From Catherine, Called Birdy by Karen Cushman

“If I had to be born a lady, why not a rich lady, so someone else could do the work and I could lie on a silken bed and listen to a beautiful minstrel sing while my servants hemmed?” (5)

Character/Connection: Catherine is not content with her life, even though she has privileges most people in her world did not have. Money isn’t everything, is it? Or Do you ever have enough money to be content?

History: What was the difference between a baron’s daughter’s life and the life of a princess? What would be an accurate comparison today?

“I am near fourteen and have never yet seen a hanging. My life is barren” (5).

History/ Connection: What a life a Middle Ages teenager led. I wonder if this is like a 13-year-old complaining to her parents, “Everyone else has seen an R-rated movie. Why can’t I”

Character: Catherine seems whiny and complaining. She is not happy with her life at all. Do I complain about my life as much as she does hers? She has a privileged life, and I guess I do, too.

“The stars and my family align to make my life black and miserable” (5).

History: Astrology played a large role in the Middle Ages, I’m guessing, because when I lived in Milan, the cathedral there was built with a hole in the ceiling so that the sun’s rays always fell on an astrological disk at the back of the cathedral. Catherine really believes in the power of the horoscope. I should look into this. What did people believe about the stars?

From Crispin by Avi

“Though our great and doddering king surely means well, his loyal subjects go hungry. And why? Because the officials of this most holy kingdom are all corrupt gluttons” (75).

Connection/History/Prediction: It seems as though the cycle of poverty and misuse of power has been around a long time. In North Korea and in Zimbabwe, the people starve because their ruler is corrupt. It’s why revolutions begin, I think. I wonder if Bear will start a revolution.