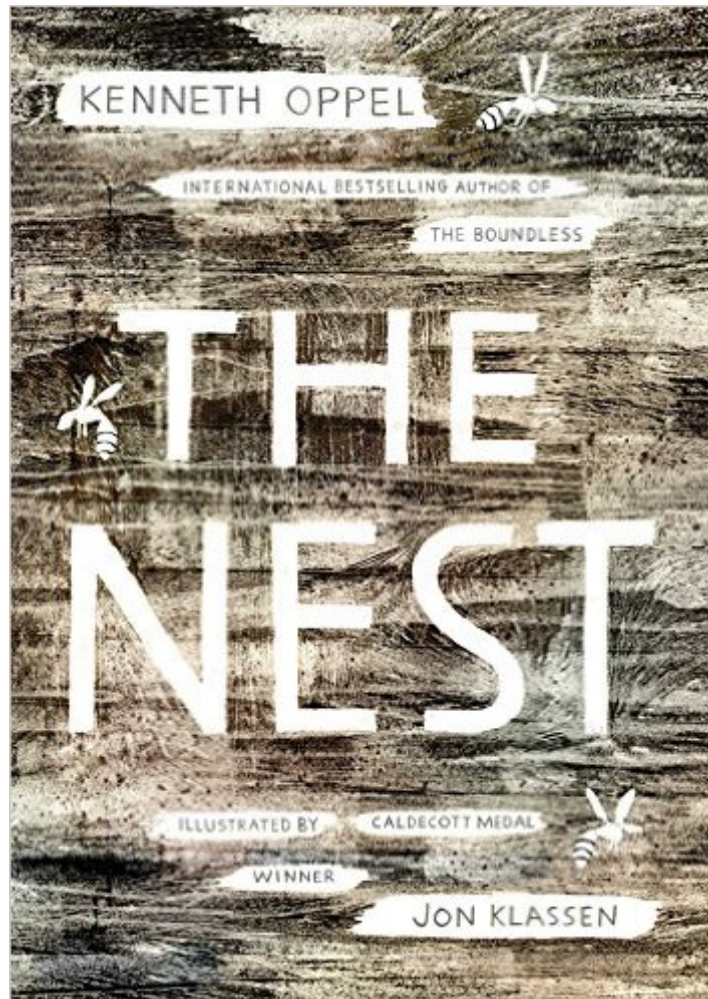


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# The Nest (Ala Notable Children's Books. Middle Readers)



## Synopsis

“The Nest leaves a lasting mark on the memory.” The New York Times Book Review Steve just wants to save his baby brother “but what will he lose in the bargain? Kenneth Oppel’s (Silverwing, The Boundless) haunting gothic tale for fans of Coraline, is one of the most acclaimed books of the year, receiving six starred reviews. Illustrations from Caldecott Medalist Jon Klassen. For some kids summer is a sun-soaked season of fun. But for Steve, it’s just another season of worries. Worries about his sick newborn baby brother who is fighting to survive, worries about his parents who are struggling to cope, even worries about the wasp’s nest looming ominously from the eaves. So when a mysterious wasp queen invades his dreams, offering to fix the baby, Steve thinks his prayers have been answered. All he has to do is say “Yes.” But “yes” is a powerful word. It is also a dangerous one. And once it is uttered, can it be taken back? Celebrated author Kenneth Oppel creates an eerie masterpiece in this compelling story that explores disability and diversity, fears and dreams, and what ultimately makes a family. Includes illustrations from celebrated artist Jon Klassen.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 640 (What’s this?)

