

Book Review

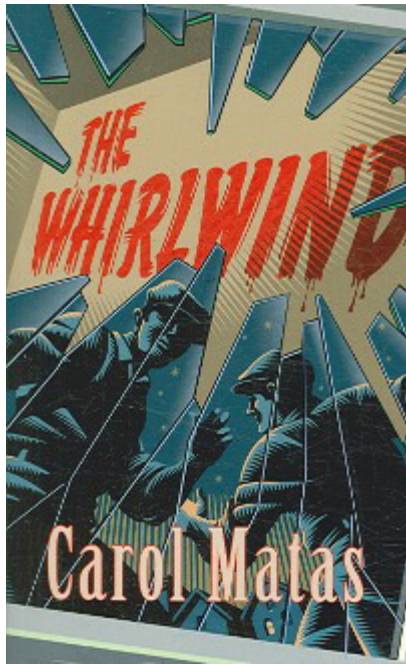
A Sixth Grade Humanities Publication Celebrating Jewish Book Month 2011

A Book that will Catch You in a Whirlwind

by Solek

Moving. Packing. Leaving. I would hate to have to leave my friends, family, and community. But if the Nazis were after me? That is a different story. Ben, a Jewish boy in Germany, is faced with this as a reality. In *The Whirlwind* by Carol Matas, Ben almost stays in Germany after it's too late. He takes the responsibility to motivate his family to move because his father was too stubborn. Finally when they move to Seattle with their uncle, they find out that there are others who are experiencing a fear similar to what they felt in Germany. Were they still the enemy?

In the beginning of the book, Ben is kicked out of his school. All of a sudden, his teacher told him there is no school for the Jews anymore. That is all Ben needs to confirm how plain dangerous it is to stay in Germany. In Seattle, Ben starts school as soon as possible. It was nice for him to be back in school again. He met an Asian-American boy named Jon and they become close friends. When Jon's dad is accused of being a spy from Japan, he is taken away to an internment camp. Shortly after, the whole family is taken to a different camp. Ben keeps thinking that it would be him next, because he was a German. He runs away not once, but twice, because of his nagging fear. When he gets home, he writes a letter to his baseball loving friend Jon in camp to share his thoughts, and to tell him about how the Dodgers are doing. During his letter, he can't fight sharing his frustrations: "...maybe it helps to get mad so you can try to change things. I still want to fight Hitler. I still hate him. I'm going back to work selling papers, but I'm going to give all my money to war bonds."



Ben is the lead character and narrator. This book is written in journal form, which helps explain the situation better than third person could. (Ben wasn't always in the norm.) He never quite understands that the Nazis are not coming for him anymore. Jon was one of the lesser characters, but he was a crucial role in this book. When Jon gets taken to the camp, Ben started the theory of: Are we really safe??? Without Jon, the theme of this book wouldn't come through. I can relate to Ben as a reader. I might not share it, and

I might not run away to Canada, but I'm Jewish, I hate Hitler, and I always have some fear tucked away.

I think the theme of this book is fear. Fear is always at play in this book. Ben has fear, passing it on to his family, passing it on to Jon, passing it on to Jon's family. Fear of what? They escaped the Nazis, right? What to be scared of? Let me tell you, if I had a friend taken to a camp because of his race, I would be afraid too, because who knows if I'm next? Now, I get he might have overdone it a little, but who knows

how it would feel to have that as a reality? At least not me. In a sense, hate is always lingering around in this book. Ben always wrote how he hated this, and hated that, and how he wanted to overturn Hitler—a man who himself used hate to try and take over the world—but Ben didn't really make too much of a difference, unless running away for survival counts.

From this book, I learned about the Holocaust like I never had before. It wasn't only from a different viewpoint, but it was educational in a way. I never knew until I read the book that people are scared even when they are safe.

This book had a pace that didn't bore me, had a style of writing that I think is clever and suspenseful, and was something I actually liked to read. Usually when I get a book from a teacher, it's a dread to begin to think about

reading it, but this book falls into a different category. This book made me think. Think deeper. I even thought about being at Ben's school, being his friend, being Jon's friend.

The Devil's Arithmetic- A Book Not Worth Reading

by Anton

Are you looking for a good book? Well, my suggestion is to not read "The Devil's Arithmetic." Sure it has good parts, but most of them are very boring. Some of the sentences go rambling on and on and on. The beginning is especially slow, but it does get better. This book still needs some improvements. It wasn't very clear at first who the people were. At some points of the book it left you clueless.

When Hannah goes to her grandparents' house for the beginning of Passover, she accidentally goes to the past. She gets very confused when she wakes up in strange clothing, in a place that looks like her home but isn't. In her "home" she sees people that claim they are her family, but she knows that they are not. When she goes to her brother's wedding, she realizes that she is in the past. She sees Nazis and tells everybody not to go with them. Sadly, it is too late. They all get forced into a truck in which they have to stay for three days. There are no stops and they have no food. When they arrive at their destination, they immediately get sent to the showers to get washed off. Hannah is convinced that they are furnaces instead of showers. Because she is from the future, she knew about what happened in the camps, and she tries to warn everyone. Nobody believes her. Hannah is relieved when she finds out that they are regular showers. Then they engrave numbers in their arm, and they are forced to change their names. After a few weeks, Hannah can't live one more day in the horrible camp. She decides to escape the prison. Will she succeed?

