

The Portland Jewish Academy Book Review

A Sixth Grade Humanities Publication Celebrating Jewish Book Month 2013

A “Fictional” Book

by Olivia J.

Have you ever been to a Passover Seder? If so, you would know that your little brother has to ask the four questions. Or that you have to help your Aunt Eva in the kitchen. Or that you have the responsibility of lighting the candles. You would know that you get to drink your first watered-down cup of wine that leaves a tickle in your nose and a buzz in your head. Or that you have to listen to the story of the Holocaust. You might be bored and swing your legs back and forth under the table or stare out the window while the endless seder keeps going on and on and on. In the book “Devil’s Arithmetic” by Jane Yolen, there is a character named Hannah, and this is exactly what happens to her. But with a twist...

When 13-year-old Hannah goes to the door to greet Elijah the Prophet, she did not expect to go back in time to 1942, much less for her name to suddenly be changed to Chaya. With her family gone, she meets new people and learns about her new “past.” Apparently, she had lived in Lublin, Poland, and her parents had died. She had nearly died herself and was sick for many days. She had been brought to her aunt and uncle’s house, treated like a baby bird with a broken wing. Then, on her uncles’s wedding day, black trucks had come and told them they had to get in there. This jogs Hannah’s memory, and she realizes that all the stories that people told her were much worse than it sounded.

This book included so many true events, it barely passed as historical fiction. Nearly everything in this book was true. Yolen even said it herself in

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the author’s note: “Only the characters are made up.” It didn’t wander off into the land of make-believe, it stayed within the world of the camp. Everything was truthful; the watery potato soup, the hard work. Yolen delivers this information in a delicate yet forceful way. ““Do not be afraid.” Rivka said quickly. ‘We have little to fear in the night. Any “Choosing” is done during the day. They do not run the gas ovens at night. They let us out for an hour each evening for enforced recreation. If you are alive now, this minute, it is enough.”’ This excerpt stood out to me because it all seems so

real. Like it actually could have been what someone had said.

In this book, Hannah slowly started forgetting who she was back in New Rochelle at the Passover seder and molded into a girl named Chaya from Lublin. She forgot her family, friends, and every memory from her past. She became frustrated with the emptiness in her head, the hole in her heart where love for her past used to take place. She was too far into the world of sadness and hope to go back to the land of television and modern medicine. So she kept venturing on, with only her partly conscious mind and heavy heart to help her through her journey.

At the end of the book (I won’t spoil anything), Hannah finds the connection between her and Chaya. I love that moment because it tells you why you have read the story. It makes the whole book seem more clear, and you have that ‘ah-ha’ moment of realization. It’s not one of those things that makes you say, “I nearly knew it!” It’s more of a time when after reading, you just think for a few minutes about what you just read. Savor that feeling and love it until it’s gone.

When the book ended, I was deeply satisfied. I had bounded through Yolen’s incredible story and enjoyed it so much. I thought it was a great book filled with sadness and belief throughout. I would recommend it for ages ten and up because it was a mature book that I didn’t think should just be for middle school; it should also be for kids in about fourth or fifth grade. Kids should be familiar with the Holocaust because even though they won’t be able to wrap their heads around it, at least they won’t have to ask what it is when someone brings it up or ask why nobody told them. I think this book would be a great way to tell kids about this historical event because it keeps it relatable when it comes to Hannah but still move along with Chaya as she makes her way across the page.

The Reviewer Who Dared

by Lydia

My whole life I’ve heard stories and read books of how the Jews were affected by Hitler. But this was the first book I’ve read that really talks about how Hitler affected not just the Jews but Germans as well. The title of the book is “The Boy Who Dared” written by Susan Campbell Bartoletti. The book starts off with a seventeen-year-old boy named Helmuth who is in a German prison. It goes on to have flashbacks of his childhood and turns into the story of how he got to prison. It’s a story of how Helmuth’s mother got remarried to a Nazi and Helmuth is forced to join the Hitler Youth Group. But when Helmuth’s half brother Gerhard comes back to town from war, he brought back an illegal radio. At that time Hitler would only allow Germans to listen to approved German radio stations. Gerhard has always been smarter and wiser than Helmuth and

so he won't let him listen to the radio. Helmuth wouldn't listen to Gerhard and he listened to the British radio station. Helmuth finds out Hitler has been lying to them! Helmuth is so disgusted that he starts making pamphlets telling other Germans about all the lies and what is really going on.

This was a very interesting book of how Hitler affected not only the Jews but also all the other Germans. This is in the point of view of a teenage boy affected by Hitler and the Nazis. When I was reading this book I could not quite get myself to stop. This book had many qualities I liked about it such as how in the writing there is a darkness that you can just sense. As a reader I appreciated that because it kept the dark theme of the book intact the entire time. There were certain things I did not like, like how in some parts of the story there was unnecessary punctuation. There would be certain phrases that after each word would be a period and it made it very bumpy and difficult to read, and it made it feel that it ruined the "flow" of the story. Another thing I did not enjoy was the point of view it was written in. It was written in the point of view as a person telling the story but I would have enjoyed

it better if it was told in the point of view of the main character Helmuth because I would have liked to know all the things he was thinking about in his mind.

Overall this was a good read that I would read again, and I highly recommend it to more mature readers. There are some more disturbing moments in the book that may be uncomfortable for some readers.

Away From Home

by Zoe

Right now I can't think of any reason I would want to run away from home. Even if I were very mad at my mom, or brother where would I stay, would I live at my friend's house, or in the woods? How would I get my food? Even though Ben, the main character of "Whirlwind," has somewhere, his Uncle Isaac's home, to go to, how would he get there? I would consider a lot of things before I ran away from home. I was very surprised when Ben actually ran away the next day. That's a good thing though, keeps the suspense going!

