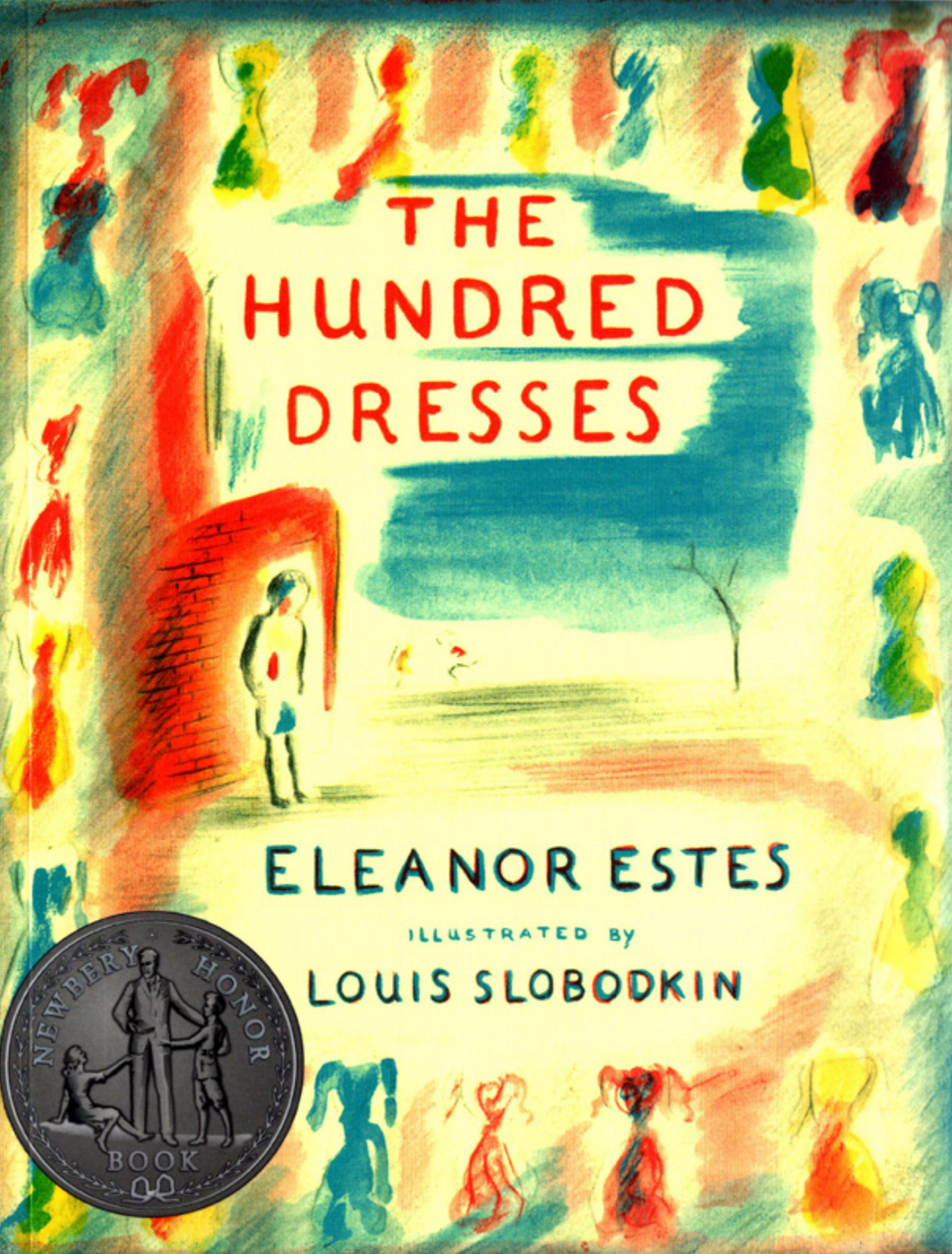


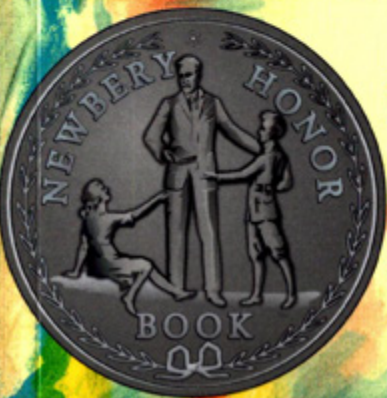


THE HUNDRED DRESSES

ELEANOR ESTES

ILLUSTRATED BY

LOUIS SLOBODKIN





This book belongs to



THE HUNDRED DRESSES

ELEANOR ESTES

ILLUSTRATED BY

LOUIS SLOBODKIN

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Includes a note from the author's daughter, Helena Estes.

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ALSO BY ELEANOR ESTES

Ginger Pye

(Newbery Medal Winner)

Pinky Pye

The Moffats

The Middle Moffat

(Newbery Honor Book)

Rufus M.

(Newbery Honor Book)

The Moffat Museum

The Alley

The Tunnel of Hugsy Goode

The Witch Family



A LETTER TO READERS



When I am asked about my mother's book *The Hundred Dresses*, I often wonder what to say. What more meaning could my words give to a book that, although written sixty years ago, continues to reach the hearts of children around the world? What answers could I give the children who still write letters of thanks and praise to my mother? "Is this a true story?" they ask. "Did this happen to you?" Well, most stories are based on both fact and fiction, and certainly this is true for *The Hundred Dresses*.

Years ago, I asked my mother why she had written the story. She told me about a classmate in her elementary school who had been taunted because she wore the same dress to school every day, and because her Polish name was unusual and difficult for many to pronounce. My mother was in school during World

