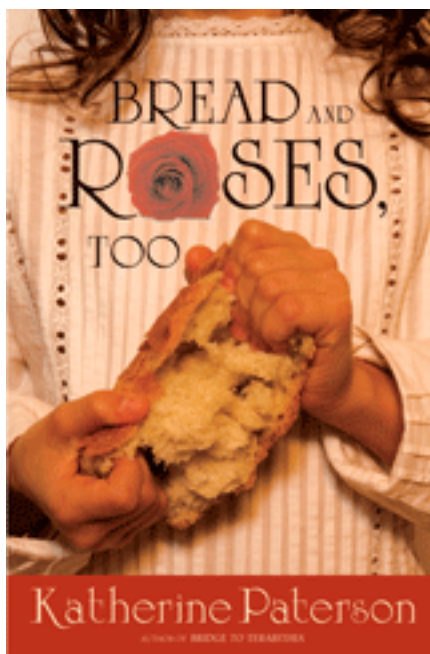


A Teacher's Guide



Bread and Roses, Too

by Katherine Paterson

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About the Book

Rosa Serutti just wants the books she needs to do her schoolwork. But books cost money, and her family doesn't have enough even to buy healthy food for her one-year-old brother. During the winter of 1912, Rosa's family and their neighbors struggle to survive on their jobs in the textile mills in the immigrant town of Lawrence, Massachusetts. When the mill owners demand more work for less pay, the mill workers decide they've had enough. Strike! Suddenly, Rosa has more to worry about than going to school. Her mother and older sister join the protest against unfair wages and working conditions; rumors of violence spread; the militia is called in; and money is more and more scarce. As the strike continues, Rosa becomes one of the many Lawrence children who are sent to live in other towns, where strike supporters will provide for them during the lean times. But Rosa doesn't go alone — she is joined by Jake Beale, a troubled boy who pretends to be her brother. Rosa's fears grow as she tries to cover for Jake, misses her family, and receives news of the intensifying labor strike back home.

Based on real events, here is a tale of family, courage, and community that conveys the power that everyday people have to help one another and change the world.

About the Author

Katherine Paterson's international fame rests not only on her widely acclaimed novels but also on her efforts to promote literacy in the United States and abroad. A two-time winner of the Newbery Medal and the National Book Award, she is the recipient of the 2006 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award and the 1998 Hans Christian Andersen Medal. She was recently given the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts by her home state of Vermont. Her novels for Clarion include *The Same Stuff as Stars* and *The Preacher's Boy*.

Mrs. Paterson lives in Barre, Vermont with her husband, and is the mother of four grown children and the grandmother of seven.

Questions for Discussion

1. What does the title of this novel refer to? Explain.
2. Read the dedication. What do you think a "living wage" is? Why do you imagine Katherine Paterson might have dedicated the book in this way?
3. How would you describe Rosa Serruti? What is important to her? Explain how you know this from the book. Compare and contrast her school day in Lawrence before the strike with your own experience of school.
4. How would you describe Jake Beale? Would you want to be friends with Jake? Explain why or why not. What three adjectives can be used to describe Jake?
5. How are Rosa and Jake's families similar and different? Are the Jarusalises part of Rosa's family? What role do families play in this story?
6. What are the workers angry about? Do you agree with their decision to strike?
7. Discuss some examples of prejudice and stereotypes in this novel. Why do you think the author included these?
8. Rosa has mixed feelings about the strike and is confused about whether to believe Joe Ettor or Miss Finch. At one point, Rosa is "caught up in the excitement of the mob." Why did she get caught up? Think of a time when a crowd swayed you. What happened? What do you think influenced you? How do you decide what to believe and whether to join a crowd or not?
9. How do the immigrant women support one another and their families? What is their role in the strike? Which woman in the story do you admire most? Explain your reasons.
10. This story is told from different perspectives, or points of view. Give some examples of how different characters view the same individual, such as Billy Wood, or an event, such as the strike. What explains these different perspectives?
11. Rosa notices that "the madder Mamma got, the less American she sounded." What does she mean? Rosa also says that she wants to change her name, marry a "real" American and have "real" American children. What makes someone a "real" American in Rosa's eyes?
12. Discuss the importance of the sign Rosa paints for the demonstration at the train station. Why does everyone in the room react to the saying on the sign the way they do? Do you agree with the meaning of "Bread and Roses, Too"? Explain.
13. Why are the children of strikers sent to New York City and Barre, Vermont? Why does Rosa cry about this situation, while Jake considers it an opportunity?

