Hi! My name is Jaden, and I am reviewing the book “Letters from Rifka,” by Karen Hesse.

It is 1919. A 12-year-old girl named Rifka is sending letters to her cousin, Tovah, about how she, her parents and two brothers had to flee their home in Berdichev, Russia, because of worsening persecution of Jews. After they escape, they head to Poland, and then to Belgium in hopes of making it to America. But before they can travel to America, Rifka catches ringworm, and isn’t permitted to join her family as they leave Antwerp. After a year, she is healed, yet her hair hasn’t grown back. She boards a ship for America, but when she arrives at Ellis Island in New York City, her lack of hair causes the authorities to quarantine her. Rifka keeps a scarf and a hat on at all times, and when her head itches, she fears that the ringworm has returned. But when the officials become suspicious, she’s forced to take off the scarf and hat, and realizes that the itching was just her hair growing back. Rifka is allowed to leave Ellis Island and rejoin her family.

Rifka and her family had been persecuted because they are Jewish. We see the family endure harsh treatment, get split up, but in the end they are together again in America. I liked how even though Rifka went through hard times, she came out on top.

I enjoyed “Letters from Rifka” because it’s fun to watch Rifka travel and grow as a person. I recommend it to readers who like stories about journeys or who like a diary kind of format.