During school one day Ben, the main character, is told to leave and never come back again. That worried Ben, he thought that even though his parents had been kicked from their jobs

Ben didn't think they would come for the kids. That was when his father decided their family had to leave Germany. There was too much danger from the Nazis. This was very difficult for Ben because that meant leaving his best friend behind. I know how Ben feels because in fourth grade one of my best friends moved to Israel. It was very hard at first, but eventually I got used to it, and we still kept in touch. It was probably harder for Ben because he was moving, and not only leaving his friend behind but also his grandparents. Also he had to get used to living in a different environment

because he moved away, not his friend.

One thing I enjoyed about this book was getting to know the characters. Each character was interesting and unique compared to the rest. Ben thinks that the bad guys are always there, waiting to come and get his family. The father assures him that everything will be fine, but Ben doesn't believe him. I think the reason Ben acts like this is because he gets into lots of fights at school. This makes him realize that the enemy is everywhere.

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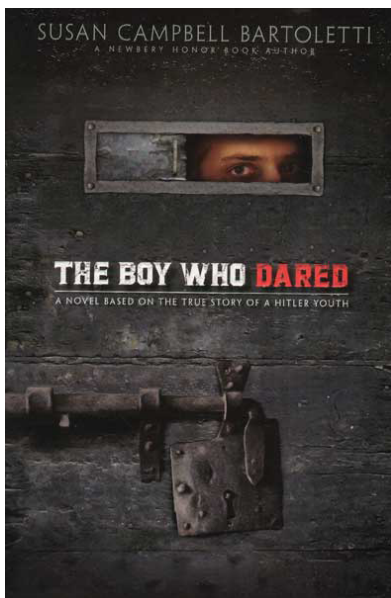
Ben only makes one friend after his family leaves Germany for Seattle. His friend's name is John. They get along very well and stand up for each other. That is a very helpful thing for Ben because it seems that he comes home from school with new bruises every day. It takes a while, but Ben is invited to join the school track team. He gets along fine with everyone there, luckily. Someone even invites him to get ice cream on

Thursday after school! Ben has finally found more friends.

Ben thinks he is fed up with his father because he won't move out of the path of the Nazis. I think Ben is actually just acting fed up because he is worried about his family getting taken away. The first time he just runs away to his friend's house. He comes home after a while when he realizes staying away won't help. Then later Ben runs away again. This time however he goes all the way to Canada on a bus, which is a problem because the border is not allowing Jews to pass. Once Ben gets in, he notices that Canada is just as bad, even worse than Seattle. Then his father can't even come and take him back home. Ben thinks the only reason he goes to Canada is to see his Uncle Isaac who moved there. I think that he was also trying to run away from the hate in Seattle. Even though some people at school are starting to open up, most of the kids still hate and bully Ben. He just wants there to be peace for the Jews.

My favorite part of this book is how realistic it is. This way it is more suspenseful and livelier. Sometimes the good guys actually get hurt. This enriches the book a lot because usually it seems the main good character escapes unscathed. This makes the book much more engaging and keeps you wondering about the health of the main character. Ben also gets into lots of fights, especially after chess club. A boy named Bill, who is chosen as Ben's chess partner, bullies him after school/chess club nearly every day. This brings that characteristic out much more.

One thing that needs improving about this book is the amount of detail. A lot of the time I felt like I was missing



something. At the beginning when Ben was telling his friend he could translate anything, there was a small argument but it felt like they were both saying okay to the other. Then again during Ben's dream he fights but it feels like he just runs. There was something missing that I wanted to know. I think I would have enjoyed the book much more with the extra detail.

Overall I enjoyed the book although it could have been a bit longer. I could imagine what Ben was doing but it was difficult because of the lack of detail. When the characters got hurt I always wondered if they would make it out of the problem okay. I found a lot of suspense and the characters always did surprising things. When Ben decided to run away to Canada, I never thought he would follow through, but then the next day he was gone. I thought the author's choices in "Whirlwind" were all well educated decisions that made this book more interesting.

Trapped in a Different Time

by Zach

When I used to think of the Holocaust, I pictured people being rounded up into cattle cars and being flushed out of the public eye and taken to a prison camp to die one way or another. After all, isn't that what the Holocaust was about, just killing off an innocent people in the blink of an eye? I mean over eleven million people were killed in this tragic event, six million of them Jews. Or was there a more secret operation where the Nazis forced innocent people into hard labor for their needs? Well, the answer is yes, there was.

The book "Stones in Water" by the America-Italian author Donna Jo Napoli takes readers into the world of

Venice, Italy, in the early 1940s. The book starts when the main character, a young teen named Roberto, is offered tickets to an American western movie. Since Italy has just declared war on America, Roberto takes the tickets since it might be the last time that he ever sees that kind of movie. Roberto then invites his older brother Sergio and his Jewish friend Samuel to come along. But soon after they arrive in the theater the lights are switched on and shock turns to horror as Nazi soldiers march into the theater, taking Roberto and Samuel into a situation they had never wanted to be in.

As the story keeps moving on, it gets more and more suspenseful as Roberto and Samuel need to escape before the Nazis find out Samuel's true identity and move Samuel away from his best friend...forever?

This book was very dramatic and suspenseful at times, which caused me to get more interested in it. Although I felt that the book had kind of a sluggish start, it totally got more interesting later in the book when something horrible happens, which offers a great opportunity for Roberto to escape.

Another thing I liked about this book was the fact that even though it was not all true, the author told the story in such a true way that it seemed totally real until I found out that it

wasn't. And that brings me to another positive in this story: the representation of the main character, Roberto, was based very, very loosely off of the experiences of Guido Fullin, who was also abducted by the Nazis during World War II. I felt that the author did a good job by weaving the real life experience of somebody and adding in fictional parts that made the main character, Roberto, come to life.

Even though this book was very interesting and was a good piece of literature, I still had some issues with it. For one point, it could get a little dull at some points in the story. For example when Roberto and Samuel were working on a farm doing the same stuff every page soon became dull which made me less interested in it. Another reason is that like a lot of books that I have read, the ending left me hanging and wondering, which is not a bad thing if a book is in a series, but since this book stands alone, it was kind of annoying.

