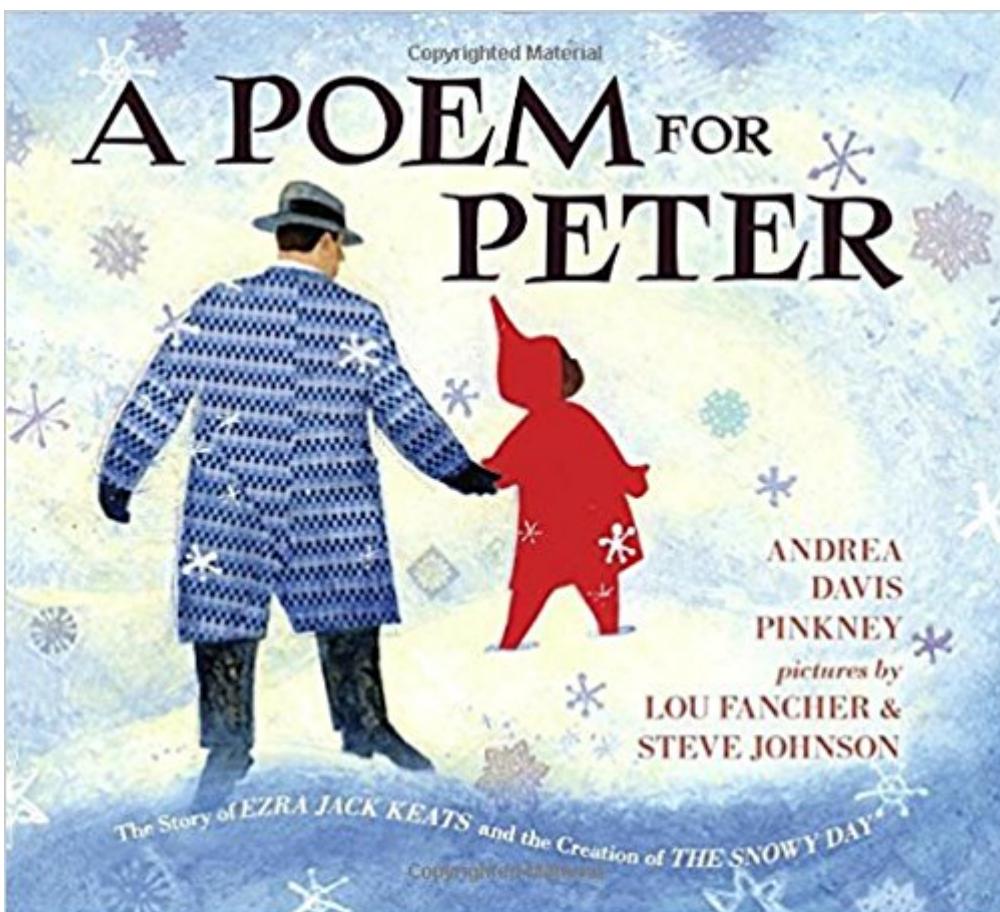


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# A Poem For Peter: The Story Of Ezra Jack Keats And The Creation Of The Snowy Day



## Synopsis

A celebration of the extraordinary life of Ezra Jack Keats, creator of *The Snowy Day*. The story of *The Snowy Day* begins more than one hundred years ago, when Ezra Jack Keats was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. The family were struggling Polish immigrants, and despite Keats' obvious talent, his father worried that Ezra's dream of being an artist was an unrealistic one. But Ezra was determined. By high school he was winning prizes and scholarships. Later, jobs followed with the WPA and Marvel comics. But it was many years before Keats' greatest dream was realized and he had the opportunity to write and illustrate his own book. For more than two decades, Ezra had kept pinned to his wall a series of photographs of an adorable African American child. In Keats' hands, the boy morphed into Peter, a boy in a red snowsuit, out enjoying the pristine snow; the book became *The Snowy Day*, winner of the Caldecott Medal, the first mainstream book to feature an African American child. It was also the first of many books featuring Peter and the children of his • and Keats' • neighborhood. Andrea Davis Pinkney's lyrical narrative tells the inspiring story of a boy who pursued a dream, and who, in turn, inspired generations of other dreamers.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0620 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 60 pages

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Product Dimensions: 9.8 x 0.5 x 10.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 27 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #100,686 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #44 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Literary #69 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Art #141 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Prejudice & Racism

Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

## Customer Reviews

Gr 2-4 •Pinkney dives into the life and work of Ezra Jack Keats, specifically focusing on *The Snowy Day* and his creation of the main character, Peter. Using poetry (what the author refers to as "collage verse"), mainly addressed to Peter, Pinkney pieces together Keats's biography, tracing spots where early versions or hints of Peter can be found, and reflects on what a monumental event the publication of the picture book was and still is. Students will learn about Keats's early life, his tireless dedication to provide for his immigrant family, his love and pursuit of art, and how he changed his name from Jacob (Jack) Ezra Katz to Ezra Jack Keats to avoid anti-Semitism in the United States after World War II. Pinkney's verse seamlessly weaves together story and fact to craft an intimate conversation about the artist's history and impact. ("Brown-sugar child,/when you and your hue/burst onto the scene,/all of us came out to play.") Readers familiar with Keats will notice allusions to his other works throughout. The illustrations complement the text, and Keats's own style, by using mixed-media collages of prints, fabrics, photos, and paint, all of which capture the liveliness of the urban setting and historical points. This uplifting telling ends with a discussion of the cultural importance of Peter and how Keats's vision paved the way for authors and artists to look for and include children of color in their work. **VERDICT** This celebration of a visionary children's book author and illustrator is a lovely addition for most collections. •Briana Moore, Elmont Memorial Library, NY

A Publishers Weekly Best Book of 2016 • Kirkus Reviews Best Book of the Year 2016 • Chicago Public Library Best Book of the Year 2016 • Sydney Taylor Award Honor Book • ALSC 2017 Notable Children's Books list pick • "Those who love Peter (and who does not?) will relish the illustrations, particularly that of Keats holding hands with Peter under a snow-dappled tree. More to the point, Pinkney lets readers know what Peter meant and still means as a milestone in inclusive children's literature. "He brought a world of white / suddenly alive with color." A loving and forceful reminder that Keats' Peter is our Peter • always." • Kirkus Reviews, starred review • "Fancher and Steve Johnson's acrylic, collage, and pencil illustrations seamlessly integrate images from Keats' books into their own art, which employs a style complementary to the originals. Equally important they skillfully represent Pinkney's lyrical text, which sometimes requires historical accuracy, magic realism, and nods to future possibilities, all within one spread . . . This is an important book." • Booklist, starred review • "Pinkney's poem sheds fascinating light on Keats' long-lived achievement." • Publishers Weekly, starred review • "Pinkney's verse seamlessly weaves together story and fact to

craft an intimate conversation about the artist's history and impact . . .

Lovely." *Booklist* "In lively verse, Pinkney presents a picture book biography of Ezra Jack Keats . . . The resonances are immediate and cathartic. Fancher and Johnson, who, like Keats, are known for their collage illustrations, thoughtfully incorporate Snowy Day motifs and other images from Peter's world along with photos and additional archival material; the color palette and textures, too, effectively pay homage to Keats's work." *The Horn Book* "A heartfelt and thoughtful look at an artist's growth and a single individual's effect on a genre." *BCCB*

Ezra Jack Keats' *The Snowy Day* helped open the door to children's books being published with diverse main characters. While the lack of such diversity remains a problem, the numbers of such books being published continues to grow. In beautiful poetic language, Andrea Davis Pinkney introduces the reader to the man behind the book. I didn't even know that Keats had changed his name until reading this book. I loved getting a glimpse into the man who dared to take a chance, who saw a picture of a cute African-American boy and hung on to it because it touched him. And then 20-years down the road using that photograph as inspiration when creating his first children's picture book. It was sweet reading about the encouragement Ezra (Jack) received from his teachers and his concerned father regarding his passion for art. Despite serious reservations about his son being able to support himself with art, he couldn't deny his son the chance to do what he loved. And Keats continued to pursue that passion despite the discrimination (he was a Jew) and life challenges that came his way. The gorgeous illustrations beautifully complement the lyrical verse that both addresses Keats life and references Peter (The Snowy Day's main character). The wonderful combination of text and illustrations makes for a book that is a work of art unto itself.

Such an incredibly beautiful book. The text dances off your tongue as you read it aloud. This is easily my favorite book by Ms. Pinkney yet, and the illustrations are captivating as well! It's absolutely worth owning a hardcover of this one.

Andrea Pinkney's unique tribute to Ezra Jack Keats further immortalizes the visionary he was. Pinkney's poetic narrative lingers in poignant, solitary eulogistic honor to the works and the characters of Keats' picture books.

Andrea Pinkney does a beautiful job of sharing this awesome story. Peter has effected so many

children. It's a wonderful book.

Nice to know what inspired Mr. Keats to write what was, at the time, a groundbreaking storybook, since it featured an African-American boy enjoying a snowy day. It's neat to know the story behind the story.

One of my sons favorite books is a Snowy Day, while this is a bit advanced for him I enjoyed learning more about one of his favorite stories. He looked at all the pictures!

A warm and wonderful tribute to Ezra Jack Keats, an author/illustrator who was well ahead of his time in his stories of inner city neighborhoods. The illustrations in this volume are very reminiscent of Keat's own illustrations. Beautiful.

This is wonderful book about an incredible author and artist who is a legend in the history of children's literature.

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