14. How would you describe Mr. Gerbati's approach to life? Why does Mr. Gerbati make Jake go with Mr. Duncan instead of having him arrested when he finds him breaking into the safe? In what way does Mr. Gerbati affect Jake, and in what way does Jake affect Mr. Gerbati?
15. Just as the strike brings about large-scale changes in terms of labor laws, it also changes individuals. Who changes in this story and how?
16. Throughout the story Rosa thinks about whether she is cowardly or brave. What do you think? Discuss examples of fear and bravery in the book.
17. Could this story take place today? Why or why not?

Activities

1. This story is based on actual history. Charge students with making a timeline of the major events of the strike in the novel. Have them annotate the timeline with explanations of the importance of each event. Then provide them with opportunities to research the Bread and Roses Strike of 1912 to find out which events in the novel are real.
2. Divide students into partners or small groups to research one aspect of the history in this novel. Possible research topics include immigration in the early 1900s; the Industrial Revolution; child labor; textile mills; the Bread and Roses Strike; labor union songs; Joe Ettor; Elizabeth Gurley Flynn; the Industrial Workers of the World; Lawrence, Massachusetts; and Barre, Vermont. Have each group create a presentation of the information they find to share with the rest of the class. Encourage students to use visuals and even recordings of labor songs, if possible.
3. Organize the class into teams in preparation for a debate over the following statement: "A strike is necessary." One team will be the mill owners; the other will be mill workers. Allow time for both sides to conduct research (including facts and perspectives in the novel) and encourage the debaters to speak — as much as they can — as if they were living in 1912. If your class is large, prepare for more than one debate.
4. Research the minimum wage today. Is it a living wage? What is the difference between minimum wage and living wage? After a class discussion of these questions, have students write letters to their local, state, or national representatives expressing their opinions about these topics. Guide students to include support for their opinions in these letters.
5. Provide students with lyrics for the song "We Shall Not Be Moved" that the women strikers sing in the story. Discuss what made the song important to the workers. Play the song for the class and come up with additional stanzas that would have been meaningful to the strikers and their cause. For example, some of the other stanzas are: "The union is behind us, we shall not be moved," "We will stand and fight together, we shall not be moved," and "We're fighting for our children, we shall not be moved." (One source for a sample of the song is www.smithsonianglobalsound.org. On the left-hand side of the screen you can enter the song title in the Quick Search. Look on the second page for the track result performed by Joe Glazer.) Interested students can research additional union songs that the mill workers sang and share them with the class.

- 6.** What feeds your soul? As the sign Rosa made said, the workers were striking not only to have enough food to eat. They also wanted to experience beauty in their lives. Ask students to think about Rosa's mother's explanation of what the strikers wanted. Provide them with materials to represent the meaning of "Bread and Roses, Too." This can be through art, music, poetry, dance, or woodworking. Cultural expressions of beauty and art could be a focus of students' efforts, just as the poetry of Robert Burns or Italian opera was meaningful to Scottish or Italian characters in the story.
- 7.** Immigrant women played a huge role in the success of the strike both in the novel and in history. Pair students up and have them choose a woman from the book who interests them — a fictional character, such as Mrs. Serutti, or a historical figure, such as Mrs. Annie Welzenbach. Guide students to use information from the story, from the historical note at the end of the book, and from additional research to create a dialogue of questions they would ask the person if they could and the answers the person would give. Encourage students to include questions about the strike as well as the role the women played. Have each pair decide who will be the interviewer and who will be the character to act out the dialogue for the rest of the class.
- 8.** The story references newspaper articles about the strike. Since the book doesn't relate the newspaper articles in full, ask students to write their own article that covers an important part or parts of the strike. Guide them to include when and where the situation they're writing about took place, who was involved, what happened, and why it happened. Students may use the book and the historical note in the back, as well as their own research.
- 9.** At the end of the novel, Rosa says she'll write to the Gerbatis and Sal. Ask students to write Rosa's first letter to the Gerbatis after she returns home, thinking about how the strike has affected her and her family. Then, tell the class to assume that Jake learns how to read and write and ask them to imagine him five years after the strike. Where is he and what is he doing? Have the students write a letter from Jake to Rosa five years after the strike telling her about his life.
- 10.** Mr. Gerbati respected his mentor, Mr. Corti, and appreciated what he learned from him. Charge students to think of someone they respect and have learned from. This person could be someone older, the same age, or younger. Ask them to consider what they value about their relationship with this person and write a letter to him or her expressing their appreciation.