A Great Escape!

by Isabel

I know you've all seen a magician at one point or another. If it was a good one, then you hopefully know how magicians can be awe inspiring and mysterious.

You may ask, what about Houdini? If so, then here's a book for you.

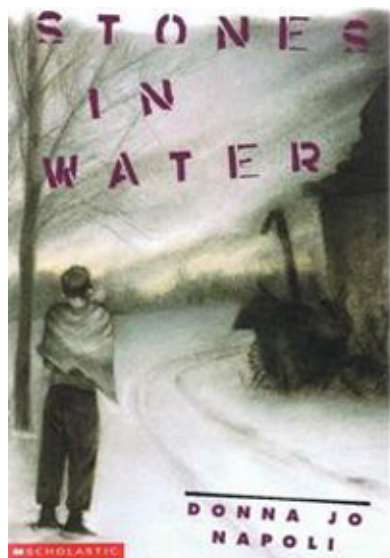
"Escape! The Story of the Great Houdini" is a well-written book about Houdini's life. I liked it because in some parts it seems almost like you're sitting there in the front row, watching the show.

It is written by Sid Fleischman, a distinguished author who lives in Santa Monica, California. He has written many books and has received a Newberry medal for his book "The Whipping Boy."

Sid Fleischman knew Houdini's widow Bess. She was the one who gave him many of the never before seen photos in this book.

It's nice how this book, unlike most, focuses on Houdini's whole life, and not just the part that people already know about. I also enjoyed the fact that it goes into so much detail. For example it tells you that his real name was Ehrich Weiss and that he got seasick easily. The interspersed pictures grab your attention and hold it there until it seems like you are seeing for yourself all Houdini's miraculous feats (such as staying underwater in a iron coffin for 90 minutes in a hotel pool).

The only thing I would've liked is if Sid Fleischman had told the solutions



to just a few of the tricks and said a bit more about the legends surrounding Houdini. Other than that I think that it was a very good book.

Overall, "Escape! The Story of the Great Houdini" is a fascinating book that you must read.

A Withering Rose

by Cassie

Have you ever had a question where the answer seemed to be lost, where the answer was buried in a story with hardships and miracles, where the answer was only burdening those who were lucky enough to hold the memory? In this story, a girl named Becca does.

I would recommend "Briar Rose" for more mature readers looking for a bit of action, suspense, and emotion.

This story is about a little girl always being told the story of Briar Rose, more commonly known as Sleeping Beauty. All throughout her childhood her grandmother tells her the story of Briar Rose. As she grows older she and her family wonder about their grandmother's past. After her grandmother dies, she starts a search. She finds some old files in a hidden box in her grandmother's old apartment, and she digs further. When in the process of digging she realizes the only way to get more information is to go where the files said she was. At the extermination camp called Kulmhoff.

I thought that Jane Yolen clearly explained the horrors of the Holocaust and how it affected many different people. It saddens me to read Holocaust books on how our world didn't accept certain people for their religion, for their color, or for their status in the community. Having these sorts of stereotypes is how our world gets separated.

I have read many different Holocaust books and I think "Briar Rose" clearly states everything that

made the Holocaust such a tragedy: "The distinction was lost on the 100,000 people who died there". Jane Yolen seems to be focusing more on the tragedy of who was lost. I think that Jane Yolen really has a deep understanding of the Holocaust and how it had such an impact on everyone who lived through it, some people won't even talk about it; they're so mortified about what had happened.

All throughout the book there was this element of suspense. At first it starts out with the characters as adults then it switches every other chapter to Gemma telling them the story as kids. As the story went on all the pieces fit together and the story finally made sense in retrospect. The actual meaning of Gemma's story to me was a bit surprising. The way Gemma told it was nothing like it actually happened. As it happens though, I love surprises so I thought that part was well put together.

I thought Jane Yolen's writing style had some good traits but at some times I felt like she could have ended the subject earlier. Like with "'And no one could see out,' Sylvia said. 'But you didn't say about the barbs.' 'I want to hear the story,' Shana said nudging her sister.'" In this passage, the writer had already written a lot on how the sisters wanted to know what the barbs

were and also about them fighting. So this felt repetitive to me.

What the author seemed to do while writing the book was over explain some stuff in the book, but at the end she didn't explain enough. It really disappoints me when authors do that because to me the ending of the book is the most important not just the writing leading up to the end. Although the writing leading up to the end is important, it's less important than the ending. Having read all the over explained stuff in the book it led me to think there would be a

deeply explained ending.

Overall this book was a good read with a lot of believable information. Although there were some flaws with the way the author chose to write this book, the story line was well written and explained. If someone were to ask me about "Briar Rose," I would say it explains the Holocaust well and it has some creative elements to it.

The Boy on the Other Side of the Fence

by Isabella

In the book, "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," the author chooses a different direction to write about the Holocaust. Instead of telling the story of a Jewish family who has to leave for the concentration camps, John Boyne chose to tell the story from a clueless boy who is the son of a Nazi who didn't understand what was happening around him. I thought how he chose to write the book was very interesting because most writers don't choose to write Holocaust books that way.

In this book Bruno has to move because of his father's job. He doesn't want to leave Berlin and his friends. Bruno had always wondered what his father did. No one ever told him. But they said it was very important. He never learned that his father was one of the most important Nazis and controlled many concentration camps. When he first came to his house, out his window he saw people of all ages wearing striped pajamas walking around a gated area with huts; he didn't know what it was. He asked his parents but they just said it was nothing to worry about.

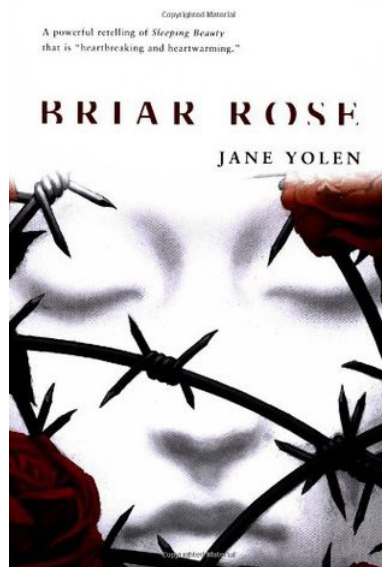
Bruno doesn't like his new house, he wants to go back to Berlin.

