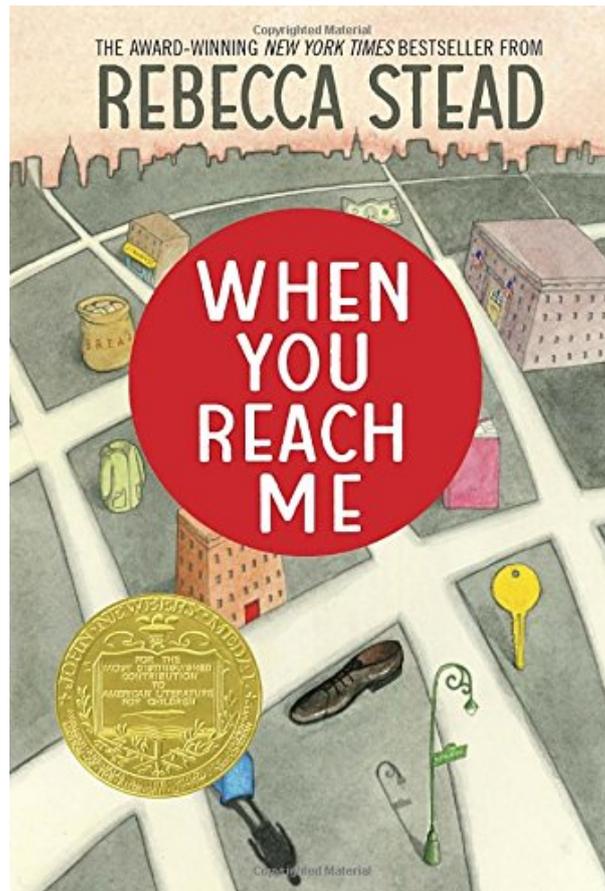
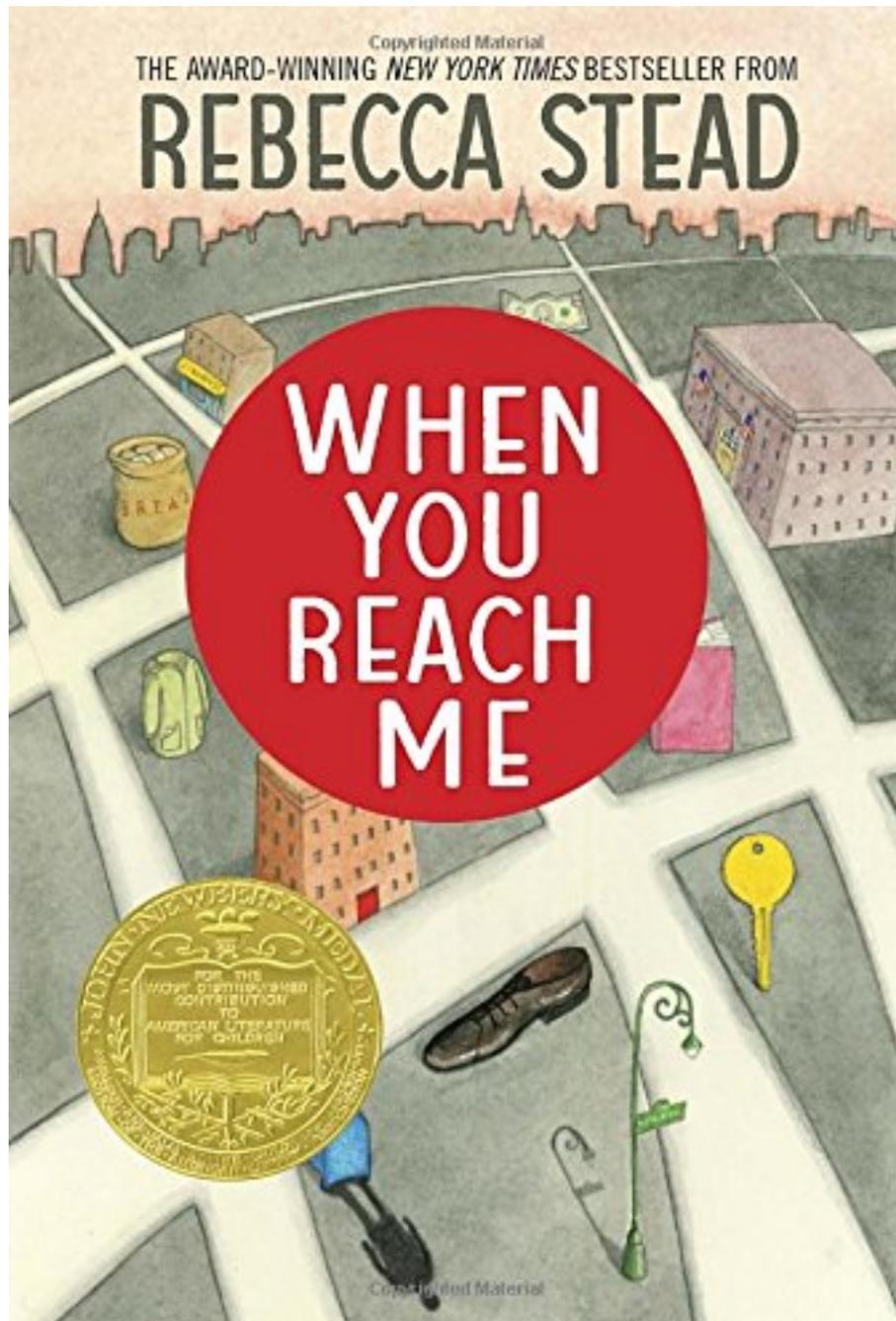


