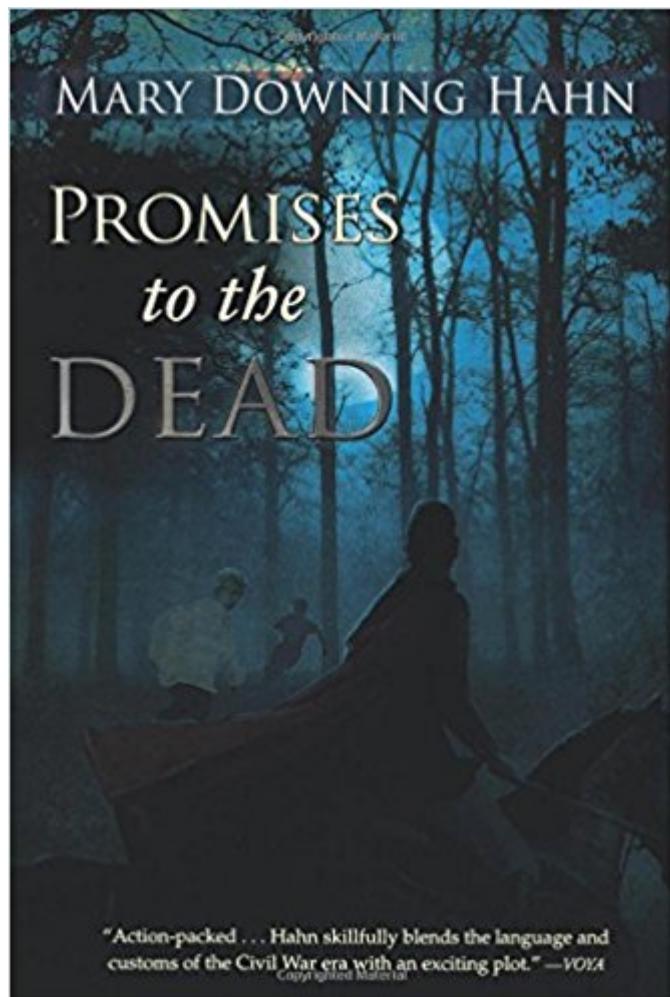


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Promises To The Dead



Synopsis

When Jesse went down to the marsh on that fateful day, he expected to find a turtle for terrapin soup. Instead, he comes across a dying slave woman who makes Jesse promise he'll take her young son, Perry, to a relative in Baltimore. Aiding and abetting a slave is against the law, and it also goes against everything Jesse has been taught to believe. But he can't break a promise to the dead, and, more important, he has to follow what he knows in his heart to be right. The journey is more treacherous than Jesse ever imagined. At the crossroads of a country about to plunge into civil war, danger lurks around every corner. Will these boys on the run ever find a safe haven? Includes an author's note.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Hahn's (Anna All Year Round) historical novel, set in a divided Maryland at the beginning of the Civil War, portrays an unconvincing tale of escape from slavery. The story begins with a tenuous premise: 12-year-old narrator Jesse stumbles on a desperate pregnant runaway captive (whom Jesse recognizes), Lydia, and her young son, Perry, fathered by her recently deceased master, Peregrine Baxter. She holds Jesse at knifepoint ("She'd just as soon kill you as look at you," Perry tells Jesse), yet as the woman is dying from childbirth, Jesse promises her that he'll deliver Perry to Peregrine Baxter's sister in Baltimore (though readers will question whether he'd find a welcome reception). While readers may suspend disbelief regarding Jesse's risk taking, they may not take the leap of faith that captives with even more to lose would help them so freely. For example, during

a riot inspired by the influx of Union soldiers in Baltimore (based on actual events), the "meanest and most determined slave-catcher in Talbot County" nabs Perry and knocks Jesse, with a pistol, on the head; Jesse faints in front of Judge Baxter's (Peregrine Baxter's father) residence, and the judge's staff secretly nurses him for weeks. The connection between Jesse and Perry is not fully developed, hence their relationship--as well as Jesse's Herculean efforts--seems hollow. Ages 10-14. (Apr.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 4-6-Despite some unlikely coincidences and superficial secondary characters, this is a reasonably exciting adventure story that integrates many historical details. When 12-year-old Jesse, a white Southerner, promises Lydia, a slave who dies while trying to escape, that he will take her young son, Perry, to relatives in Baltimore, he finds himself not only traveling farther than he's ever been, but caught up in the outbreak of the Civil War as well. The focus of the story is Jesse's realization about the evils of slavery, personified by the despicable Colonel Botfield, who is searching for the runaways. In the end, Jesse has learned to question much of what he has been taught. The African-American characters, while mostly brave and good, serve mainly to move the plot along. Some readers may find the facts that Perry's father was a white slave owner who seduced Lydia and that Colonel Botfield is indeed Lydia's father confusing. While these details add important historical information, they overload the plot at times. Still, the dangers that Jesse and Perry encounter, and the events they witness, from a riot in Baltimore to a skirmish with Union soldiers, make this an involving story that raises many of the issues that led to the Civil War. Crysse Jaffee, formerly at Newton Public Schools, MA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book was the best book I read by this author and so far I have read three books by this author. But this book was so fascinating to me that I read it one whole day I could put the book down, and this is a true story, in the back of the book it tells how this story was a true story that happens to the authors parents grandparents. This is the third book I read and it was amazing ever book I pick up by this author I end up loving it more than I loved the one before . I give this book five stars. One of my new ball time favorites.

I always like a good story with highlights of history. The beginning is something to check into. Thank you for the adventure

Loved everything about this novel: the dialect, the quest, the uncommon friendship. I would highly recommend this novel, and don't be dissuaded by the title and Hahn's other novels -- this isn't a ghost story.

I bought this for my daughter and have decided to read it myself. My daughter is 12 and loves this author and wants all her books. It's really good read so far!

For my grand daughter

As a middle school teacher, I am always looking for books which will catch the interest of my students. This book has danger, the mysterious, and a touch of history that will grab their attention.

Nice addition to our school library

This shows what it was like for slaves back then and it shows that no matter who you are you can make a difference in your life other people's lives. Still love Mary Downing Hahn

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