When Bruno knew he was never going back to Berlin, he went exploring. He found a boy named Shmuel behind

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a fence. "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas" made me feel like I was in the book, I was sad when Shmuel was, and confused and angry when Bruno was.

John Boyne didn't write in an over poetic way but there is still details. He



gets the personality of the characters and makes them feel real. Bruno thinks Shmuel is lucky to live with many other boys when Bruno is the only other boy where he lives. In this book Bruno tries to find out what his father does.

This book made me realize how many people at that time didn't know what was happening, and how people were treating good people badly just because of who they were. "With the other Jews, Bruno. Didn't you know that? That's why they have to be kept together. They can't mix with us," Bruno's sister said when he was asking about Shmuel. When they didn't even know them, and they were just listening to other people.

I would recommend this book for people who don't want a lot of action and just want a detailed and well-written book. But if you do not like sad books, I wouldn't recommend this to you. I wish John Boyne told more about some of the minor characters like the Bruno's parents and told more of the story about how Bruno's Grandparents ignored Bruno's father because he became a important Nazi. I love how the author didn't tell you everything that was happening and left me to keep reading to find the surprises. The book made me guess what would happen next. This book was very slow paced and at some places in the book it got a little boring. At the end it had a sad cliffhanger ending that I thought was very sad. In the end Bruno never did learn what his father did, or why Shmuel did live behind the fence and could never come play with him.

Forgot About Rain

by Olivia F.

No one has ever become poor by giving." "Laziness may seem attractive, but work gives satisfaction." "Whoever is happy will make others happy too." You may have heard these words before, but they were written first in "Anne Frank: a Diary of a Young Girl," in which

Anne Frank chronicles her life and her experience of the Holocaust.

Anne Frank was a Jewish girl living in Frankfurt and Amsterdam in the 1930's and 1940's. Her story retells the Nazi invasion of the country and the subsequent deportation of the Jews to concentration camps. Her diary is a remarkable chronicle of this historic event.

When Anne went into hiding at an office building, she was there with her father, Otto Frank, her mother, Edith Frank, her sister Margot Frank, the Van Daan family, and a dentist named Albert Dussel. There was a very exact set of rules for their lives together such as: the washtub is only available

for residents after 9 am on Sundays. The kitchen, private office, or main offices are available to occupy for the time that one bathes.

When I first started reading Anne's diary I felt the incredible importance the book had to her. She had no one else to share

her thoughts with or so she felt, so she wrote everything she had to think in her diary. She named her diary Kitty and addressed her entries to Kitty.

I had no problem relating to Anne. She was a normal girl, with normal feelings. Sometimes she would get into fights with her parents, or just feel plain lonely. I felt as if her words were pointed directly at me, because at heart we are all the same people with all the same feelings, no matter what era, or race we are from.

As the book I read is a diary, it felt odd to critique it. How could you say: "It was too slow," There wasn't enough action," or "The characters weren't believable," when these are real people, doing real things. My main critique is

that I didn't know what life was like outside the annex that Anne and her family stayed in.

I think the book should be read by everyone wanting to learn more about the Holocaust, its effect on the world, and individuals.

Most of us know how it ends. Anne and her family get arrested by Nazi soldiers and are held captive. Many of them died. The book stands not only as a testament to brutality but also offers a stunning portrait of a young girl. Reading the book made me sad for the loss of such a special person whose personal voice comes through so strongly.

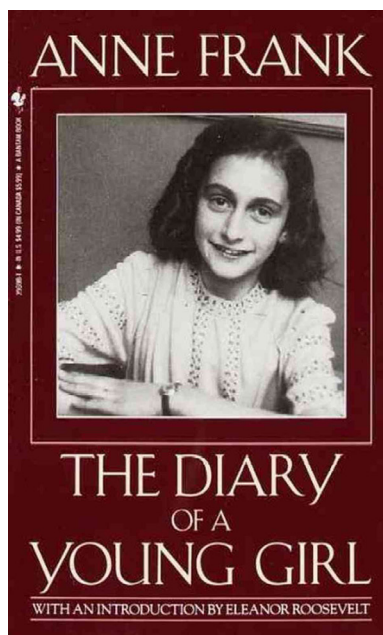
The Kids of Brooklyn

by Sophia

Most Jewish books are about the Holocaust or a family celebrating a Jewish holiday. But in this historical fiction, "Brooklyn Bridge" by Karen Hesse, the only thing Jewish is the main characters' family. They aren't orthodox, but they follow most of the Jewish laws.

Joseph Michtom, more regularly known as Joe, is fourteen. It's the summer of 1903. His parents used to run a candy shop. They made enough money and Joe had a lot of friends on his block. But one day, his mother and father were reading the newspaper and saw a comic about President Theodore Roosevelt not wanting to shoot a bear cub. That gave Joe's parents the idea of the teddy bear, which made them somewhat rich and so Joe's friends thought less of him. Joe also had to start helping out with the bear business so he had less time to play stickball with his "friends."

Joe has a younger sister, Emily Michtom who is ten, and a younger brother, Benjamin Michtom who is two. Emily is one of my favorite characters in the book, she loves to read and is fine with watching her little brother, which I can relate to. His mother is Mama Michtom and his father is Morris Michtom. Joe has three aunts and an uncle in Brooklyn: Aunt Mouse, A.K.A Lena, Aunt Beast, The Queen, and Uncle Meyer. He is closest with Uncle Meyer, who is there for Joe to talk to, and The Queen who is there



to give advice.

All of Joe's friends have already been, or are going to Coney Island, the most exciting place on earth. Joe's family has no plans of going anywhere this summer because their bear business is too important. He spends his time working, watching Benjamin, and going to his aunt's houses.