Hannah is a very important character. She is the main character and without her, there would be no story to tell. The other characters have boring personalities. They

have long conversations with Hannah that are hardly ever relevant to the book. Also, they aren't mentioned as much in the book.

This book is very boring at the beginning. When Hannah gets sent to the past, it takes way too long for the characters to get introduced. Then, when they finally properly introduce the characters, they start chatting about how they are excited and nervous about the wedding. That was one of the most boring parts. When they go to the wedding she makes some friends and then they talk for what seems like an eternity. Do not waste your time reading this book.

"I'm tired of remembering." That is one of the many things that Hannah says throughout the book. As time progresses, Hannah slowly starts forgetting her real life in the future. There were some good parts of the book that come towards the middle and the end like when Hannah suddenly remembers a key event that she knew about. Also, when she is trying to escape from the camp, it gets very good. This is not enough to change my overall opinion about the book. It is still bad.

I can kind of relate to this story because my grandmother came to America because of the Nazis. Her two sisters didn't go to America. Luckily, my grandmother was able to send letters to them, and they sent many letters back. One day, they stopped sending letters.

Two Kids and a Fence

by Jonah

Have you ever wondered what the Holocaust would have been like for a nine year old German? Well, "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas" by John Boyne is the perfect book for you. It's amazing to imagine having a father who is a soldier while having no clue what is going on outside your window, (literally!), not to mention having a "hopeless case" for a sister. It's one amazing story and you can't wait to find out what happens

"As time progresses, Hannah slowly starts forgetting her real life in the future."

next.

First Bruno finds the family maid packing up all his stuff and his mom tells him that they need to move because of his dad's job. Bruno gets angry, and humor comes into play when Bruno asks if Gretel, his sister, has to come. They move to a place that Bruno pronounces "out-with" even though he's told that's not how it's pronounced.

The one thing that annoyed me and at the same time, I loved, is although it's a great trick making Bruno naïve because it's supposed to feel like you don't know either but since most people do, you just want to go up to him, slap him, and say WAKE UP!!! OPEN YOUR EYES!!! Most everyone who reads this book knows about the Holocaust, but the book tries to completely keep you in the dark.

Throughout the book, Bruno describes his sister Gretel as being a "hopeless case." I will agree because she always finds a way of either being weird or acting like she knows everything. I can honestly say that I don't think Bruno is very fond of Gretel. Gretel, on the other hand, is always caught "flirting" with Lieutenant Kotler which Bruno finds absurd.

While I'm talking about Lieutenant Kotler, I consider him the biggest jerk in the book as I'm sure anyone else would. However, he somehow keeps the book interesting (although, I don't know what it is). He is full of himself, rude and yells way too much. One time Bruno found Shmuel in his house and gave him some food. Lieutenant Kotler just happened to walk in and asked if Shmuel had been eating and he said Bruno gave the food to him. As usual, Lieutenant Kotler started yelling at Bruno and asked him if they were friends. He scared Bruno so much that he lied about knowing Shmuel and giving him the food.

I haven't even talked about Shmuel yet, Bruno met Shmuel and it turns out they have the same birthday. So every day Bruno would come with some food and visit Shmuel. One day he brought a ball to play with but when he threw it over the fence, Shmuel freaked out and threw it back over. Some days they played checkers to-

gether and Bruno never knew where Shmuel wanted the piece to be moved and it always took them a minute or two to figure it out

Although this is a great book, it is also very sad for reasons I shall not disclose because it will give away the ending. I would only advise this book if you think you can take the sadness or you are at least twelve, and even then it's still hard to read.

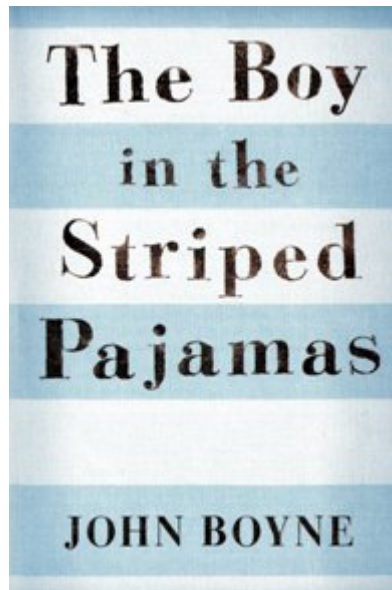
On a side note, the movie is a lot different so if you've seen the movie, you've only seen about half of it.

A Fascinating and Incredible Story

by Benjamin

When you add just the right amount of everything to a book, it makes it really come to life. *Stones in Water* is one of the few books I've read that does this. The author, Donna Jo Napoli, has fabulously worked in the occasional thrill that comes from reading action, and then highlighted those events with some sadness and suspense. In my opinion, this book is mostly dedicated to the subject of religious freedom, but it incorporates other elements that make it surprisingly fun to read. Even though this isn't one of my favorite genres (Historical Fiction), this has been a really entertaining book to read.