# WHEN YOU REACH ME (YEARLING NEWBERY) BY REBECCA STEAD



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We had the opportunity to chat with Rebecca Stead over e-mail about her second novel, *When You Reach Me*. Here's what Rebecca had to say about growing up in New York City, meeting Madeleine L'Engle, and how writing a novel is a lot like solving a puzzle.

Amazon.com: *When You Reach Me* captures Manhattan in the late 70s perfectly. Why did you choose to set a book for young readers today in the not-too-distant (but very different) past?

Rebecca Stead: I grew up in New York in the seventies and eighties. When I was in elementary school, I became acquainted with a mysterious sort of character, who I wanted to use for this story. When I began to write about him, I was suddenly remembering all kinds of details and moments and places from my own childhood and happily writing them into the book. And in this way the book's setting sort of rose up around the plot.

There's another reason I set the story in the past, which is that I wanted to show a world of kids with a great

deal of autonomy, and I wasn't sure that it would ring true in a modern New York setting. For better or for worse, life is different now.

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I was also really interested in what is "knowable." There's a certain number of people alive on this planet right now, and it's a simple number that anyone could write down or say aloud, and so in some sense that number exists as a truth, yet we can't know it. That's the kind of thing I thought about when I was Miranda's age.

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The chapter names are (mostly) the names of categories inspired by a game show called *The \$20,000 Pyramid*. As she tells her story, Miranda is helping her mother get ready to be a contestant on the show. They practice every night, and the game sort of seeps into her general thinking. The book is about all sorts of assumptions and categories we carry in our heads, so it felt right on that level, too.

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Rebecca Stead: They need the money! Part of what's happening for Miranda during this year is that she gets pushed outside of her formerly tiny world. Not far, but enough for her to start thinking about class, and the way other people live. She starts to see the way she lives in a new way, and has to deal with that. It's the beginning of that kind of awareness for her, and so the money they hope to win has a lot of meaning for her, but it's a meaning that changes.

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Amazon.com: Do you think latch-key kids like Miranda are any different today than they were back in the 70s? How about city kids versus suburban kids?