Karen Hesse is great at drawing a picture in your head. She puts so many adjectives in one scene and it feels like your almost there with the characters: "The air no longer shimmered in the July heat. It was cool in there, calm. I heard it moments before I saw it. Where three paths came together we stopped. Uncle Meyer had brought me to a small waterfall. It splashed on to a fern-filled grotto. How many times had I been to Prospect Park? How many hours had I spent there? And this I'd never seen before." In this excerpt, I think the author captures a lot of what the character was thinking and detail of the setting. My favorite part of the excerpt is where Karen Hesse talks about how air shimmers when it's hot. I know exactly what she means because of such well used wording.

She also captures the opinion of a character in detail. The main character was always thinking to himself and the ideas or thoughts he had were described really well. I like all the characters in the book, especially Emily because I can relate to her. All the characters fit together really well. None of them stood out more than another or was in a completely different world.

I like how the author tells two stories and combines them at the end. At first it seems like there are just two stories being told, but in the last few chapters, they come together in a way that no one could have guessed. Well, I guess you could guess if you thought really hard but I was too busy wanting to read on.

This book would get four and a half teddy bears out of five because there were a few places that confused me a little and also there was too much detail in some places that made the plot go slowly. I would be reading and then think, "Is it almost to the exciting part?" In my opinion, the main story

was a little boring and the less detailed story was more interesting.

I would recommend this book to anyone who likes an adventure, mystery, or just a nice story. I would say kids eight and up should read it because there are a few parts that younger kids wouldn't exactly understand like there is a boy who lives on the same street as the main

character and he has a mental disability so some kids might not understand that.

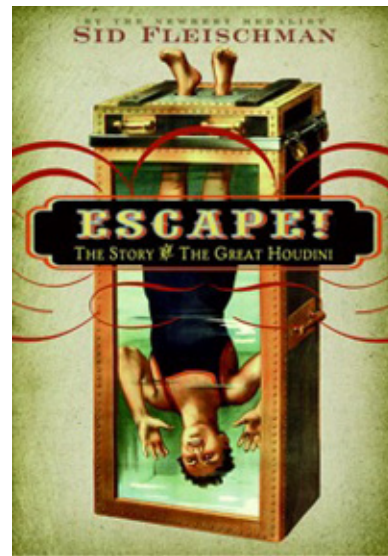
This book is a great read for any day and would definitely keep me hooked till the end. Every chapter seemed new and it didn't repeat itself. This book ties together family hardships but also how much you have if you compare to other situations. Karen Hesse does a great job putting an interesting plot with a good moral.

The Poorly Planned "Escape"

by Juliana

I was on an airplane when my mother was reading to me. I was only seven, but I realized that not all books were to my liking. When we landed I was relieved that we only had to read to chapter one. One day in sixth grade I picked up the same book "Escape" by Sid Fleischman and wondered if I would think differently about the book. In addition to "Escape," Mr. Fleischman has written "Wild West" and "The Ghost in New Day Sun," two Newbery medal winning books. The magical and mysterious portions of the book excited me, but the parts without those elements seemed boring.

My favorite character was Houdini because he was so secretive and hid so many things, but Sid did not mention all of these in this book. If I could change "Escape" I would write more about his secrets and mysteries and less about his daily life. Sid Fleischman did a great



job making the interesting parts fascinating, but did not do his best on taking out the boring parts.

Houdini was a famous magician at age 17. As a young man he performed in front of small groups. In the early part of his career, his tricks were simple and not dangerous.

Later in Houdini's career he performed more dangerous stunts. This part of the book got more exciting, but the author repeated Houdini's life over and over again, and the exciting became boring.

When I read this book I thought there were not enough of Houdini's words. Instead it was continuously Sid Fleischman describing Houdini's thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Throughout the book the main plot revolves around Houdini keeping his magic tricks secret. I liked that there was a lot of suspense held in the story, but my questions were never answered.

I think someone who would like this book would be a person who doesn't want to dig deep into Houdini's life. Clearly it doesn't matter if you are either seven or eleven.

The Story Inside the Suitcase

by Dina

In March 2000, a suitcase arrived at a children's Holocaust education center in Tokyo, Japan. On the outside, in white paint, were these words: Hana Brady, May 16, 1931, and Waisenkind – the German word for orphan."

Karen Levine tells an unfortunate story of a girl named Hana Brady in the book "Hana's Suitcase." Hana had two parents named Karel Brady, her father, and Marketa, her mother. She also had an older brother named George.

She lived right in the center of the town in Czechoslovakia. Her parents owned the town's general store where people could buy almost anything. Hana

and her brother loved to ski, and they would enter skiing competitions. Hana would also like to ice skate. Hana had a little red dress she would wear while she would ice skate in the wintertime. One night Hana's mom got taken away because the war was starting and there was already a Nazi patrolling the streets of their neighborhood.

It all started when Fumiko got a job working at a Holocaust Museum and she needed a couple objects to have for show. She kept asking different museums for things. They all said "no." Then she asked the Auschwitz Museum and they said "no" too. Then one day Fumiko got a package from the Auschwitz Museum and inside was a suitcase, Hana's Suitcase.

I started to read the minute I got the book. I thought it was really good because it had a lot of information in only the prologue and first chapter. I wanted to keep reading on. While I was reading through the book, I noticed it had a lot of detail and I thought that was good considering the book wasn't that long. What I also noticed and liked were the pictures because that book could still be informative and still have pictures. The pictures also kept the book interesting and showed what was happening in Hana's and her family's life.

Even though there was enough information to tell Hana's story, I wish there was a little more information about Hana or more at the end about George. Sometimes in the book it wasn't always that understandable because it switched back and forth with two different stories. I remember reading this one part in the book when I didn't really understand where Fumiko was. It would help, though, to read the chapter titles because they do tell you where and when the action is taking place.

While Levine is telling the story of Hana Brady she is also telling one about Fumiko Ishioka and the Little Wings of the Tokyo Holocaust Education Resource Center trying to find the story about Hana.

Overall while reading this book I thought it was really good because I learned a lot and it was a very emotional topic. I think I would definitely read this book again and recommend it to everybody.