The story starts with Roberto, Memo, and Samuel, our three main characters. Italy had just declared war on America, and this could be their last chance to see an American film, so they head out to the theatre. They arrive and the movie begins, but it's not long before the theatre is filled with German soldiers, and the boys are loaded onto a train. Samuel, being Jewish, is in danger of being recognized. On the train, everyone is worrying, and when someone finally tries to leave, they are punished with death. The boys finally arrive in Germany and are given food, but they are treated harshly and are forced to work. But when presented with a chance to escape, the challenge for Roberto is simply to survive. This is an excerpt from the chapter *Cold*, which really shows how Donna Jo Napoli can describe simple things in an interesting and descriptive way: "He moved more and more slowly. The small clouds of his breath were spaced farther apart. Everything about him was slowing down. He stared with dry stinging eyes into the nothingness. He tripped and fell." Unlike some other books of its kind, this is not a hard book to read. There are a few



extreme hardships for the characters, but it doesn't have the emotional intensity that other books do. This helps the story by taking out the slower themes, leaving you with a book that really engages its reader. However, it also takes out some of the rich content that most people can connect to. Still, I was very impressed at how much I could relate to this book.

The author, Donna Jo Napoli, was born in Miami, Florida, in an Italian household. She loved reading, but there were no books in her house. Despite this, she would read all the time. When she went to college, she studied mathematics; but later realized that she really loved to write, and writing became her second job.

Every minute that I spent reading this book I was impressed at the drama and challenge that was put into it. Donna Jo Napoli has created a masterpiece of themes that has everything you want in a book. If you are interested in some history and like a good story, this is an incredible book filled with thought, action, sadness, and death.

Two Boys in One Holocaust

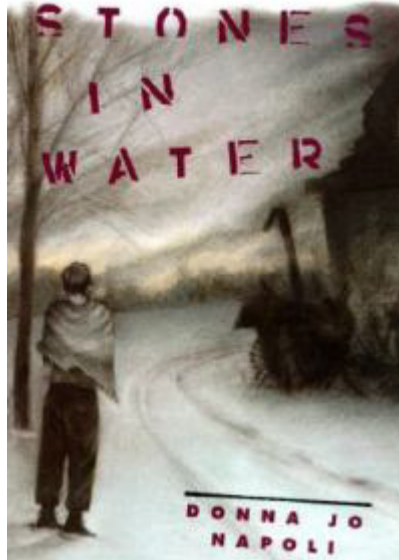
by Moses

Bruno thought that his life was going great. He had a five story mansion in Berlin, three best friends, and a loving family. Most of that was about to change.

Shmuel was living a happy life in Poland. He had a loving family, his dad owned a successful watch shop, and he had all the Jewish holidays. Until one day the Germans took him, his mom, and his dad away.

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas by John Boyne is about the lives of Bruno and Shmuel. Bruno was forced out of his home because his father was relocated as a concentration camp supervisor. At first Bruno hates living at his two story isolated house,

but after meeting Shmuel he starts to adjust. Shmuel and his family were taken from their home, stuck in a one room house with two other families, and then stuck in a concentration camp in Poland where his mother goes "missing" the second they get there. Shmuel's dad eventually does not come back from one of the marches and Shmuel tries to find him. This is the story of how these two unlikely friends meet each other and how their bond grows.



This book taught me a lot about the Holocaust. Before I read The Boy in the Striped Pajamas, I knew that the Holocaust was bad but I did not know just how discriminative to "different" people it was. "Ignoring Bruno, Lieutenant Koller marched over to Shmuel and glared at him. 'What

are you doing?' he shouted. 'Didn't I tell you to polish those glasses?'" This quote only shows a fragment of how bad the Nazis were.

I enjoyed the book overall. Some of it was sad and confusing like the first three chapters because there was not much explaining and a lot of things were happening at once. "'Mother,' said Bruno marching towards her, 'What's going on? Why is Maria going through my things?' 'She is packing them,' explained Mother. 'Packing them?'" This quote shows the confusion for Bruno that was going on in the first few chapters. The rest of the book was an easy read and interesting until the last few chapters when things got really sad. "Bruno found that he was still holding Shmuel's hand in his own and nothing in the world would have persuaded him to let go."

To me, this was the most emotional line in the book and the beginning of a turn of events that is truly tragic.

I would recommend this book to people ages twelve and older. It is too tragic and sad for young people to read. There is also historical stuff that you need to know. I also think that I would have enjoyed the book more if I was older.

Young and Wounded

by Tamir

When I found this novel four years ago in the young adult section of the library, I was excited to find a book that was about something I knew. Well, it turns out I was way over-estimating myself. Forty pages and a few nights in, I was mortified by the cruelty. *Milkweed*, by Jerry Spinelli, became the first book I had ever quit.

Last month, when I saw *Milkweed* in the collection of books we were supposed to read for school, I wanted to challenge myself to read it. So, four years later, I picked it up again to finish where I left off. Immediately, (for the second time) Misha's life became part of mine.

A small boy dodges someone's outstretched hand and runs from the shouts and the bakery, a loaf of bread cradled in his arms. This is the rough life of a boy without a name, or if he does have one, it is long lost. This boy calls himself Stopthief, and that is what I knew him as for the first few pages.

He is taken in by a large, red-haired boy named Uri who becomes a major part of his life, for good and for bad. For the next few months, he and Uri rob together, talk together, argue together. Uri was very wise and held all of his young friend's trust, which was not the right place for anybody's trust. He teaches Stopthief about the real world; surviving, mostly. That is, until the days when Uri starts disappearing.

