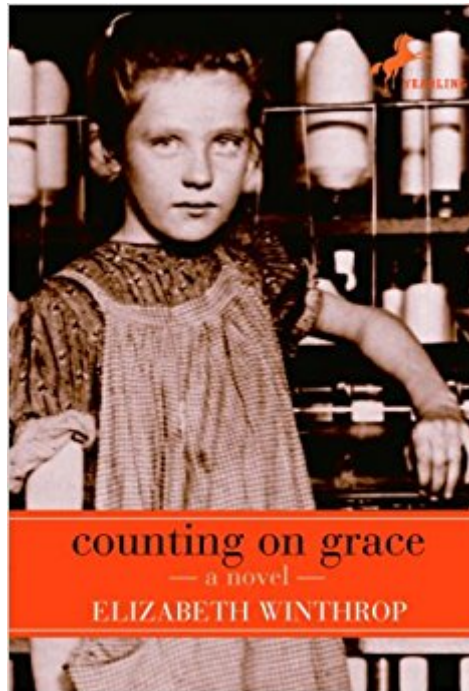




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Counting On Grace



Synopsis

1910. Pownal, Vermont. At 12, Grace and her best friend Arthur must leave school and go to work as a "doffers" on their mothers' looms in the mill. Grace's mother is the best worker, fast and powerful, and Grace desperately wants to help her. But she's left handed and doffing is a right-handed job. Grace's every mistake costs her mother, and the family. She only feels capable on Sundays, when she and Arthur receive special lessons from their teacher. Together they write a secret letter to the Child Labor Board about underage children working in Pownal. A few weeks later a man with a camera shows up. It is the famous reformer Lewis Hine, undercover, collecting evidence for the Child Labor Board. Grace's brief acquaintance with Hine and the photos he takes of her are a gift that changes her sense of herself, her future, and her family's future. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 5-8 Inspired by Lewis Hines haunting photograph of a French Canadian girl in Vermont in 1910, Winthrop's compelling story vividly captures the mill experience. Grace Forcier and her friend Arthur, both 12 and the best readers in the mill school, are forced to suspend their educations to doff bobbins for their mothers' frames in the spinning room. While this is

difficult for left-handed Grace, Arthur is desperate to escape the stuffy, sweaty, linty, noisy factory. Miss Lesley, their teacher, helps them write a letter to the National Child Labor Committee about underage kids, as young as eight, working in their mill. Grace understands the dilemma a response will cause. If the children don't work, the families won't have enough money to survive. Lewis Hine is the answer to the letter. He comes and photographs the mill rats, as the kids are called; no one will believe the conditions without pictures. Arthur, however, can wait no longer to carry out his escape plan. In a horrifying scene, he jams his right hand into the gearbox of the frame, painfully mangling it and losing two fingers. Miss Lesley's interference causes her to be fired, and she encourages Grace to be the substitute teacher, leaving readers with a sense that she will escape the mill and have a better life. Much information on early photography and the workings of the textile mills is conveyed, and history and fiction are woven seamlessly together in this beautifully written novel. Readers won't soon forget Grace.

— Connie Tyrrell Burns, Mahoney Middle School, South Portland, ME

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--This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Gr. 6-9. Inspired by a Lewis Hine photo of a child at work in a Vermont cotton mill in the early twentieth century, Winthrop imagines the story of Grace, 12, torn from her one-room schoolhouse and forced to work long hours in the textile mill as a "doffer," turning cotton into thread, alongside her mother, in the spinning room. The child-labor story is gripping--the dangerous working conditions, the work of activists who sought to publicize the abuse--and although sometimes the research overwhelms the story, Grace's present-tense narrative makes the history heartbreaking. Grace is no sweet victim. Furious at having to leave school and distressed by her failure to satisfy her French Canadian immigrant family, she quarrels with her best friend and smart ex-classmate, who deliberately injures himself on the machines to get back in school. The fiction is framed by notes about Hine and a bibliography that will lead readers to such books as Russell Freedman's *Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade against Child Labor* (1994) as well as to accounts of abuse today.

Hazel Rochman

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A historical novel written for middle-agers, vital enough to please even adults. Grace is a precocious little girl of a time before child labor laws were established. The look at work conditions, no matter how familiar we may be with them, is shocking. This, along with well-drawn and sympathetic characters (we love Grace) plus a good story, make it a winner.

Counting on Grace allows the reader to step into the world of child labor in the textile mills of the 1900's. Told through the young eyes of 11 year old Grace, we are privy to her thoughts, dreams and desires while slaving away in a cotton mill. She sacrifices a lot and the story itself leads us to love her and want to know her. Children of 8-9 and older will understand this story and be surprised at what happens at the end. Grace will be a forever friend.

This book is written for a young reader. I read it through for a connection with an Art project. I found it to be very engaging and interesting. I am eager to use the book with my students.

Loved the story and after reading the background info/inspiration for the author, did additional research on the photographer who took the cover photo. I want more!

love it

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Great story. Fell in love with the characters. I was rooting for Grace and Arthur the entire time. Very historically accurate.

Shows how important the child labor laws are & how desperate some people are for money.

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