A Story of a Holocaust Rescuer

by Leanne

In the beginning of "In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer," a true story by Irene Gut Opdyke, there is a story where Irene was tottering toward a river and her dog, Myszaka, followed. And then Myszaka sunk her teeth into Irene's diaper to keep her away from the water. Then they had a tug-a-war where Irene was trying to go to the river while Myszaka was trying to keep Irene away from the dangerous water. Then her mom came outside and rushed towards Irene and scooped her up so she would not be swept away by the current. Irene's mom, Maria, praised Myszaka. For many days Myszaka was the talk of Kozenice, where Irene lived. Once a rabbi came to their house and blessed them both. Another time their priest came and told Maria, "God has plans for your daughter, Pani Gutowna. We must watch to see what little Irenka does." I really liked the story because it is amazing to me how Myszaka knew that Irene should not go close to the river because it was dangerous. I also think it is a miracle that Maria saw what was going on and saved Irene before she reached the river. Also I think the priest was correct about God having plans for Irene because she saves sixteen

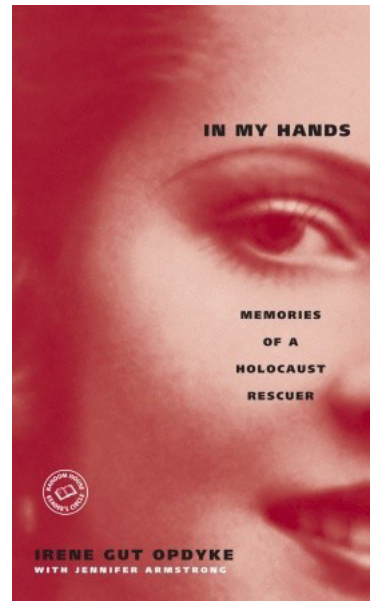
people's lives as an adult.

Irene was born on May 5, 1922, in Kozenice, Poland. She was the first child born to Maria and Wladyslaw Gut. Irene had four other sisters. Irene was the oldest, then Janina, then Marysia, then Bronia, and Wladzia was the youngest.

One of Irene's passages from the book is, "By this time, the four of us were crying uncontrollably. Helen was on her knees, sobbing in her mother's arms. Janina turned her face away. But I watched, flattening myself against the window. As I pressed myself against the glass, I saw an officer making a flinging movement with his arm, and something rose up into the sky like a fat bird. With his other hand he aimed his pistol, and the bird plummeted to the ground beside its screaming mother, and the officer shot the mother, too. But it was not a bird. It was not a bird. It was not a bird."

Irene's new friend, Helen, who is Polish has a husband who is Jewish so he was taken to a concentration camp. One day Helen had heard a rumor that a large number of the Jews from the Arbeitslagers were being held in a nearby village. Helen begged Irene and Janina to go with her mother and her to find her husband, Henry. Irene and Janina agreed to come with them. They did not find Henry, but they did see many people die. This part really made me sad because it showed that the officers did not care about people and would not spare anyone's life if they were Jewish. Not even a baby.

Irene worked at a restaurant before working at the major's house. She would take some of the food she got for being a waiter and she would put food under the fence to the concentration camp near the restaurant. She then started saving people's lives. Irene's story is really amazing to me because



she saved sixteen people's lives. She hid about thirteen people in a German major's house. The other three people she brought to a forest so they would not be killed.

Irene died on May 17, 2003.

I thought this book was a page turner because her writing and topic were very interesting for me because I really like learning about the Holocaust and her writing was suspenseful.

One thing I did not like about the book was that it ended too early. Irene was given a great opportunity and I did not learn anything else about her. I also wanted to know more about the people she rescued and what their lives were like after the war. I rate this book four and a half stars out of five because some of it was a little inappropriate for me. I think people ages twelve and up could read this book. Overall I really liked the book.

The Devil's Arithmetic – Adds Up To Good Reading

by Hannah

How would you feel if you had to travel back in time? This is the question Hannah had to answer in the book "The Devil's Arithmetic" by Jane Yolen. The book is about a girl named Hannah who is forced to travel back in time to Nazi Germany in World War II. She is faced with living the life as a young Jewish girl in a difficult time.

The main characters in the story are Hannah, Gitl, Chaya, and Shmuel. Hannah is a 12-year-old girl who likes to think of herself as 13. She has a little brother named Aaron. Hannah actually becomes Chaya when she travels back in time. When she is Chaya she has no recollection of her life as Hannah. Chaya has an uncle named Shmuel. Chaya's uncle lives with her and Gitl. Gitl was really close to Chaya. Gitl was raising Chaya with Shmuel. Shmuel is just about to get married to Fayge his fiancé but right as they are pulling up to the synagogue there stand the Nazi soldiers ready to take them away. The Nazi soldiers take away Chaya's family

and friends to a faraway concentration camp. Their future rests on Chaya.

This book showed a lot of pain and emotion through the characters, and I really admired that. It really makes you think, "I don't know what I would do if that ever happened to me." It captured the average life of a 12 years old girl in a concentration camp. This shows the pain and horror that these innocent people had to go through every day not knowing if they are walking into a shower or to their death in a gas chamber. "I will not tell them that the Nazis often lie and said people were going to take showers when they took them to be killed." Life was rough then. Reading this book makes you realize how lucky you are being a Jew these days and having the freedom to be who you are and not being persecuted and shamed for your religion.

I really liked how Hannah got the opportunity to go back in time and experience the Holocaust. Not that I would ever want her to have to go through that. You can always read about the Holocaust in books but actually

It really makes you think, "I don't know what I would do if that ever happened to me."

getting to experience that is scary. Although the book never tells us, I bet she will never look at the Holocaust the same way. I would imagine everything

would be different for her.

Overall I really liked this book. One of the reasons I really liked this book is because Hannah got to go to the past and experience the Holocaust and be a different person so she could have a different point of view. I really liked the ending of the book and how it all comes together.