When Misha (Uri took the liberty of naming him) meets spunky, six year old Janina for the first time, he is busy stealing some tomatoes. After a lecture from the young girl, they begin talking. Throughout the book, they develop a strong bond, like brother and sister. They like to exchange things; bread for some little trinket is how it usually goes. Misha is always excited when Janina leaves him something.

Don't think that this is just a book about a sad friendship between a boy and a girl. This is a book about a lot of things, but it's based in the time of the Holocaust, so let's get on with it.

Bombs. Tanks. Glass, broken. Jackboots. Guns. Rapes. The Jews have not been sent to concentration camps yet, but violence is everywhere. So, when the Jews are shepherded into the ghettos with nothing but clothes, Misha's innocence and curiosity lure him in. There he stumbles upon Janina's family, who lets him into their room, which they share with another family. Life is tough in the ghetto, and after a few months even the children

on the street have nothing left but rags and dead eyes. Barely a difference between the living and the dead, sadly, except the faint pounding in the chest.

Smuggling is dangerous, and many smugglers are hanging from ropes off street signs, but food is food. Through a two-brick gap in the wall, a small boy and a smaller girl disappear every night in search for food for their family, now brother and sister. Try as he could, Misha could not get Janina to leave him alone, for her own safety.

"On many days I went off to a favorite bomb crater and lowered myself into it and licked traces of fat from my fingers and closed my eyes and remembered the good old days when ladies walked from bakeries with bulging bags of bread." The writing in this book is not very elegant, just cuts to the chase but has a nice, simple feeling to me. Since Misha was younger than me, as the book went on I kind of looked out for him more, kind of like a little brother. I wish I could have warned him...

One morning when Misha comes back through the hole, there is a group of people in the street yelling. One man is louder than the others and is trying to convince people that the trains bring you to ovens, not resettlement. That night, as Misha prepares for a long night on the other side of the wall, in "heaven," he is told by Mr. Milgrom to flee, to bring Janina and never come back.

The trains. Janina's downfall, luring her closer. Abruptly, the end.

If I did not know who the author was, I would have never guessed who wrote it. I know Jerry Spinelli as the author of fun, happy books about the lives of ten-year old boys. This is much more serious, in a time of violence and depression. Nevertheless, it is in my top-five book favorites. (Yes, I like depressing books.) The clueless, innocent eight year old boy, the main character, brings some subtle humor, even in such a horrific time, with his up-lifting spirit, part of why I kept flipping the pages.

The one thing I didn't like about the book was the language was unrealistic. "Jew Dogs!" Jackboots and Flops came through the lines, screaming into people's faces, poking them with clubs and rifles, spitting in their faces. I don't just have a lust for bad words, but when the Nazis are screaming at the Jews I don't think they would just say "Jew Dogs." I just think it detracts from the message and

realism.

There are so many books about the horrors of the Holocaust that I didn't think any more could be said, but I realized when you focus on one person's life, when you get to know them well, it slaps you in the face way harder than if you just hear numbers or names. I really got to identify with the characters, making this one of the only books I

read that was powerful enough to make my eyes water at the end. If you are looking for a Holocaust book, I would not more highly recommend any other book than *Milkweed*. I could barely put the book down as I traveled with Misha, his friends, Janina, Uri, and the Milgroms.

A Book that is Spookingly Bad

by Mason

If you are looking for a good, fast moving, engaging book, you won't find it here... Unless you're seven.

The Entertainer and the Dybbuk is a book by Sid Fleischman. It is about a man named Freddie who is a ventriloquist. His act is not going very well and when he gets back to his hotel room, there is a child dybbuk in his closet. (A dybbuk is a Jewish ghost.) The book doesn't say how he got there or when, but later the dybbuk possesses Freddie and can talk through his mouth. The dybbuk says that he died in the Holocaust and that the reason he possessed Freddie is that he wants Freddie to find the Nazi that killed the child and his family. Freddie agrees under one condition: the dybbuk has to help him with his act. One show, the dybbuk tells the audience to help him find the killer. They eventually find out where the killer is and they see him in a court house on trial. I could tell you more but that would spoil the book

The only thing I liked about this book is

that the plot is original, but I did not think it was well-executed. The characters weren't really well developed and I also thought that the ending was too predictable. I thought that Freddie didn't have much of a personality and he didn't have much of a back-story.

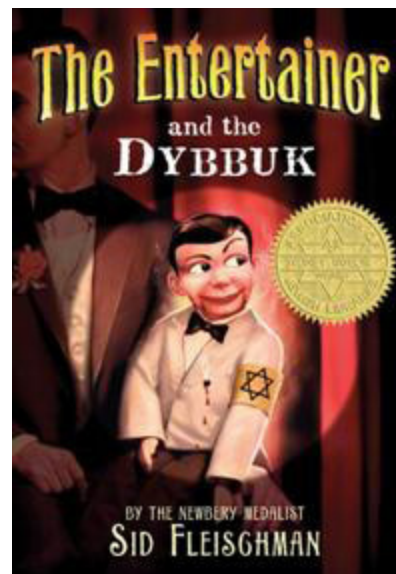
Another thing I enjoyed was that there were lots of references to Judaism: "'Do you know that gossip has sprung up' Freddie reported. 'Theater managers are wondering if I'm Jewish..' 'Oy, such a crime,' said the dybbuk. 'But I'm not!' 'That's not a crime either.' 'You could do me a big favor, show up Friday night and put an end to the gossip!' The dybbuk replied, 'I don't lift a finger on Shabbas.'"

