

# Summary of bread and roses too



The novel, *Bread and Roses Too*, is a story written by Katherine Paterson in 2006. This book takes you through the hard life of a young child, named Rosa, during the Bread and Roses strike of the mill workers of 1912. This story took place in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and displays the different hardships that had to be overcome the Bread and Roses Strike. Rosa is a young child who is living through the highest peaks of the strike of the mill workers, and she is not sure what to think of it. Confused by all the commotion, she stays close to her most authoritative figure in her life, her mother.

When Rosa figures out that her mother is approving and supporting this strike, Rosa has concerns for her mother and why she is doing what she is doing. In response, Rosa creates her own strike against going to school to show her mother that if she continues to strike, then Rosa will continue not to go to school. Working and getting a good education were two very important things Rosa's family valued, so it seemed very easy to Rosa that she would be able to get her mom back to working by striking against going to school.

When this didn't even make Rosa's mother think about going back to work, Rosa realized this is a much bigger problem than she first imagined. Throughout the story, Rosa meets different people and friends that would help her outlast the rough and dangerous conditions in Lawrence during the Bread and Roses strike of 1912. Rosa will try to find what is best for her, her friends, and most importantly her family. A character in this story that was one of my favorites is Jake. Jake is also a young child, but has so true family to go home to everyday.

He barely provided with enough clothes, food, and shelter to live his own everyday life. Jake is a self-reliant kid who finds himself stealing many things for his own good. In my opinion, for the situation Jake is in, and the reason for why he steals, I don't see him as a bad kid for stealing. In my eyes, he is a bad influence to others, but not a bad person inside. I like Jake a lot because he doesn't bring himself down because of his rough conditions, he works a full time job and gets decent money out of it.

This shows he is hard working and not a lazy kid, but when you figure out that his dad beats him and takes the money Jake earns at work to buy alcohol, you understand why Jake is the way he is. His father provides him with a shack as a shelter, but on most nights Jake spends his nights sleeping in a trash can. To me, this shows Jake's great maturity for his age accepting the conditions he is faced with. In my opinion, this also shows his toughness and brevity to endure these rough situations that he is forced to be in the middle of.

A part in the book that I found very symbolic of a theme was when Jake was caught by Mr. Gerbati stealing out of his business's money safe. Although Mr. Gerbati was very upset, from my point of view, it seemed as if he understood why Jake was doing something like that. Mr. Gerbati was very firm with his voice, but told Jake he was willing to take care of him. In my opinion, this is the beginning of a very important recurring theme in this story, transformation. An important theme in this book that the character of Jake displays very well is transformation.

Through out the book, you see Mr. Gerbati take Jake through a “transformation journey” from stealing to stay alive, to becoming the son figure that Mr. Gerbati once had. Jake found a much better, healthier, and more stable father figure to live by everyday after meeting Mr. Gerbati, and being cared for by him. That is one example of the theme transformation in this novel. Another example of transformation in this story was the actions taken for the strike against the owners of the mill buildings. The first immediate actions taken for the strike was the workers not showing up to there daily jobs.

As the strike progressed through out the book, it developed into marching bands of people chanting with picket signs. As the strike continued the rebellion transformed into more and more extreme protests. The strike continued to be very violent and dangerous, the people thought it would be best to send the children away on trains for the duration of the strike. They believed it was safer to send the kids on trains that brought them to Vermont and New York than to stay in Lawrence during the strike. Characters like Jake thought this was a good idea because he thought it allowed him to start a completely new life.

It was seen as a new opportunity to start over. For Rosa, she was extremely nervous, and felt content with her family at home. There were many opinions about sending the children away, but it was going to be done no matter what. After the children left, not only were the protests transforming and becoming more dangerous, but also the people holding them were developing into people they originally weren't. Their attitudes towards life, and work transformed along with all other piers rebelling together.

Through out this novel, in my opinion, I found transformation to be an extremely important theme and also recurring. It played a big part bringing out the good in people, but also the bad. That is why I believe transformation is so important for this story. Another character that had a large role in this story was Rosa. Rosa is also a young child who is a daughter of an Italian mother who is on strike. Rosa watches her mom participate and encourage the violence for the strike, and Rosa is very confused by this act of striking.

As Rosa learns more about what striking really is, she becomes apart of it and helps her mom with the easier things in a strike, for example, making picket signs. All the Italian women were sitting together trying to think of something to put on their signs to get their point across. Rosa came up with the idea of putting “ Bread and Roses” on the picket sign. The bread was acting as the symbol of life, and the roses acted as the want for more than what they have. Rosa didn’t want this to be taken literally, she thought more of it as a symbolic saying.

From my perspective, this incident brought another key theme into play. This part of the story brought the theme of making something simple into something great. Being a young child like Rosa is a very hard spot to be in to fully understand why there is a strike, or what is a strike in general. She took what she knew, which was something very simple, and turned it into the exact message the Italian women were looking for to advertise during their strike. This simple message developed into being the main saying through out the entire strike.

In my opinion, Rosa's simple intelligence displays this theme very well. Rosa was a big part in this story, and another one of my favorite characters in this novel. In conclusion, I did enjoy this book very much from the standpoint that it was very easy to connect to the setting of the book. Even though nearly one-hundred years later after the strike in Lawrence, I still see some conditions described in the book. That aspect also made this book easy to connect with. One thing that I like the best about this book rather than *Scat* and *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* is the characters.

Jake and Rosa are two characters that display the rough hardships during the strike as a young child very well, and made it easy as a reader, in my opinion, to sympathize with the characters. I thought that this book was a very historical and interesting book that I would recommend to anyone who enjoys learning more about the experiences people went through in our past history. Having the setting of the book be where I go to school every day made this novel even more interesting to me. It also made it much easier to relate what the characters went through seeing the setting they lived in very often.

Another aspect that I really enjoyed about this book is the way the author put each character through different hardships. This really displayed how many obstacles needed to be overcome by every person during the strike. This aspect of the book also showed the various ways these characters accomplished these tough tasks. I enjoyed the story, characters, and plot of this book and would read it again any day. Those are just some aspects of the many in *Bread and Roses Too* that I picked up on, and enjoyed reading about.