



Great Joy

Kate DiCamillo , Bagram Ibatouline (Illustrator)

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In her first picture book, America's beloved storyteller Kate DiCamillo reunites with Bagram Ibatoulline to offer readers an unforgettable holiday gift.

It is just before Christmas when an organ grinder and monkey appear on the street corner outside Frances's apartment. Frances can see them from her window and, sometimes, when it's quiet, she can hear their music. In fact, Frances can't stop thinking about them, especially after she sees the man and his monkey sleeping outside on the cold street at midnight. When the day of the Christmas pageant arrives, and it's Frances's turn to speak, everyone waits silently. But all Frances can think about is the organ grinder's sad eyes — until, just in time, she finds the perfect words to share. Newbery Medalist Kate DiCamillo pairs once again with acclaimed artist Bagram Ibatoulline as she presents a timeless story of compassion and joy.

Great Joy Details

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Author : Kate DiCamillo , Bagram Ibatoulline (Illustrator)

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Calista says

Beautiful art. It has a warm golden glow about it that winter feels like. I was entranced. So, this is a Christmas book. I did not figure that out from the title alone. I simply ordered the title from the library as to read another Kate DiCamillo book. So that was a surprise. Although, it is set at Christmas and around a pageant it could be any snowy time really.

I felt like the story is incomplete. It is a mystery. All we know is a girl sees a man with an organ grinder and his monkey. She is curious about him. We all become curious about him. She invites him to her pageant and he does come. We never know anything about him or see the girl and him really interact. What happens. What will change in their lives because of this??? All mystery and who knows. So I felt this is the first act in a story. Where does the great joy come in????

Even with all the art, the story was good but unfinished and so I can only give it 3 stars. This is a beautiful book.

Kelsi says

Overall I thought that this was a beautiful story that focused on an important aspect of the holidays. The artwork was beautiful- the paintings that were used through out really captured the essence of the story and what the meaning behind it was. I loved that the story focused on the importance of being a friend to all. I think that this would be a great book to be read to children to help them understand the important message that goes along with this story. I thought that the ending was somewhat surprising but powerful. I thought that the overall length of the story was a little long for children to listen fully, but overall I would highly suggest this book to be read to children.

Kristen Herzog says

Loved the story Great Joy by Kate DiCamillo! What a good message for kids to read about, it is important to think about others and to not judge but ask questions about their situations. The pictures were absolutely beautiful and I actually really liked how they went with the time frame of when the story takes place. The little girl is so worried about the organ grinder and his monkey but kids today wouldn't even know what an organ grinder is. Excellent way to put a teachable moment into the reading of the story. The author did an excellent job of helping the reader really feel the little girls curiosity about the homeless man and her longing to make something right for him.

Tricia says

I really liked it when I read it to myself. But when I read it to my family, I sobbed like a baby.

Jaleesa says

This book is about a girl named Frances and the Christmas pageant she is in. While getting ready for the pageant she notices an organ grinder on the street corner and his pet monkey. She asks her mother about where he goes at night and her mother glosses over the subject. Frances goes on to invite him to her pageant and when he walks in the door she feels right saying her lines. I feel like this book glosses over the idea of homelessness. It doesn't spend any time discussing how he became homeless or how he survives. I do however like that the book shows the differences between how adults feel about homeless people and how children feel about them. Frances wants to invite the organ grinder in for dinner and is appalled that he has to sleep in the snow. Her mother tells her no repeatedly and changes the subject every time he comes up. I think this is an accurate depiction of how most parents would react in this situation. This book ends rather abruptly and could have delved deeper into what happened to the organ grinder after the pageant.

Rubi says

Another ok book.

The illustrations were beautiful, but I found the story kinda sad and pointless.

Yes, the girl (Frances) was kind, but nothing is really fixed for homeless musician and his monkey.

He just got a kind invitation to church :)

And there is no real satisfying ending (at least for me). It seems like the play ended and everyone ate and life went on like nothing happened. :/

Still, I wish more people would be like Frances instead of her mother. We need people like her in this world.

Laura says

The illustrations for this book are simply astounding, I loved looking at them, remembering all the magical moments I had as a child when I didn't know how to read and would glean what I could from the pictures. The story was very sweet and made me smile. Definitely read if you are a fan of Kate DiCamillo.

*Taken from my book reviews blog: <http://reviewsatmse.blogspot.com/2008...>

Amanda says

Each time I finish reading a book by Kate DiCamillo I say to myself, "This woman is a genius." And, this gentle picture book is DiCamillo at her best - tender, meaningful, and enlightening without even a hint of preachy judgment. Simply beautiful.