Here is an example of immature writing "'Why am I talking to you?' he asked aloud. 'I don't believe in ghosts.' 'You want to know the truth,' replied the dybbuk, 'neither do I. But here I am.'"

This is a quote by the author: "Revenge may be sweet, but guilt is non-transferable. Still, hatreds survive with the persistence of cockroaches." I thought that this quote is very poetic and I was wondering why he didn't use language like that in *The Entertainer and the Dybbuk*.

Fairytale from the Holocaust

by August



This Holocaust story is not like most Holocaust stories you hear. This is the retold story of "Briar Rose," more often known as "Sleeping Beauty and the Holocaust? What a peculiar combination, but Jane Yolen makes it work, quite well in fact. Jane Yolen writes a Holocaust book about one girl's search for her grandmother's identity. She tells this story with a gentle brutality, being

careful around the more delicate subjects, but not making them seem less horrible than they actually were. She also includes humor which no one would expect.

The story begins with Becca's past when she was a baby being told the story of "Briar

Rose” by her Grandmother, Gemma. Every possible moment she gets, Gemma seems to tell the girls the story of “Briar Rose.” It is in fact the only story she ever tells to them. One of the things I thought was clever was Yolen’s flashbacks to the past where Gemma is telling the story. While in the past, Becca and her sisters are small children enjoying the warmth of a worn out bedtime story; in the present day they are grown up women. Her sisters have growing families and barely even have time for Gemma and Becca anymore.

It isn’t until Gemma is on her deathbed when she tells the girls that she is the “Briar Rose” of her story, the one who was awakened by a kiss. This seems to be the only thing Gemma can remember from her past life. Her family knows nothing and has nothing. That is until, of course, Becca receives a small wooden box with the engraving of a rose. “Oh great,” most of the family seems to think, “Another darned rose.” With the promise she made Gemma in mind, Becca sets off for Poland with only a box to guide her. It is there that Becca learns of castles, princesses, deep sleep, and being awakened with a kiss. But this is no fairy tale. This is horror, sadness, death, and cruelty. This fairy tale has turned into death camps, Nazi’s, Jews, gas chambers and mass graves.

This is when the story gets good, horrible and painful, but well written. The first half of the novel, frankly, was somewhat annoying. Crammed in between stories about Gemma, were catty fights between Becca and her sisters, both in the past and present. It was actually a distraction to the more meaningful plot.

This book was a little mature and deals with some more seriously topics like homosexuality and the gruesome way not only Jews were treated but gypsies and homosexuals.

“You must understand that this is a story of survivors, not heroes. The war was full of them. A man is not a hero if he scrabbles to stay alive, if he struggles for one more piece of bread, one more ragged breath. We all are heroes of the moment.” Not only does Yolen demonstrate an excellent writing style, but hidden in a story being told by one of her characters, this quote feels like she was writing about her book. But Becca is a hero.

She goes above and beyond to put together the pieces of Gemma’s confusing puzzle. While some might think they are not heroes, because of that, they probably are.

Boy Meets Boy in Striped Pajamas

by Ben

A boy in Berlin. He has a mansion, three best friends and almost everything he wants. He thought his life would be happy forever. That is until he has to move and leave all of that behind. He hated his new life, until he became friends with a boy in striped pajamas.

The only thing in their way is a fence, so they can play.

A boy in Poland. His life was the best. He and his family were taken away from their home by Nazis soldiers! His life turned upside by guns, people hitting him and starvation. He gets to a new place to live and is given striped pajamas. He hated his new life, until he became friends with a boy. The only thing in their way is a fence, so they can play.

“The Boy in the Striped Pajamas” is by

John Boyne. In the year 1943 in Berlin, a nine year old boy named Bruno came home to see the family maid Maria packing his things. His mother told him that his father got a promotion and they are moving to a different place. When they get there, their new house in the land of Out-With. It was really small and not very nice for Bruno.

“One afternoon, when Bruno came home from school, he was surprised to see Maria - the family maid that never took her eyes off the carpet - who was standing in his room packing his stuff.” This was first part in the whole book. It was interesting because it would be fun to see what would happen next. Most of the books I read I stop reading after the first few chapters because (a) it didn’t make any sense and/or (b) it got boring. But

this book did make sense and it didn’t get very boring. The reason why is because the book always had new material and didn’t repeat itself.

The main characters in this book are Bruno, Gretel, Mother, Father, Maria, and Shmuel. Each character has a special part in the book. Bruno is the main character so the story is about him. Gretel is the older sister that sometimes tricks Bruno. Mother is the mom that almost always argues with Bruno’s father. Father is a Nazi soldier that gets the promotion that turned Bruno’s life upside down. And Shmuel is a Jew who is the exact same age as Bruno; they share the same birthday. Shmuel is also in the land Out-With, in the concentration camp. The only thing that is different is that Shmuel is skinnier than Bruno.