Rebecca Stead: I'm now raising two kids of my own in New York City, and I think a lot about the differences between today's "preteen experience" and the one I had. Kids are generally less independent now, I think. My friends and I had a lot more freedom than I let my own kids have. The community just doesn't support it anymore. Now we have 24-hour-a-day news and twenty-two different police dramas that make constant fear seem kind of reasonable. And the internet has changed everything, obviously. Kids socialize in cyberspace now. I've heard that the suburban experience has also changed a lot. My husband grew up in the suburbs and his parents hardly ever knew where he was at age twelve. Those days are gone, I think.

From School Library Journal

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From the Hardcover edition.

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**When You Reach Me (Yearling Newbery) By Rebecca Stead.** Is this your downtime? What will you do then? Having spare or spare time is quite impressive. You can do every little thing without force. Well, we mean you to save you couple of time to review this book *When You Reach Me (Yearling Newbery) By Rebecca Stead* This is a god book to accompany you in this downtime. You will certainly not be so tough to recognize something from this e-book *When You Reach Me (Yearling Newbery) By Rebecca Stead* More, it will help you to obtain much better information as well as experience. Also you are having the excellent works, reading this publication *When You Reach Me (Yearling Newbery) By Rebecca Stead* will not include your thoughts.

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# WHEN YOU REACH ME (YEARLING NEWBERY) BY REBECCA STEAD PDF

This remarkable novel holds a fantastic puzzle at its heart.

By sixth grade, Miranda and her best friend, Sal, know how to navigate their New York City neighborhood. They know where it's safe to go, and they know who to avoid. Like the crazy guy on the corner.

But things start to unravel. Sal gets punched by a kid on the street for what seems like no reason, and he shuts Miranda out of his life. The apartment key that Miranda's mom keeps hidden for emergencies is stolen. And then a mysterious note arrives, scrawled on a tiny slip of paper. The notes keep coming, and Miranda slowly realizes that whoever is leaving them knows things no one should know. Each message brings her closer to believing that only she can prevent a tragic death. Until the final note makes her think she's too late.

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- Published on: 2010-12-28
- Released on: 2010-12-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.60" h x .50" w x 5.18" l, 1.00 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 208 pages

## Features

- Weight - 0.325
- Depth - 7.65
- Width - 5.35
- Height - 0.56

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From the Hardcover edition.

Most helpful customer reviews

191 of 205 people found the following review helpful.

Realistic novel with a heart of fantasy

By Amy Tiemann

"When You Reach Me" is a rare gem of young adult fiction: an involving story whose subtle writing and characterization pull you in as much as the mystery that binds the story together. I liked the slice of life of 1979 New York as twelve-year old Miranda and her friends explore their neighborhood, giving us a bit of a Free-Range Kids perspective on days gone by.

Miranda gains and loses friends, and grapples with normal sixth-grade angst, but her worries take on a new twist when she discovers mysterious notes from someone who tries to convince her that he or she can see things that have not happened yet, adding fantasy and sci-fi into this realistic setting where you'd least expect it. Once the mystery has been solved, many readers will want to go back and read the story a second time to see how the pieces fit together in a new light.

In a thematic parallel, Miranda's experiences reflect her own shifting ability to see situations through other people's eyes. She also learns that giving or withholding small acts of kindness or meanness can have big consequences. What I love though is that the story is told in a way that does not feel at all preachy.

This is a great book for anyone ages 10 and up. It would be okay for younger kids, but those readers have so many choices that I would save "When You Reach Me" for age 10, because in my experience it's harder to find good books for that age. Also, the point of view of the story is a bit tricky (skillful, but unconventional), as Miranda writes to her mystery correspondent, which could be confusing for younger readers but an interesting challenge for older kids.

As an adult reader and I thoroughly enjoyed "When You Reach Me." (I am actually Miranda's "age," 11 in 1979, and I loved the part about her Mom's obsession with the \$20,000 Pyramid. Brought back memories.) In the story Miranda talks a lot about her favorite book, one that has captivated readers from the 1960's to today, *A Wrinkle in Time*, and I would recommend reading that first!

100 of 105 people found the following review helpful.