Linda Lipko says

The combination of a Christmas story of homelessness, a little girl who is concerned, and the inclusion and safety of a church, lends to an incredible tale, rich in meaning and significance at this time of year. With the added lush, stunningly beautiful, incredible illustrations of Bagram Ibatouline, of the 102 children's illustrated books I've read thus far, this is my favorite of 2014.

When a little girl notices a lonely organ grinder and his monkey standing on the street corner during a very cold day, she cannot help but wonder what happens to them during the night. Purposely staying awake, she waits and watches in the dark as she sees them alone, cold and sad.

The child asks her mother what will happen to them, which only provides frustration as the adult is consumed with day-to-day tasks. The setting appears to be WWII and there is an unspoken, but implied sense that the father is absent, perhaps away at war.

When her mother prepares her costume for the Christmas Eve pageant, the young girl once again seeks answers to the question regarding the fate of the man and his monkey in the cold of winter. As they leave their warm apartment, venturing into the chill and ice of December, she drops a coin into the cup of the monkey, and invites the organ grinder to attend church that evening.

Hopeful that the organ grinder will come to church to see her read her biblical lines regarding the birth of Jesus who will bring great joy, she finds she cannot say her words until she sees the door open and the organ grinder enter the sanctuary.

The organ grinder is welcomed after the service, and for this shining night he is happy. In a mere 32 pages, the author raises many issues. The ending is unclear and we are left to wonder what happens after that Christmas Eve night.

So often, we reach out to others over the holidays, forgetting the needs still unmet for the remainder of the year. So often, in our haste and daily wear and tear, we have little energy for others. It is through the eyes of a sensitive child that the story comes to life. It is through her compassion and questioning that lives are touched, if only for one evening filled with meaning and joy.

Kathryn says

Exquisite! I loved this book, so gentle and yet so powerful. Really captures the moment when a child realizes the injustice in the world, the lack of compassion--and how troubling that can be, especially when the grown-ups in life can't/won't fix it. And yet, she finds her own way to make some "great joy" in the end. The pictures are absolutely stunning and I really like the "old fashioned" element--I'm guessing '40s--in terms of the style of dress, hair-dos, cars, etc.

Judy says

There is always much warmth and good spirit in Kate DiCamillo's books. It's a hopeful tale, and it addresses both directly and indirectly the spirit of Christmas which should really be an all year thing... caring for one another and particularly those in need. It also raises a lot of issues that could be discussed in a classroom setting or at home, or simply provide a subject for personal reflection and self examination.

The depiction of the mother was, I felt, particularly telling. She is not an unsympathetic character, but like most of us, she is caught up in the details of schedule and routine and does not dare look at – front on – a more serious issue on her very doorstep. Instead she distracts, hurries, brushes over in every way she can, that problem that seems too difficult to deal with.

The problem is still there at the end, as it is still there in the real world. What are we going to do about it? Each and collectively?

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

I read this gem of a story on Christmas Eve, the perfect time for such a beautiful tale. Little Frances feels sorry for the organ grinder and his monkey, who sleep out on the streets in the cold. She tries to get her mother to invite him in for supper, but her mother says no. Finally, as they're heading to church on Christmas Eve, she manages to invite the organ grinder to her church--and the rest of the story will bring the tears to your eyes. Bagram Ibatoulline's illustrations really make this story, lending it an atmosphere of long ago with his soft colors. He seems to set it during World War II, judging from the cars, clothing, hair styles, and the picture of Frances' father in a uniform. The dust jacket indicates that this is Kate DiCamillo's first picture book, and it's a winner. Absolutely beautiful. Highly recommended for a Christmas Eve read!

Cynthia Egbert says

What a sweet Christmas story. A child shall lead them and this wee one sees with spiritual eyes what is happening around her. Kate DiCamillo hits it out of the park with this first attempt at a picture book. It could become a Christmas classic for our family.

Jessica says

This book is probably my favorite picture book that I have read so far. It gave me chills. It is a wonderful story that illustrates the difference that one person can make. Not only that, but it shows the pure and simple heart of a child. The world would be a much better place if we were as indiscriminating as the little girl in this story. Great joy is felt when we feel love toward one another, especially at Christmas time. The thing that I liked most about the artwork is the use of color. It really helped to convey the tone of the book. The pictures of the man asleep at night looked cold and wet while the picture of the pageant looked warm and inviting.

Melissa Izzo says

This book is a story of compassion at Christmas Time. It is a sweet story of a little girl who is curious where a homeless man goes at night. She has such care and concern for the man because it is snowing and cold. Her mother wants nothing to do with the man, but that doesn't stop her. To be so young and want to reach out and help someone you have never met just tugs at my heart. This was Kate DiCamillo's first picture book and I want her to write more of them! I have read this book across grade levels and it's amazing the thinking and inferring that comes from reading this book. I highly recommend this book around Christmas time or anytime.