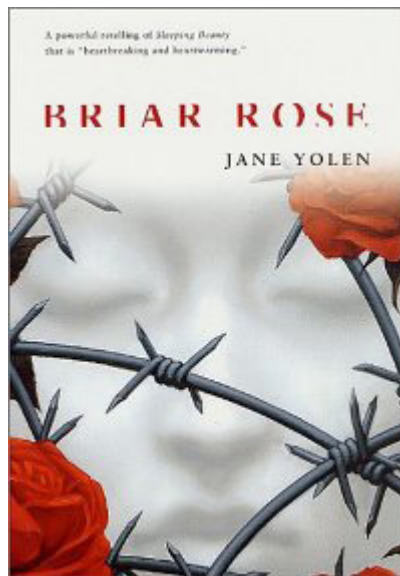
My favorite main character is Bruno because when he grows up he wants to have adventures like the people in the books he reads, such as “Treasure Island.” Bruno always has a taste for adventure so almost every chapter is a new adventure for him. Think of you as Bruno in the land of Out-With. There is nobody around but the soldiers that work with Father. Gretel is in her room arranging stuff. Mother is out somewhere. You have to do something to keep yourself entertained. So you explore Out-With. That is why my favorite main character is Bruno.

This book is amazing. The reason why it’s amazing is because of the rich detail of all the writing. It makes you feel like you are in Berlin and Out-With in the year 1943. The one part in this book that gets boring is that the first chapters are just Bruno telling almost everybody that the move was a big mistake. It started to get boring because we already know that he hates this move. The only thing that made me keep on going is because of

“Bruno always has a taste for adventure so almost every chapter is a new adventure for him.”

the conflict along the way. For example, in one chapter in the middle of the night, Bruno sees Maria putting his laundry in his dresser and Bruno started talking to her and then Bruno said that Father was being

stupid moving. Maria told him not to call Father stupid because Maria had a terrible life before Father found her. Maria’s mother was dying and when Father found her, he paid to save Maria’s mother. This is why this book is amazing because Bruno learned something about Maria that he didn’t realize because he thought he knew everything about Maria.



An Orphan's Tale

by Aedan

“Call me thief. Call me stupid. Call me Gypsy. Call me Jew. Call me one-eared Jack. I don't care. Empty handed victims once told me who I was. Then Uri told me. Then an armband. Then an immigration officer. Now this little girl in my lap, this little girl whose call silences the tramping jackboots. Her voice will be the last. I was. Now I am. I am . . . Poppynoodle.”

The orphan, who is unnamed at this point, goes through a lot in Jerry Spinelli's *Milkweed*. This orphan, who has many names, has always done dangerous things to help his family by finding and stealing food. At this point his family is the boys he lives with.

The story begins with an orphan who stole food with a group of boys so that he could survive. He didn't really have a name, but everybody said to him “Stopthief” when he stole food from them. So he wanted to be called Stopthief. The boys were his friends and they lived together.

The boys that he lived with were Uri, Olek, Kuba, Henryk, Enos and Ferdi. Those kids were his family until eventually he met a young girl named Janina. By the time he met her, his new name was Misha Pilsudski. He didn't really choose it but Uri did and Misha just liked his new name so it became his. And after he met Janina, he kept on sneaking extra food in, and then he set the extra food on the porch of his new friend's house. And when he gave food to his new friend he started to find these little toys and other candy. It was a thank you gift for all the food.

This relationship becomes important later on in the story because they will need each other to get through the ghetto and to get enough food. Their friendship got them a long way, because if Janina didn't start stealing food also, they would probably starve. They would starve because Misha always went to an orphanage and gave them food, because he knew they needed it. So Janina and Misha played a lot of games together, but the one game they really liked to play was pickup sticks.

In this book, a war is taking place so

it was really hard to live in. Eventually all the Jews were sent to a mean and horrible place called the Warsaw ghetto. The police guards, called Jackboots, would catch smugglers and they would punish them. Misha was one of these smugglers, and as readers we fear for him, this orphan. This is one of the most emotional parts of the book, one's concern for Misha's safety. When the Jews got to the Warsaw ghetto, every night Misha would go to a hotel and climb through bars to get food to his family. (Before they went to the ghetto, Janina's dad said Misha was a part of their family now. And because he is a part of the Milgrom family, he is now Misha Milgrom. So Misha brought food back to the Milgrom's.) And eventually Janina followed him and stole food also. So they ended up getting twice as much food as just Misha alone.

I loved this book when I first read it, especially the excerpt I mentioned earlier. That appears at the very end of the book. It shows all that Misha has been through in his life. It also shows how he was changed many times throughout the years.

Misha is my favorite character because he has been through a lot in this book and he knows how to deal with it all. So Misha is my favorite for his courage and for his happiness. His courage and his ability to stay happy throughout his difficulties make him an inspiring character. I could tell this author in this book uses very strong and meaningful words; this author can make an emotional piece of truth happen to a little kid with no parents. I myself have a brother who is one, and a sister who is three. So I felt like if that happened to them I would be heartbroken, finished and full of emotion.

Spinelli has written many great books for children, but *Milkweed* might be a little too mature for younger readers. It was pretty emotional when the Nazis were being really mean to the Jews. I would recommend *Milkweed* to people who like adventures, suspense, a little humor and a lot of emotion.