I'm a time traveler, too

By Susan Tunis

I have wanted to read this book ever since I heard librarian Nancy Pearl talk about it on NPR. She said the magic words: she said it was an homage to Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, one of my very favorite novels when I was a child a million years ago.

*A Wrinkle in Time* is also the favorite novel of 12-year-old Miranda, a sixth grader living in Manhattan in 1978. Miranda is rehearsing a story in her head. She needs to tell the story to a somewhat scary unknown person who's been leaving her hidden notes and appears to know the future. The first note says, "I am coming to save your friend's life and my own." It asks Miranda to write a letter relating the story of the events of the novel, and it asks that she deliver the letter by hand.

This is a bizarre and meaningless request when Miranda first reads it. But as the story unfolds, slowly, slowly, everything becomes clear. By the time you get to the end, you will understand everything that Miranda did.

Nancy Pearl and her librarian friends are predicting that *When You Reach Me* will win the Newberry Medal for "the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children." Let's see... The writing is excellent. The character's breathe life. The plotting is superlative. And one more thing--by the time I reached the end, I was truly moved. I don't know if it was the story's poignancy or if I was just feeling nostalgic or if it was something in between, but for a few hours this 41-year-old was 12 again. And if that's not time travel, I don't know what is.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Delightful book for readers of all ages

By drebbles

Miranda and Sal have been best friends for years but lately things are different – Sal stops talking to Miranda. Miranda makes other friends but she misses talking to Sal – especially when she starts getting mysterious notes from someone who seems to know things before they happen. The notes frighten Miranda, especially since the note writer says that someone close to her is in danger. Miranda tries to figure out who is leaving her the notes but the truth may be too much for her to believe.

Aimed at ages eight to twelve, “*When You Reach Me*” is a novel that will linger with you long after you have finished reading it. Author Rebecca Stead has created a world that is both very realistic and fantastical at the same time and makes it very believable. Miranda is a likable character who loves the book “*A Wrinkle in Time*” so much she reads it over and over again. She is twelve years old, still a child, but growing up quickly. Her sorrow over losing Sal as a friend is well done as is her growing relationships with the other kids in her class. The mystery of the notes is a good one – I don’t want to say too much in fear of spoiling it but this is the type of book where you may want to immediately reread it after finishing it so you can find all the clues Stead cleverly placed throughout the book.

“*When You Reach Me*” is a delightful book for readers of all ages.

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# WHEN YOU REACH ME (YEARLING NEWBERY) BY REBECCA STEAD PDF

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## Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best of the Month, July 2009: Shortly after sixth-grader Miranda and her best friend Sal part ways, for some inexplicable reason her once familiar world turns upside down. Maybe it's because she's caught up in reading *A Wrinkle in Time* and trying to understand time travel, or perhaps it's because she's been receiving mysterious notes which accurately predict the future. Rebecca Stead's poignant novel, *When You Reach Me*, captures the interior monologue and observations of kids who are starting to recognize and negotiate the complexities of friendship and family, class and identity. Set in New York City in 1979, the story takes its cue from beloved Manhattan tales for middle graders like E.L. Konigsburg's *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy*, and Norma Klein's *Mom the Wolfman and Me*. Like those earlier novels, *When You Reach Me* will stir the imaginations of young readers curious about day-to-day life in a big city. --Lauren Nemroff

## Amazon Exclusive: A Q&A with Rebecca Stead

We had the opportunity to chat with Rebecca Stead over e-mail about her second novel, *When You Reach Me*. Here's what Rebecca had to say about growing up in New York City, meeting Madeleine L'Engle, and how writing a novel is a lot like solving a puzzle.

Amazon.com: *When You Reach Me* captures Manhattan in the late 70s perfectly. Why did you choose to set a book for young readers today in the not-too-distant (but very different) past?