War I, and Polish names were uncommon then in the small town of West Haven, Connecticut, where my mother grew up and where the story takes place. Her classmate wore the same dress to school each day because it was the only one she had. This little girl moved away to New York City in the middle of the school year, and my mother, as sometimes happens in real life, did not have the opportunity to tell her she was sorry.

My mother never forgot the little girl who had been so badly treated. She herself knew what it was like to be poor as a child, to always be cold in winter, to wear clothes passed down to her by her sister. But was this a reason to tease or be teased? Was it right to play with the feelings of one who was different?

What could she do so many years later, my mother wondered, to set things right—to reach out to the girl who had stood lonely and silent against the red brick wall of the school? Well,

she thought, the one thing she could do was to write her story. And so *The Hundred Dresses* was born. Was the character Maddie based on my mother? Probably. Did Wanda really have a hundred dresses at home? Certainly in her imagination, she did.

Decades later, *The Hundred Dresses* is still loved by children. Not long ago, I received a letter from a little girl in Southern California. She was especially moved by Wanda's ability to forgive. She wrote, "Seeing people for themselves, from the inside, is one lesson I learned from Wanda. She forgave both Peggy and Maddie, even though she had to put up with them every day."

I am grateful to all the children who continue to love this extraordinary story. May *The Hundred Dresses* live on for many, many more years!

