature past symbols like her best friend's coveted ring, which she at first mistakes for a sign of being grown up.

Kate's Ring is a beautiful story about a family struggling to deal with illness and loss. The adults in Kate's family cannot solve their problems or even agree on how to try. Still, the whole family rallies, and this ring of family support allows them all to emerge from their tragedies with hope. *Kate's Ring* is a triumphant and moving coming-of-age story.

CATHERINE THURESON (March/April 2019)

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