Arithmetic Through Time

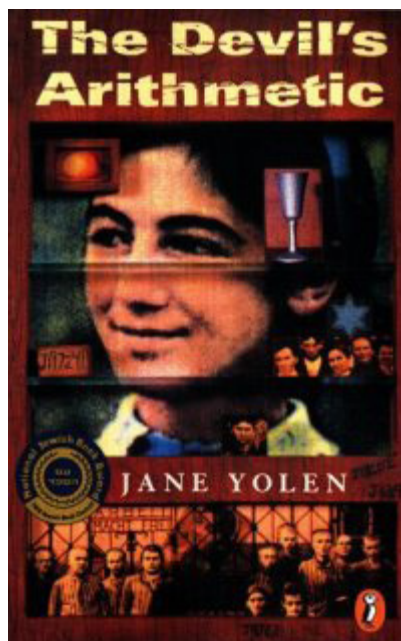
by Sam

Jane Yolen has written many great books. *The Devil's Arithmetic* is not one of them though. *The Devil's Arithmetic* has an interesting plot, but I think that it doesn't all come together very well and too many questions are left unanswered. I was left wondering what happened to Chelm? What about Lublin? What was happening in New Rochelle in Hannah's own time?

Hannah who lives in New Rochelle is a typical teenager. Whining, complaining, whining. Early on in the book Hannah has Easter with Rosemary, and later that day Hannah has Passover with her whole family, extended and all. “It's not fair!” is Hannah's favorite line at the first Seder where she is given undiluted wine. She drinks too much and then puts her fourth cup into Elijah's cup. Then one of the relatives suggests that instead of her younger brother opening the door, Hannah can get to open the door for Elijah. When she opens the door for Elijah, she teleports back in time to the time of the Nazis. From there it takes place in Chelm. Hannah lives in two worlds at once you could say.

Hannah has learned the way of the concentration camps. Thankfully Hannah had Rachel to help her out. Rachel handed Hannah the “every bowls.” “Don't lose these,” Rachel had said. Hannah also learned not to stand next to Greek Jews and don't step out of line. Greek Jews don't understand German and are likely to get “chosen.” If you get “chosen,” you literally go “up the smoke-stack.”

In the concentration camps, they had numbers not names. Rachel had a certain way to memorize their numbers. “J is for Jew, 4 is the amount in my family, my brother thought he was a zero, 2 of were dead and 1 is me.” To get back to New Rochelle, Hannah thought, “New Rochelle, NR04, New Rochelle, 04, my apartment is 04,” and then she teleports back to New



Rochelle.

As the reader I heard about Lublin, but it was frustrating to not know anything about that part of the story. "...And there's Lublin, it's like I'm being told that story, it is like Lublin was a dream I can't remember." And New Rochelle, what was happening there? Did time freeze or are the parents wondering where Hannah went?

There is something in this book that I like about how much Hannah matures and is able to better take it all in. She went from "typical teen" to a protector of the children, helping them hide. Gone was the whining and Hannah was forced to grow up, or die!

A Book Worth Reading (kind of)

by Melina

I want to say this is a good book. But I can't. There are some things that gives it a low score, like the author's writing style. I think it went too fast for me.

The beginning starts out with Bruno moving to Auschwitz and hating it. He thinks the whole thing was a mistake leaving his three best friends for life: Karl, Daniel and Martin. Until he meets his new friend, Shmuel, a boy who is forced to work in a concentration camp. It turns out Shmuel is the same age as Bruno; it take only seconds for these two to become friends. Bruno visits Shmuel every day, to find that their friendship only grows stronger. One slow day Bruno's dad (his father is a high-ranking officer) gets a visit from "the fury" (Hitler). Bruno really doesn't know what is going on. Neither Shmuel nor Bruno knows what is happening or what is going to happen but they both know no matter what they will, try to stick together. One day Shmuel comes to Bruno's house to work and clean dishes. Bruno notices Shmuel is hungry so Bruno reaches into the fridge and grabs Shmuel something to eat. The soldier realizes that Shmuel has been eating. The soldiers asks Bruno a hard question "Do you know this boy?" Thankfully Bruno says "no." I like how their relationship works out, each other not fully knowing why they are there. Or what they did wrong to get there.

Here is a quote when Bruno is talking to his father about the people in the striped pajamas: "'No, not them,' said Bruno. 'The people I see from the window. In the huts, in the distance. They're all dressed the same.' 'Ah, those people,' said Father, nodding his head and smiling slightly. 'Those people... well; they're not people at all, Bruno.'" After

this Bruno has a good sense of who they are. But it doesn't change Bruno and Shmuel's relationship at all. I think this is the most meaningful part. I like how strong of a relationship they have even though they are total opposites.

Towards the end you know things aren't going to be good. I also think this book is really predictable; every chapter is like a clue to the next one. Like the part where Bruno visits Shmuel right before he is about to move back to Berlin. You know something sad is going to happen.

Overall I thought this book on a scale of 1 to 10 was a 7. I just thought the book went pretty fast like one moment Bruno is moving to a new place and the next he is making friends with Shmuel. I think this book is a good read for kids in third-fourth grade.

Zig Zags?

by Philip

"The Zig Zag Kid," a novel by David Grossman, is an adventure that never stops.

It is not very old for a Jewish book, being from 1994. The story itself seemed to be aimed at nine-year-olds, but I think 309 pages is a bit overwhelming for most nine-year-olds of today.