The Musical Boy

by Basia

When you think about the Holocaust, you'll probably think; oh yeah, the Holocaust is when the Jews were trying to escape the

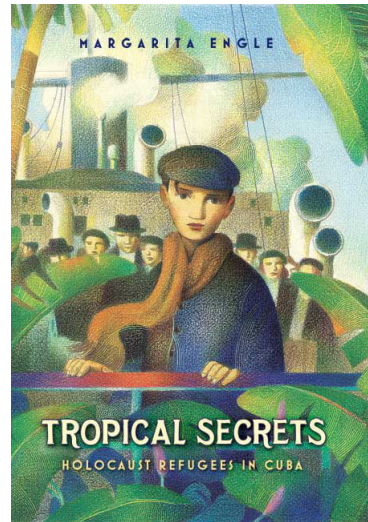
Nazis. Well, that's exactly what the book "Tropical Secrets" by Margarita Engle is about. The writing is from four people's perspective: Daniel, Paloma, David, and El Gordo. This book captures the fictional story of a boy named Daniel. His parents sent him from Nazi Germany in hope that he would make it to America. Daniel's ship gets turned away from America then Canada; Cuba is his only hope. When Cuba finally lets them in, Daniel is overjoyed. Cuba has many animals,

beautiful beaches, and mountains. He meets a man named David. David becomes Daniel's friend. He tells Daniel his background and why he had to leave Germany. Daniel also meets a girl named Paloma. Paloma is not her real name, her real name is MariaDolores. Her mother loved to dance and one day she left Paloma and her father for another man. Paloma's father isn't the nicest guy you'll meet in this story; his name is El Gordo.

Life in Cuba wasn't too bad. The worst thing was the heat. The temperature got up in to the hundreds. Most people would jump into the ocean to cool off. Daniel would do that too but there's one problem, he can't swim. David teaches him to swim so Daniel could also cool off in the water.

One day the guards decide to separate the Christians and the Jews. Many married couples had one person Jewish and the other Christian. There was an old couple who were going to be torn apart and they went to Paloma for help. She said she could hide them in her dove tower for a little bit. After a while her dad started to get suspicious so Paloma had to put the couple on a train to go to her cousin's house to live where they could be safe.

Daniel has a love for music because his parents loved to play music. He makes an instrument out of anything he can find. He made a flute that he would



play all day long.

The writing in this book is in stanzas like poetry. The words seem to flow on the page when you read them. Daniel says: "The strings of the Spanish guitar help my fingers dance through our story. Singing in a world where my parents have disappeared is not a betrayal. I am singing their story too."

I would recommend "Tropical Secrets" for fourth grade and up. On a scale of one to five, I would rate it a five.

Anne Frank's Best Friend's Point of View

by *Nayantara*

Everyone has at least heard of Anne Frank, right? The girl who kept a personal diary during World War II at the height of persecution of Jews in Europe? The one who hid in a secret annex for over two years? The girl who died at the age of 15? If you think about it, Anne Frank was like many other European girls, especially Jewish girls her age during World War II. The only difference is that the other girls didn't maintain diaries that were published and brought them fame posthumously. Anne Frank's diary ended on August 9, 1944.

"Memories of Anne Frank" takes World War II from a different perspective. Alison Leslie Gold, the author of "Memories of Anne Frank" narrates the true story of Hannah or Hanneli Goslar, one of Anne's closest friends. "Memories of Anne Frank" is about Hannah's childhood. It starts from when Hannah found out that Anne had left her home, and it ends when Hannah is about to leave for Switzerland to live with her uncle, her only surviving relative besides Gabi. This story takes Anne Frank's diary a step further, telling about the meeting of Anne Frank and Hannah after Anne Frank was captured.

The book has a strong beginning, such as when Alison Leslie Gold was describing Hannah's childhood. Early in the story, Hannah's mother died giving birth to Hannah's third sister. The baby also died, but Hannah wasn't sad because she had never met the baby before. The description in the story is

so strong that you can almost feel what it was like for Hannah to have lost her mother. A quote from the book that describes this moment is, "Hannah's knees gave away. She started to collapse but her father caught her and clasped her as tightly as he could in his long, bony arms. Gabi started crying for milk. With each passing hour, they cried more, not less."

Right after Hannah's mother died, Hannah and her family (her father, her grandmother, grandfather, and sister) were captured and loaded onto cattle cars set out to a transit camp located in Drente, in Eastern Holland. The camp was called Westerbork. Hannah's father and grandparents were marched away to be put in a different section of the camp. Hannah and Gabi were moved to the Children's Section. Hannah had to work at the Nazi camp. She decided to clean the toilets. She only agreed to do such a dirty job because the toilets were located on the side where her father was confined. She managed to slip out and talk to her father for a few minutes every day.

In the summer, the muddy camp became an ideal place for mosquitoes to have their meals. In the fall, there was wet and cold weather. Hannah and Gabi only had a sweater or two each. They had next to nothing for the winter.

After being in Westerbork for about two weeks, Gabi got a severe fever. Hannah didn't know what to do, and Gabi cried non-stop the whole night. Hannah soon realized there was something wrong. Gabi wouldn't let Hannah touch her. Hannah took Gabi to the doctors, who were also Jewish prisoners, and they operated on Gabi's ears. Gabi was angry but not crying.

In November, after Gabi's ear surgery, Hannah's grandfather suddenly died of a heart attack. Hannah's family

didn't even have time to mourn.

On an evening in January, 1944, Hannah and her father found out that the whole family was going to be transported to another place together. They were pushed onto a cattle car. Hannah's family was on the cattle car for two days, with almost no food. When they arrived, they felt like they were in the middle of nowhere. Hannah and her family finally arrived at the new camp. The camp was called Alballager.

