

RECENT BOOKS about the HOLOCAUST from the JEWISH VALUESFINDER

Yom Hashoah Ve-Hagevurah
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NON-FICTION

Bogacki, Tomek. THE CHAMPION OF CHILDREN: THE STORY OF JANUSZ KORCZAK. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009. 33 pages. ISBN: 978-0-374-34136-7. Elementary. Expressive acrylic illustrations by the author immediately set the tone of this Holocaust biography. Their tone fluctuates to match the mood of the text, which portrays Korczak's life from youth to death, last showing him marching with the orphans he taught to the train that would take them all to their deaths.

De Saix, Deborah Durland; Ruelle, Karen Gray. THE GRAND MOSQUE OF PARIS: A STORY OF HOW MUSLIMS RESCUED JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST. Holiday House, 2009. 40 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8234-2159. Primary, Elementary. This handsomely illustrated book, with paintings in shades of blue, gray, maize and gold, gives an account of how Jewish families, escaping Allied airmen, and various others (some in the Resistance) found respite and shelter in a North African Kabyle mosque in the heart of Paris.

Kacer, Kathy; McKay, Sharon E. WHISPERS FROM THE CAMPS. Penguin Canada, 2009. 151 pages. ISBN: 978-0-14-331252-9. Middle-School, High-School. As in *Whispers from the Ghettos*, Kacer and McKay have documented individual true stories from the lives of teenage survivors of the Holocaust. In some cases, the lives of the teens are saved because of their special skills, e.g. knowledge of the German language or the ability to read aircraft blueprints. Many of the stories deal with the arrival at Auschwitz - selection, stripping, hair shearing, cold showers, thin clothing, repeated lineups for counting, etc. - but each is remarkable for being personal and detailed. Also included is a 5-minute play, "The Liberation of Dachau" and a glossary.

Kacer, Kathy; McKay, Sharon E. WHISPERS FROM THE GHETTOS. Penguin Canada, 2009. 162 pages. ISBN: 978-0-14-331251-2. Middle-School, High-School. Original testimonies from survivors of the ghettos record the hardship, terror, and bravery that they experienced as young people during the Holocaust. Twelve accounts of ghetto life are included, showing the role adolescents played in securing food and necessities for their families. Very moving!

Koestler-Grack, Rachel. ELIE WIESEL: WITNESS FOR HUMANITY. Gareth Stevens, 2009. 112 pages. ISBN: 978-14339-0054-9. Middle-School. This biography covers the period from Wiesel's childhood, through his horrific experiences in concentration camps, to his life and career after the Holocaust. Following the narrative there is a conversation with the director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum about the meaning and message for youngsters of Wiesel's life, plus reference aides.

Metselaar, Menno; van der Rol, Ruud. ANNE FRANK: HER LIFE IN WORDS AND PICTURES. Roaring Brook Press, 2009. 215 pages. ISBN: 978-1-59643-546-9. Elementary, Middle-School, High-School. First published in the Netherlands by the Anne Frank House, this draws on materials from the archives to give a history of the

Frank family and their protectors, plus an account of the preserved Annex where the Frank family and others hid. The text is drawn from several sources including some adult books and Anne's diary. The testimony of Rosa de Winter, who was with the three Frank women in Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen, is also given. Many photographs of the Frank family accompany the text of a handsome keepsake.

FICTION

Clark, Kathy . GUARDIAN ANGEL HOUSE. Second Story Press, 2009. 225 pages. ISBN: 978-1-897187-58-6 . Elementary, Middle-School. Guardian Angel House is the nickname given to a convent run by the Sisters of Charity in Budapest that sheltered over 120 Jewish children during World War Two. Told from the point of view of twelve-year-old Susan, this is a story of survival, of growing up without family during childhood and adolescence, of Jewish children living in a protective and loving Catholic environment which is foreign to them, of mutual respect between people of different religions, of a young woman forced to learn courage at an early age. Based on the true story of the author's mother and aunt, it is historical fiction at its best.