Rebecca Stead: I grew up in New York in the seventies and eighties. When I was in elementary school, I became acquainted with a mysterious sort of character, who I wanted to use for this story. When I began to write about him, I was suddenly remembering all kinds of details and moments and places from my own childhood and happily writing them into the book. And in this way the book's setting sort of rose up around the plot.

There's another reason I set the story in the past, which is that I wanted to show a world of kids with a great deal of autonomy, and I wasn't sure that it would ring true in a modern New York setting. For better or for worse, life is different now.

Amazon.com: Madeleine L'Engle's classic *A Wrinkle in Time* plays an important role in *When You Reach Me*. Why did you choose pay homage to this particular classic in your own book?

Rebecca Stead: I loved *A Wrinkle in Time* as a child. I didn't know why I loved it, and I didn't want to know why. I remember meeting Madeleine L'Engle once at a bookstore and just staring at her as if she were a magical person. What I love about L'Engle's book now is how it deals with so much fragile inner-human stuff at the same time that it takes on life's big questions. There's something fearless about this book.

It started out as a small detail in Miranda's story, a sort of talisman, and one I thought I would eventually jettison, because you can't just toss *A Wrinkle in Time* in there casually. But as my story went deeper, I saw that I didn't want to let the book go. I talked about it with my editor, Wendy Lamb, and to others close to the story. And what we decided was that if we were going to bring L'Engle's story in, we needed to make the book's relationship to Miranda's story stronger. So I went back to *A Wrinkle in Time* and read it again and again, trying to see it as different characters in my own story might (sounds crazy, but it's possible!). And those readings led to new connections.

Amazon.com: I love the way you incorporate hints of science fiction into the ordinary events of Miranda's life. What scientific possibilities (or realities) did you find most interesting growing up?

Rebecca Stead: I thought about time a lot when I was a kid. Not in a mystical way--it was just the passing of time, the idea of time stretching out forever, that interested me. I used to wonder, "What will my room look like on my thirtieth birthday? What will be the first words I say in the year 2000? When I'm forty, will I remember the 'me' I am now? Will I remember this moment?" I guess part of it was thinking about how we leave ourselves behind in a way, which I think we do, throughout our lives.

I was also really interested in what is "knowable." There's a certain number of people alive on this planet right now, and it's a simple number that anyone could write down or say aloud, and so in some sense that number exists as a truth, yet we can't know it. That's the kind of thing I thought about when I was Miranda's age.

Amazon.com: Each of the book's chapters is just a few pages in length, but each scene is fully drawn. Why did you decide to write the story in this way? And why do most of the chapters begin with the words "Things That..." or "Things On..."?

Rebecca Stead: A lot of my writing is fragmented for some reason. It must be something about the way my brain works. I used to write short stories, and this was the form they frequently took. When I started writing my first novel, *First Light*, a lot of the raw material was also fragmented, and I had to sort of develop them into traditional chapters, which was what worked best for that story. But *When You Reach Me* is a little like a puzzle, and I loved the challenge of smoothing these small pieces until the whole thing fit together just right.

The chapter names are (mostly) the names of categories inspired by a game show called *The \$20,000 Pyramid*. As she tells her story, Miranda is helping her mother get ready to be a contestant on the show. They practice every night, and the game sort of seeps into her general thinking. The book is about all sorts of assumptions and categories we carry in our heads, so it felt right on that level, too.

Amazon.com: At the very beginning of the novel, we learn that Miranda's mom is going to be a contestant on the 1970's TV game show *The \$20,000 Pyramid*. Without giving away the ending, why is this opportunity so important for them as a family?

Rebecca Stead: They need the money! Part of what's happening for Miranda during this year is that she gets pushed outside of her formerly tiny world. Not far, but enough for her to start thinking about class, and the way other people live. She starts to see the way she lives in a new way, and has to deal with that. It's the beginning of that kind of awareness for her, and so the money they hope to win has a lot of meaning for her,

but it's a meaning that changes.

Amazon.com: Is there some significance to the way that Miranda, her mom, and her mom's boyfriend Richard all prepare for the big event?