Hannah was separated from her father and grandmother. Alison Leslie Gold described this part very well. A passage that described it well was: "The prisoners had been counted, then immediately recounted. Where had they taken her father and grandmother? Hannah asked this question of a

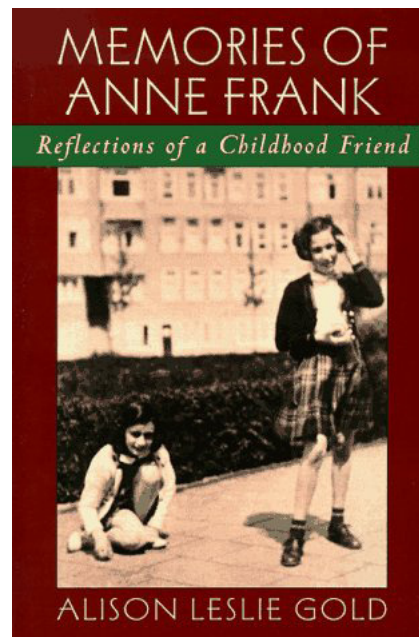
woman who was leading her group but who seemed to be Jewish.

"They are being taken to be deloused and quarantined. Don't worry. You'll see them after that. This woman told Hannah that Alballager was a privileged camp, that her clothes wouldn't be taken, that her hair wouldn't be shaved, that her family wouldn't be separated, that numbers wouldn't be tattooed on their

arms. The woman told Hannah that she was very lucky indeed. She pointed towards other camps beyond their barbed-wire fence, grimaced, and let the pupils of her eyes roll up toward the heavens."

Gabi began to grow weak. Gabi didn't get any milk because she was three and a half years old. A rabbi's wife started giving Gabi milk, and she got better.

Even though giving Gabi milk seems like a minor part of the story, Alison Leslie Gold wrote about how important this incident was to Hannah. To me, this was very touching because



the rabbi's wife could have been giving the milk to her own children instead of giving it to Gabi.

Shortly after Gabi started getting better, Hannah got very sick. Someone told Hannah that she had yellow skin, which meant that she had jaundice. Hannah was terrified because she needed to go to the hospital, but she had to look after Gabi. A woman came over, and offered to look after Gabi while Hannah was in the hospital. I was touched again because the woman was taking her own effort to look after Gabi. I was impressed because the woman was going to look after Gabi without being asked to do so.

After Hannah got better, she heard that there was a new rule about looking at or speaking to the people behind the wire fences. If someone did do any of that, the punishment was death. Some women tried to do it, but Hannah would always be on the safe side. She would not look. One day, somebody told Hannah that there was a woman across the fence who claimed to know her.

At night, she snuck out to the fence. Mrs. van Daan, a woman she vaguely remembered, told her that Anne Frank, Hannah's old friend, was there. Hannah and Anne talked and cried. Anne told Hannah about her years in the secret annex. She also told Hannah a piece of good news: the Germans were losing. Hannah promised to try to meet Anne again.

Hannah met Anne, and tried to throw a package of provisions to her. Someone else took it away from Anne. Hannah was dismayed. Alison Leslie Gold worded this part very well.

"Hannah felt weak but summoned her strength and threw the package over the fence. Immediately there was a scuffling noise and Anne cried out in anguish.

"What happened?"

Anne was crying. "A woman ran over and grabbed it away from me. She won't give it back."

Hannah tried one more time a few days later, and was successful. However, she never got to talk to Anne again.

Hannah's father died, but her remaining family, her grandmother and Gabi were on the exchange list. However, the next day the exchange was cancelled, and Hannah and her family had to stay in the camp.

Hannah got typhus. Luckily, her case was mild, but it could get worse.

Hannah's grandmother gave Hannah a diamond ring that she had somehow kept hidden. A couple of days later, she died. Now Hannah was left with only Gabi.

A month later, news came that the whole camp was being evacuated. The rumor was that they were going to a camp called Theresienstadt, where there were gas chambers. Hannah had to pack up and get on a cattle car.

At one time, the cattle car stopped, and a soldier opened the door. He told everyone to run. Everyone ran in the field and covered their heads as bombs fell. Then the bombs stopped. Everyone had to climb back onto the cattle car.

Finally the torturous cattle car ride was over. When the cattle car stopped, good news awaited her. The direct quote is:

"When Hannah became aware again, the cattle car was at a standstill. The door was open. Except for a few of the very sick people and the dead people on the filthy floor of the cattle car, everyone else was outside in a field. Gabi, too, was gone. Hannah pulled herself to her feet and went to the door. Someone shouted at her, "You missed it!" What had she missed? "The Germans have surrendered! They were marched away with white flags in their hands!"

Hannah was too tired and weak to react.

Alison Leslie Gold described Hannah's first night of freedom very well. She told how Hannah was so tired that she had to resist the urge to "eat like a wolf," and how she fell asleep immediately.

Hannah was rescued, but she was very ill. She met Otto Frank, Anne's father in the hospital. That's where she found out that Anne had died. Otto Frank had arranged for Hannah to go to a sanatorium in Switzerland because she was very sick. Hannah was to stay with her only surviving relative besides Gabi: her uncle.

"Memories of Anne Frank" was very touching. I liked the parts where Hannah and Gabi barely managed to survive because of somebody's kindness. I wouldn't call it a favorite book, though. At some parts the book seemed to go too quickly. "Memories of Anne Frank" was a quick read, which could have been benefitted by more detail and a longer ending.

The Portland Jewish Academy Book Review is a Sixth Grade Humanities publication celebrating Jewish Book Month. During November 2013, all sixth grade students read a book with Jewish content. This year's class chose both fiction and non-fiction, with most works relating in some way to the Holocaust. After reading their chosen books, students closely examined several reviews of children's and young adult literature from *The New York Times Book Review*. In addition to recognizing the informal and often personal tone of these reviews, students noted the unique stylistic choices used (short paragraphs and quotation marks around titles of books rather than the more standardized underlining or italicizing). The sixth graders then wrote their own *New York Times*-inspired book reviews incorporating their opinions about elements such as plot, characters, and author's writing style. Short excerpts from the texts to help support particular points were also included. As these reviews were written by developing writers experimenting with a new form of writing, grammatical errors as well as opportunities for idea clarification or elaboration are to be expected.

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.