Engle, Margarita. TROPICAL SECRETS: HOLOCAUST REFUGEES IN CUBA. Henry Holt, 2009. 208 pages. ISBN: 978-0805089363. Middle-School. A coming-of-age story and an unusual piece of Holocaust history, told in free verse. 13-year old Daniel, a German refugee meets and then befriends a 12 year old Cuban girl after his ship is allowed to dock in Havana. Their story is effectively told in alternating narratives. Winner of the 2010 Sydney Taylor Book Award for Teens.

Gleitzman, Morris. ONCE. Henry Holt, 2010. 176 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8050-9026-0. Elementary, Middle-School. The narrator is an imaginative and innocent Jewish child being sheltered in a convent. The son of Jewish booksellers, he believes that all of his parents' troubles are because the Nazis don't like Jewish books and want to rid the world of them. When he runs away from the convent in order to find his parents, he finds instead only devastation. Reality slowly dawns as the true horrors of the Holocaust are revealed.

Heuvel, Eric. A FAMILY SECRET. Anne Frank House, 2009. 62 pages. ISBN: 978-0-374-464554. Elementary, Middle-School.

Heuvel, Eric. THE SEARCH. Anne Frank House, 2009. 62 pages. ISBN: 978-0-374-464554. Elementary, Middle-School. Originally published in Dutch in 2007, *A Family Secret* and its sequel, *The Search*, tell overlapping stories of ordinary people during World War II. *A Family Secret* tells the story of Jeroen, a teenage boy, who is looking through his grandmother's attic for items to sell at a yard sale. After he comes across scrapbooks and other artifacts, his grandmother Helena tells him for the first time about her experiences as a young girl in Amsterdam during the German occupation. Her best friend was Esther, a Jewish girl whose family fled from Germany to the Netherlands hoping for safety from the Nazis. When Esther's family is sent to a concentration camp, Helena fears the worst, and assumes that Esther has died along with her parents. Years later, a chance meeting between Jeroen and Esther during a Memorial Day ceremony allows the boy to present his grandmother with her long-lost friend. Dutch artist Eric Heuvel uses pastel colors and a clear line style that has been compared to Tintin comics. The text is simplified for a younger audience. War is not glamorized in any way; neither the Nazis nor the victims are personalized. Because of the lack of violence, these two books would provide a good introduction to the topic for children as young as fifth grade.

Thor, Annika. A FARAWAY ISLAND. Delacorte Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0385-90590-9. Elementary, Middle-School. The story of two Viennese-Jewish sisters who are sent to safety during the Holocaust to an island off the coast of Sweden. The girls' treatments by their two foster families vary but both try to convert them to

Christianity. Hoping to be reunited with their parents soon, the girls' stay lasts indefinitely, and the story explores the emotions of children who endure uncertainty far from home. Translated from the Swedish, this is the first in a series of books about the sisters' life on the island.

Walfish, Miriam. THE STARS WILL GUIDE YOU. Judaica Press, 2009. 320 pages. ISBN: 978-1-60763-016-6. Middle-School, High-School. Rica Levi, 15, and her brother Lelio, 8, are instructed by their widowed father to flee their home in the Rome ghetto in 1943. In the ensuing months and years, they don't know what has happened to him and fear the worst. In four sections, the book describes the children's hiding by Catholics in Narola, Italy; the liberation of Rome by the Allies and their return to find their ransacked and defaced apartment; the search for family after the war; and, finally, their reunion with their father.

Whitney, Kim Ablon. THE OTHER HALF OF LIFE. Alfred A. Knopf, 2009. 256 pages. ISBN: 978-0-375-85219-0. Elementary, Middle-School. Based upon the true story of the MS St. Louis, the story takes place after Kristallnacht and follows closely the fateful voyage of over 900 passengers who are bound for Cuba. The main character is fifteen-year-old, Thomas, whose father has been sent to Dachau, and whose non-Jewish mother places him on the ship for safety. The ship is eventually turned away at several countries' ports, and forced to return to European cities that will soon fall under Nazi domination. Winner of a 2009 National Jewish Book Award.

AND DON'T FORGET...