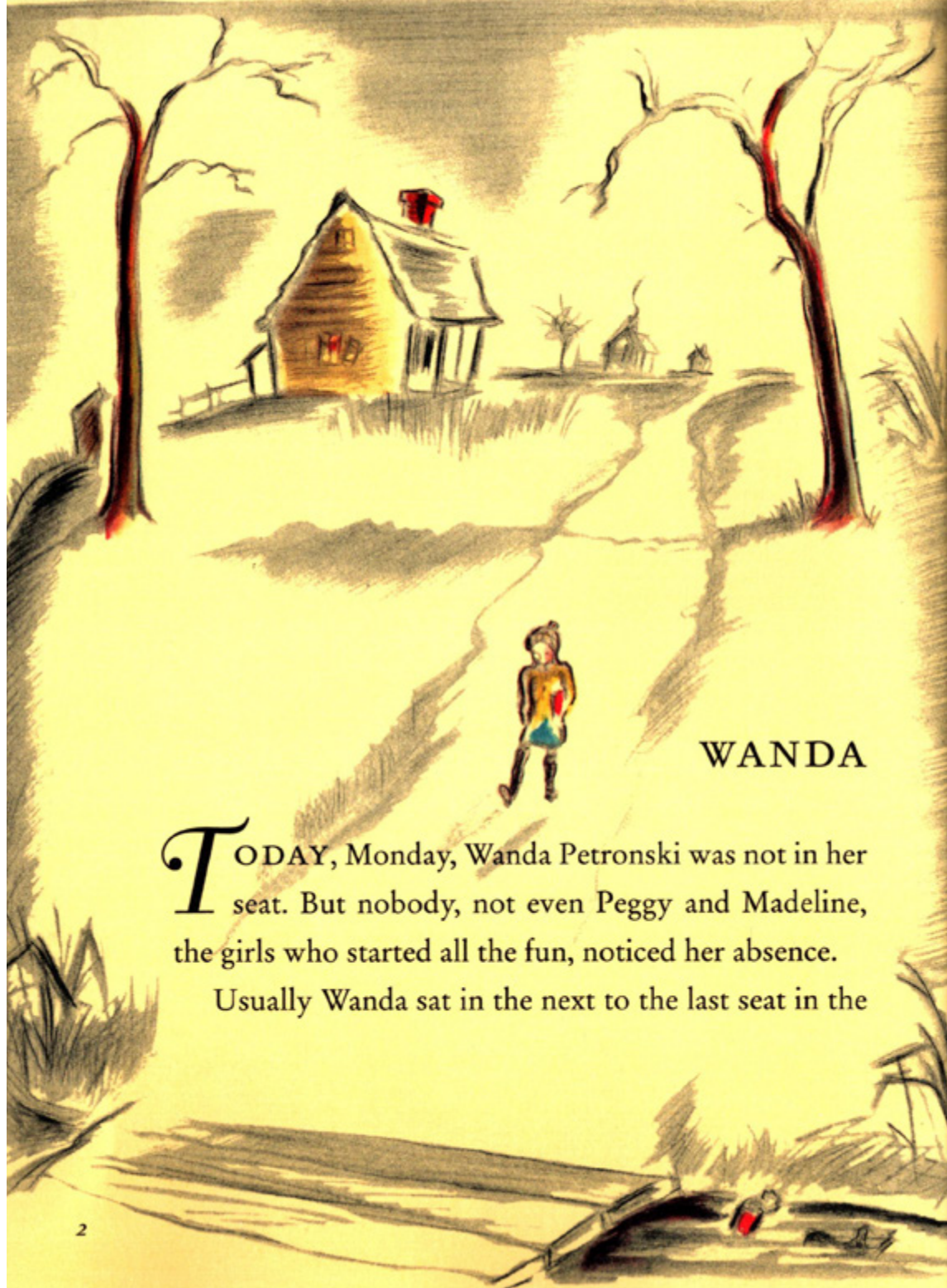
—*Helena Estes*



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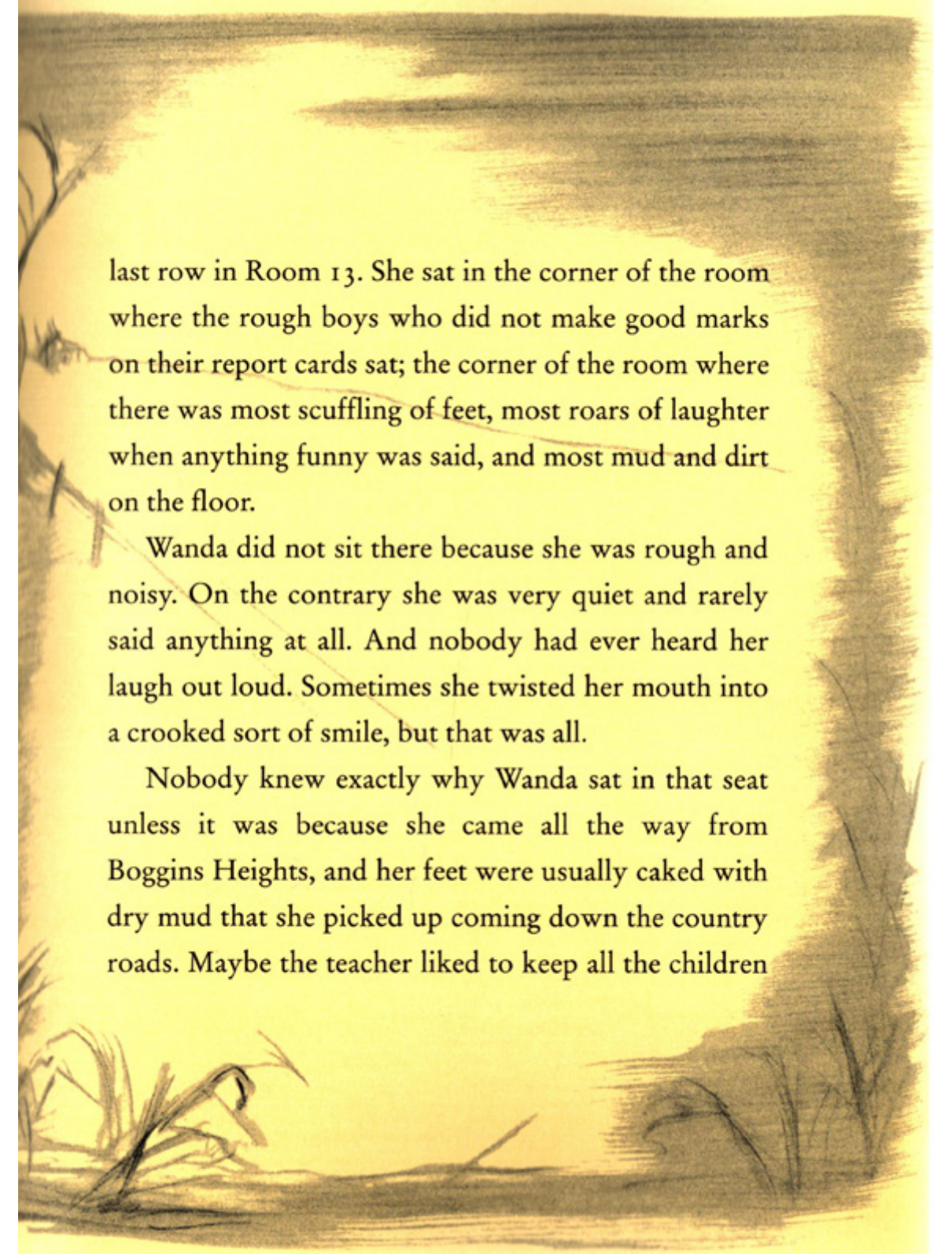
THE HUNDRED DRESSES



WANDA

TODAY, Monday, Wanda Petronski was not in her seat. But nobody, not even Peggy and Madeline, the girls who started all the fun, noticed her absence.

