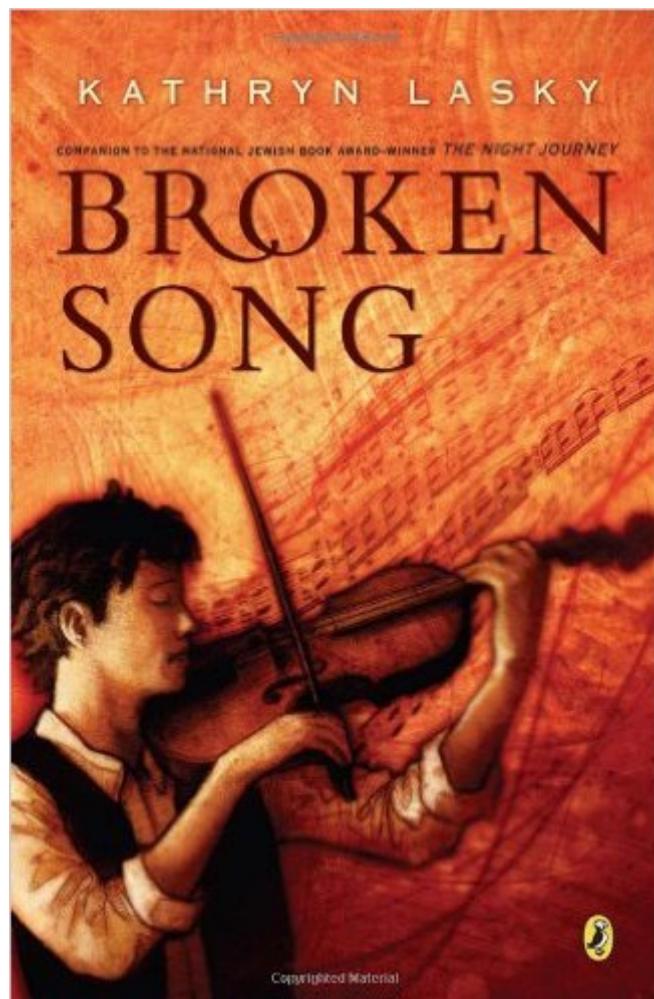


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# Broken Song



## Synopsis

The year is 1897, and gifted violinist Reuven Bloom is fifteen years old. Life for the Jews in Russia is very hard. First Reuven's best friend is captured to serve in the Tsar's army, and then his parents and older sister are murdered. Reuven's dreams of music must be set aside. Now he has only one goal: escape. With his baby sister strapped to his back, Reuven sets off toward an unknown freedom. His journey takes him first across Russia, and then ultimately to America. Readers will remember Reuven as the revolutionary who helped Sashie and her family flee from Russia in *The Night Journey*. In *Broken Song*, Reuven's own powerful story unfolds.

## Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Puffin Books; Reprint edition (February 15, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0142407410

ISBN-13: 978-0142407417

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.4 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (6 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,646,537 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #76 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Jewish #855 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Siblings #926 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Europe

## Customer Reviews

As a follow-up to her National Jewish Book Award-winner *THE NIGHT JOURNEY*, author Kathryn Lasky has written a companion novel titled *BROKEN SONG* --- a fictional narrative based on the early life of her grandfather, Joseph Lasky, at the turn of the 20th century. Broken out into four distinct sections (Russia: 1897; Russia: 1900; America, Ellis Island, New York: 1904; and Epilogue), this moving account of a young musician and his eight-year journey to escape his oppressive, anti-Semitic Russian homeland and find freedom in America, not only entertains, but also addresses a number of important issues that are still relevant in today's worn-torn society, in language that is suitable for middle-grade readers. Russia: 1897. Fifteen-year-old Reuven Bloom and his family live in the Pale of Settlement --- the "Jewish area" of Russia consisting of twenty-five provinces that include Ukraine, Lithuania, Belorussia, Crimea, and part of Poland. Life in the Pale is less than idyllic as supplies are minimal and the threat of attack by the Cossacks is constant. Despite these