Finkelstein, Norman H. REMEMBER NOT TO FORGET: A MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST. Illus. by Lars Hokanson and Lois Hokanson. Jewish Publication Society, 2004. 29 pages. ISBN: 0827607709. Primary, Elementary. A straight-forward presentation of anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and its aftermath, illustrated with stark black and white pictures. Intended as an introduction for children in grades three through five, it contains background information that is essential for any teaching or understanding of the Holocaust.

Fleischman, Sid. THE ENTERTAINER AND THE DYBBUK. HarperCollins/Greenwillow, 2007. 180 pages. ISBN: 978-0-06-13445-9. Elementary, Middle-School. In post-World War II Europe, a struggling American ventriloquist called The Great Freddie gets an offer of help with his act from a dybbuk, the ghost of a boy who was killed in the Holocaust. The dybbuk speaks for Freddy so that his ineptitude as a ventriloquist isn't visible and in gaining a voice, the dybbuk is able to speak out against the murder of himself and millions of others by the Nazis. Winner of a Sydney Taylor Book Award.

Krinitz, Esther Nisenthal; Steinhardt, Bernice . MEMORIES OF SURVIVAL. Hyperion, 2005. 64 pages. ISBN: 0786851260. Elementary, Middle-School, High-School, Adult. Esther Krinitz survived the Holocaust and lived to raise a family in the United States. Years after the war, she shared her memories with her children by sewing embroidered fabric collages depicting scenes from her early life. Her daughter, Bernice Steinhardt, has taken some of these amazing embroideries, added to the comments written by her mother, and created a book that is outstanding in its immediacy and beauty.

Patz, Nancy . WHO WAS THE WOMAN WHO WORE THE HAT? Dutton, 2003. 40 pages. ISBN: 0525469990. Elementary, Middle-School, High-School, Adult. Inspired by the author-illustrator's reaction to a woman's hat she saw in a glass case in Amsterdam's Jewish Historical Museum, this is a prose poem meditating on the identity of the woman and on her probable fate during the Holocaust. The fate of other Dutch Jews and, indeed, of every human being, is implicated in the text and in the striking illustrations, which consist of

somber-toned watercolors, pencil drawings, and old photographs. Winner of a Sydney Taylor Book Award.

Rogasky, Barbara. SMOKE AND ASHES, REVISED AND EXPANDED. Holiday House, 2002. 256 pages. ISBN: 0823416771. Middle-School, High-School. The first edition of this unflinching look at the Holocaust was written in 1988 and represented a significant contribution to books about the Holocaust for young people. Here, much new information has been added: the role of "ordinary" Germans in the Final Solution, the German's attempts to hide their crimes, the Allies' decision not to bomb the rail lines to Auschwitz and more. A chapter called "The Uniqueness of the Holocaust" lists recent atrocities and hate crimes. One of the very best treatments of the Holocaust for young people.

Schmidt, Gary. MARA'S STORIES: GLIMMERS IN THE DARK. Henry Holt, 2001. 152 pages. ISBN: 0805067949. Middle-School, High-School. In the night and fog of a concentration camp, women and children gather at night to listen to stories told by a prisoner named Mara, the daughter of a rabbi. The haunting stories are adapted from Jewish lore and modern Jewish literature.

Weisbarth, Bracha. TO LIVE AND FIGHT ANOTHER DAY: THE STORY OF A JEWISH PARTISAN BOY. Mazo, 2004. 158 pages. ISBN: 9659046235. Middle-School. An exciting novel based on the experiences of the author's family during the Holocaust. The main character is her brother, Benny, who led the family out of the ghetto before a Nazi "Final Aktion" and then into the forests, where they eventually joined partisans fighting the Nazis.

Zusak, Markus. THE BOOK THIEF. Random House, 2006. 553 pages. ISBN: 0-375-83100-2. High-School, Adult. Death is the omnipresent commentator in this compelling novel set in Germany during World War II. Genial as he muses on human existence, Death is sometimes frightened at the extent of human cruelty. Germany under Hitler was the epicenter of cruelty, as shown through several years in the life of a German child, the "book thief," her foster family, friends, and the town near Munich where she lives. These "good German" characters are earthy, flawed, and unforgettable. And while Death (always) has the final word, it is to say "I am haunted by humans." For high school and up and not to be missed! Winner of a Sydney Taylor Book Award.

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