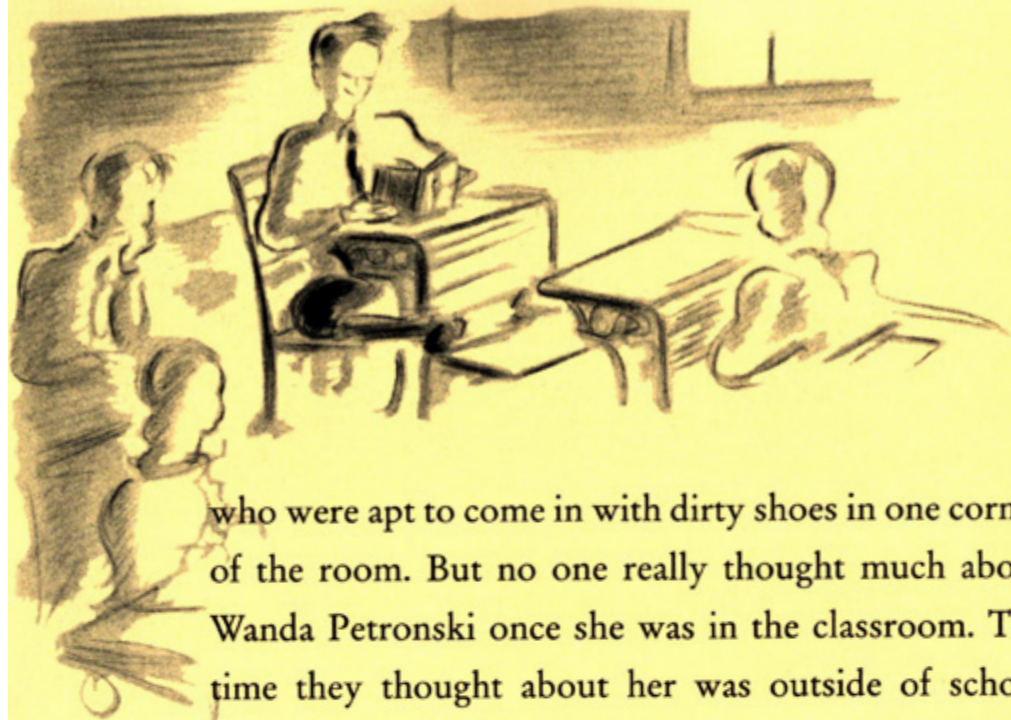
Usually Wanda sat in the next to the last seat in the



last row in Room 13. She sat in the corner of the room where the rough boys who did not make good marks on their report cards sat; the corner of the room where there was most scuffling of feet, most roars of laughter when anything funny was said, and most mud and dirt on the floor.

Wanda did not sit there because she was rough and noisy. On the contrary she was very quiet and rarely said anything at all. And nobody had ever heard her laugh out loud. Sometimes she twisted her mouth into a crooked sort of smile, but that was all.

Nobody knew exactly why Wanda sat in that seat unless it was because she came all the way from Boggins Heights, and her feet were usually caked with dry mud that she picked up coming down the country roads. Maybe the teacher liked to keep all the children



who were apt to come in with dirty shoes in one corner of the room. But no one really thought much about Wanda Petronski once she was in the classroom. The time they thought about her was outside of school hours, at noontime when they were coming back to school, or in the morning early before school began, when groups of two or three or even more would be talking and laughing on their way to the school yard.

Then sometimes they waited for Wanda—to have fun with her.

The next day, Tuesday, Wanda was not in school either. And nobody noticed her absence again, except the teacher and probably big Bill Byron, who sat in the

WANDA wears the same faded blue dress to school every day—yet she says she has one hundred beautiful dresses at home, “all lined up.” The other girls don’t believe it, and when Peggy starts a daily game of teasing Wanda about the hundred dresses, everyone joins in. Maddie, Peggy’s best friend, goes along with the game, but she secretly wonders whether she can find the courage to speak up in Wanda’s defense.

It’s not until Wanda fails to come to school one day that her classmates learn the truth about the hundred dresses—and Maddie and Peggy learn the meaning of kindness and generosity of spirit.

ELEANOR ESTES’s heartfelt story, a Newbery Honor Book and a beloved classic for more than sixty years, offers readers of all ages a timeless message of compassion and understanding.

With restored illustrations by Caldecott Medalist
Louis Slobodkin and a letter to readers
by Helena Estes, the daughter of the author.

“[*The Hundred Dresses*] will take its place with the books that endure.”—*Saturday Review*

“Written with rare intuition and pictured with warm sympathy and charm.”—*The Horn Book*

“No young person . . . will ever forget it.”—*Book Week*

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