Series: Ala Notable Children’s Books. Middle Readers

Hardcover: 256 pages

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Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars See all reviews (71 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #102,988 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #147 in Books > Children’s Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Special Needs #630 in Books > Children’s Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Spine-Chilling Horror #4240 in Books > Children’s Books > Action & Adventure

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Oh, how I love middle grade horror. It's a very specific breed of book, you know. Most people on the street might think of the Goosebumps books or similar ilk when they think of horror stories for the 10-year-old set, but that's just a small portion of what turns out to be a much greater, grander set of stories. Children's book horror takes on so many different forms. You have your post-apocalyptic, claustrophobic horrors, like *Z for Zachariah* by Robert C. O'Brien. You have your everyday-playthings-turned-evil tales like *Doll Bones* by Holly Black. You have your close family members turned evil stories ala *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman and *Wait Till Helen Comes* by Mary Downing Hahn. And then there are the horror stories that shoot for the moon. The ones that aren't afraid (no pun intended) to push the envelope a little. To lure you into a false sense of security before they unleash some true psychological scares. And the best ones are the ones that tie that horror into something larger than themselves. In Kenneth Oppel's *The Nest*, the author approaches us with a very simple idea. What if your desire to make everything better, everyone happier, released an unimaginable horror? What do you do? New babies are often cause for true celebration, but once in a while there are problems. Problems that render parents exhausted and helpless. Problems with the baby that go deep below the surface and touch every part of your life. For Steve, it feels like it's been a long time since his family was happy. So when the angels appear in his dream offering to help with the baby, he welcomes them. True, they don't say much specifically about what they can do. Not at the beginning, but why look a gift horse in the mouth? Anyway, there are other problems in Steve's life as well.

An extraordinary novel of self-discovery, involving mysticism and suspense, Kenneth Oppel's *The Nest* will keep you reading from the first page to the last. Is it possible to achieve perfection, or are everything and everyone flawed? Should one accept themselves and others for what or who they are? Can or should one attempt to change the future and, if so, is that future better than what would have been? *The Nest* addresses each of these questions in a sensitive, emotionally touching story. Steven is a fragile youth, prone to vivid dreams – on some nights, Mr. Nobody lurks at the end of his bed – and suffering from obsessive tendencies. He dreams of angels with gossamer wings; one tells him they have come because of the baby – his newly born brother who has a lot of things wrong. After an unusual wasp stings him, Steven thinks he is having conversations with the wasp queen and learns that there is a plan to correct the baby's problems. What follows becomes a nightmare of epic proportions and results in Steven exhibiting unexpected heroism. *The Nest* is an extremely personal novel, made more so by the first

person narrative and the challenges, of both Steven's emotional state and the baby's health, the characters face. Steven has internalized others' view of him. "Sometimes we aren't supposed to be the way we are | people don't like it | You've got to change |" • He says "My parents thought I was abnormal |" • Attempting to distance himself emotionally from his baby brother, Steven refers to him as "The Baby". It is only after he realizes the enormity of the events taking place that he begins to identify with and refer to "Theo". He recognizes the similarities between their situations and lives.

I was very surprised at how much I enjoyed this book! Now here's a middle grade story that actually appeals to all age groups and has so much depth and character development, but more than that, is smart and does not underestimate its readers. This is my first Kenneth Opiel, and I'm not quite sure if he's written anything else. I purchased it because I really enjoyed the synopsis, but when it arrived I was a little wary of the number of pages and font size. It looked a lot simpler than it turned out to be. I mean, wow, what a creepy book! I had no idea this was categorized as middle-grade horror. It really was an excellent read that pulls you in. Stephen's family is having some trouble, his baby brother was born with problems and the doctors don't think there's much they can do for his weak heart. His parents spend all their time with his brother or at the hospital, and he finds himself alone a large portion of the time, either with his younger sister, who is caught up in her own world or with the babysitter. There's also a knife sharpening man who drives by every so often that plays a role in the book, and of course, the strange dreams. After getting stung by a wasp, Stephen begins to have dreams of some sort of angel speaking to him every night. She talks to him about the baby and offers to help him get better...in fact, she promises Stephen that with her help, the baby can become "perfect". At first, Stephen does not take the dreams seriously, they're just dreams, right? So he doesn't ask too many questions, and does not take the questions asked to him by this "angel" too seriously either.

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