Rebecca Stead: They have a pretty nice system, which starts with their neighbor, Louisa, who scribbles down each day's Pyramid clues at her nursing job because she's the only one with access to a television at lunchtime. After her shift, she leaves the clues with Miranda, who copies them down on cards. Miranda and Richard take turns feeding clues to Miranda's mom while the other one keeps time. They operate as one kind of New York City family, which is probably the important thing.

Amazon.com: Why do Miranda and her friends Annemarie and Colin like working in Jimmy's sandwich shop during lunch hour? Especially since he doesn't pay them. Why don't they hang out at school instead?

Rebecca Stead: It doesn't feel like work to them. They are twelve, and all they want to do is see what it's like to be out in the world together. It's the most exciting thing ever, except when it's boring. Hanging out at school means sitting in the lunchroom, which is not fun. They couldn't even sit together there, because Colin would always be sitting with the boys.

Amazon.com: Do you think latch-key kids like Miranda are any different today than they were back in the 70s? How about city kids versus suburban kids?

Rebecca Stead: I'm now raising two kids of my own in New York City, and I think a lot about the differences between today's "preteen experience" and the one I had. Kids are generally less independent now, I think. My friends and I had a lot more freedom than I let my own kids have. The community just doesn't support it anymore. Now we have 24-hour-a-day news and twenty-two different police dramas that make constant fear seem kind of reasonable. And the internet has changed everything, obviously. Kids socialize in cyberspace now. I've heard that the suburban experience has also changed a lot. My husband grew up in the suburbs and his parents hardly ever knew where he was at age twelve. Those days are gone, I think.

From School Library Journal

Starred Review. Grade 5-8—Sixth-grader Miranda lives in 1978 New York City with her mother, and her life compass is Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*. When she receives a series of enigmatic notes that claim to want to save her life, she comes to believe that they are from someone who knows the future. Miranda spends considerable time observing a raving vagrant who her mother calls the laughing man and trying to find the connection between the notes and her everyday life. Discerning readers will realize the ties between Miranda's mystery and L'Engle's plot, but will enjoy hints of fantasy and descriptions of middle school dynamics. Stead's novel is as much about character as story. Miranda's voice rings true with its faltering attempts at maturity and observation. The story builds slowly, emerging naturally from a sturdy premise. As Miranda reminisces, the time sequencing is somewhat challenging, but in an intriguing way. The setting is consistently strong. The stores and even the streets—in Miranda's neighborhood act as physical entities and impact the plot in tangible ways. This unusual, thought-provoking mystery will appeal to several types of readers.—Caitlin Augusta, The Darien Library, CT

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Review

Starred Review, Kirkus Reviews, June 1, 2009:

"[W]hen all the sidewalk characters from Miranda's Manhattan world converge amid mind-blowing revelations and cunning details, teen readers will circle back to the beginning and say, 'Wow ... cool.'"

Starred Review, Booklist, June 1, 2009:

"[T]he mental gymnastics required of readers are invigorating; and the characters, children, and adults are honest bits of humanity no matter in what place or time their souls rest."

Starred Review, The Horn Book Magazine, July & August, 2009:

"Closing revelations are startling and satisfying but quietly made, their reverberations giving plenty of impetus for the reader to go back to the beginning and catch what was missed."

Starred Review, School Library Journal, July 2009:

"This unusual, thought-provoking mystery will appeal to several types of readers."

Starred Review, Publishers Weekly, June 22, 2009:

"It's easy to imagine readers studying Miranda's story as many times as she's read L'Engle's, and spending hours pondering the provocative questions it raises."

Review, People Magazine, July 13, 2009:

"Absorbing."

Review, The Wall Street Journal, July 17, 2009:

"Readers ... are likely to find themselves chewing over the details of this superb and intricate tale long afterward."

Review, The Washington Post Book World, July 15, 2009:

"Incandescent."

Review, The New York Times Book Review, August 16, 2009:

"Smart and mesmerizing."

From the Hardcover edition.

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