setbacks, however, the Blooms have managed to build a closely-knit family unit fortified by trust, religious faith, and a strong dependence on the community. Reuven's devotion to playing the violin is outdone only by the love he feels for his family. But on the sixth night of Hanukkah, when the village is ransacked and his family is brutally murdered in front of his eyes, Reuven and his baby sister, Rachel, must leave all they know and embark on a treacherous journey that will hopefully lead them to safety. Russia: 1900. Following a number of life-threatening encounters and just as many narrow escapes, Reuven and his sister are miraculously united with their cousin, Lovotz Sperling, a well-known and respected leader of the Bund --- the *Algemayner Yidisher Arbayer* of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, also known as the Jewish Worker's Federation. Taking Reuven and Rachel under his wing, Lovotz provides them with shelter and promises to send them to America along with his wife and children. But when Lovotz is murdered, Reuven makes a difficult decision to sacrifice his own freedom and his love for music in order to continue Lovotz's work as a revolutionary firebrand. Over the course of the next few years, Reuven climbs the ranks to become one of the Bund's greatest assets and a key player in the fight against Jewish persecution. America, Ellis Island, New York: 1904/Epilogue. In 1904, Reuven is ultimately reunited with Rachel and Lovotz's family in America. In time, he falls in love, gets married, and begins playing the violin again as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic. At the novel's conclusion, Reuven finally has risen above his past and attained the three things he's always wanted: freedom, fame, and a family. Music references frequent the pages, and a brief Historical Note is included for context. There are moments (especially towards the end) where the storytelling feels a bit too forced --- the ends too nicely tied --- which may frustrate some readers. However, as a whole, *BROKEN SONG* reads like a bracing adventure story, supported by a well-balanced fusion of actual historic events and Lasky's imaginative spin on her own family's background. --- Reviewed by Alexis Burling

This is a juvenile book that is appealing for an adult too. K. Lasky has written the story of how her grandfather escaped being slaughtered by cossacks during a pogrom. He and his baby sister were the only survivors from the village. He carried her on his back in a wheat basket, walking through the snow, across Russia into Poland. This amazing story of survival is well written and accessible for a young reader from grades 4 through 8. It has danger, treachery, courage and a protagonist that is inspiring to any young person in modern day. He went on to become a symphonic violinist in the U.S.. K. Lasky has also written about her grandmother, Reuven Bloom's future wife, and how she met Reuven during her family's escape. "The Night Journey" is her story. Both are accurate representations of what drove people to abandon their homes in "The Pale" a century ago and come

to the New World. I teach immigrant children and this book will resonate with them. Highly recommended for upper grades and middle school. It's history with a face.

The next book from National Jewish Book Award-Winner, Kathryn Lasky, who won the title for her book, *The Night Journey, Broken Song* once again delves into the world of Reuven Bloom, a 15-year-old Jewish boy, living in Russia at the turn of the 20th Century. Reuven lives with his father, mother and two sisters in a small village in The Pale, which was the only part of Russia where Jews were allowed to settle at the time. His love of music, and in particular his love of playing the Ceruti violin, which he had been given by his Uncle, who had in turn been given it from the ring Baron for whom he was a tailor. Music occupied all of Reuven's time, when he was not playing it, he was thinking about it. And so, life was good. Until the word spread that the Cossack soldiers had destroyed a nearby village, forcing all of the young men to join their army. Reuven's family is quick to hide him in the small potato hole in their floor, and when the Cossacks finally arrive, he can do nothing as he hears them ransack his family house and slaughter his family. When he finally does come out of hiding, he discovers that baby sister Rachel has been hidden from the soldiers when a press fell over, and trapped her inside. Uninjured, but scared, Reuven now had the huge responsibility of taking care of this little child, as well as himself. But where would he go? His uncle had told him of a cousin in Vilna, and Reuven and Rachel sets off on the long and perilous journey to safety. Along the way, Reuven meets some who want to help him, and some who want to harm him. Will he reach his ultimate goal of reaching Vilna, and then following his uncle to America? This book gave an excellent insight into the struggle of the Jewish community in Russia at the turn of the 20th Century, and would be ideal for a school curriculum reading book for young teens, because, as well as being educational, it also raises some interesting questions which could be debated in the school environment. Armchair Interviews says: A well-written story of one boy's struggles to survive.

tight colorful writing of a dramatic story and history of Jews leaving Russia in early 20th century. Reuven Bloomsaves his baby sister and uses his wits to cross the Pale and make his way to America after a brutal pogrom. He keeps his dreams of music alive, we find out about socialistrevolutionaries, and the life of a gifted violinist and survivor. Told unsparingly and spot on for this age leveland riveting for adult readers as well.

Excellent, polite customer service and very speedy processing. This product received is exactly as pictured. I am pleased. Will order again from these nice people.

Companion book to The Night Journey. I like Broken Song more than the first book.

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