Nonny, the main character, is a child detective that is always trying to follow his father's footsteps. He wants to be an Israeli cop. Felix Glick is the second main character; he takes Nonny on the journey throughout the book, telling him secrets, and going by his own laws. Lola was a minor character that was a famous actor. She may have been a minor character, but not minor in the plot. The Zig Zag? It is only mentioned once in the entire book of 309 pages. The character was not really displayed on an emotional level, which I do not like, but it did say a little bit of what he was thinking.

Nonny is having his bar mitzvah in a few days. He has no idea what he is in for. Nonny goes on an action packed adventure full of crime mystery and secrets. He thought he was going to his uncle's house when his family (or what's left of it) had set up an adventure. He goes around Israel with a top criminal who is constantly changing disguises and keeping a low profile. This book does not quite sat-

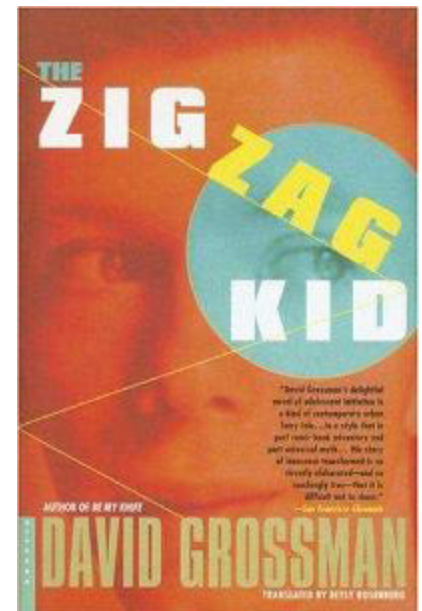
isfy me in terms of plot. I think that this book had some flaws, but was okay, I guess. The ending was extremely dissatisfying. It just didn't make sense. It all seemed like it was leading up to something that wasn't there.

Haifa ahoy! Being set near a beach in 21st century north Israel was a big part be-

cause the beach was a holder of many secrets. I sort of liked the setting, but it never really had any plot in a specific setting; the plot was on the road. I liked how they were always sort of on the move. I think that the author wanted to get a sort of western theme, just in Israel. The reason I think that is because he had disguises and car chases and big lies.

Another thing I didn't like was that it seemed a bit disorganized, like for instance it would be talking about the story, then just go off into memories and then finish the chapter. That made it all seem kind of jumbled up.

Overall, I think it might have been a good book if the author hadn't gotten so carried away. It seemed as if he had the book, and then just tried to add more pages. He did, but then the book became pointless to me. I would not recommend this book.



The Tale of Bruno The Magnificent

by Will

I've never been the son of a Nazi officer. But Bruno has. One day after a long day at school, Bruno comes home to find the house maid packing his thing to leave to go to a new home. Bruno is devastated that he must leave the best house in the world not to mention him saying goodbye to his best friends for life. When Bruno gets to his new home called Out-With Bruno hates it, but everyday he's able to get more comfortable with the house. One day Bruno gets bored and decides to take a walk. The first place that comes to his mind is the fence that he saw earlier. As Bruno is walking, he sees a

"Bruno asks a bunch of questions but doesn't get that Shmuel is on that side of the fence for a reason."

black speck. No, not a speck. As Bruno gets closer he can see the body of another human. The boy says his name is Shmuel, and Bruno quickly finds out that they were born on the same day and year. Bruno asks a bunch of questions but doesn't get that Shmuel is on that side of the fence for a reason. And not by choice. Bruno keeps coming to the boy every day bringing him food and water. Bruno wants to play with Shmuel every day. So every day Bruno asked Shmuel if he would like to play with him. But Shmuel would say the same thing every time and tell Bruno that it's probably not a good idea.

The author, John Boyne, really emphasizes this story of *The Boy in Striped Pajamas* well. He really makes every word come out for a reason. There was never a part in the book that wasn't interesting. I know because I was hooked on the first sentence of the book when Bruno comes home to find the family maid packing his stuff. I wanted to keep reading there so I would know why they were packing his stuff, so I kept reading. This wasn't my favorite book but it was worth reading. It's very engaging and captivating. This is a book for people who want a fast reading novel about a German kid who makes friends with a Jewish boy. The book takes place in the 1940's which is the time of the Holocaust. The story could not have taken place at any other time or in any other location.

The Portland Jewish Academy Book Review

The Portland Jewish Academy Book Review is a Sixth Grade Humanities publication celebrating Jewish Book Month. During November 2011, all sixth grade students were required to read a book with Jewish content. This year's class all chose fictional works, most relating in some way to the Holocaust. After reading their chosen books, students closely examined several reviews of young adult literature from *The New York Times Book Review*. In addition to recognizing the informal tone of these reviews and how the writers shared content without giving away any surprises, students noted the unique stylistic choices used in this publication (quotation marks around the titles of books, for instance, rather than the more standardized underlining or italicizing). The sixth graders then wrote their own reviews incorporating their opinions about the plot, setting, characters and author's writing style, as well as short excerpts from the texts that helped support particular points they wanted to emphasize. Each student revised his or her written work several times before submitting it for publication. Final reviews may contain occasional grammatical errors as well as opportunities for idea clarification or elaboration. This is to be expected from developing writers, especially when experimenting with a new form of writing for the first time.

It is hoped that the opinions of these thoughtful and insightful readers will lead to many conversations about what makes a book great and will inspire others to read some of the most appreciated titles.

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