

RECOMMENDED READING

Elementary School

Benno and the Night of Broken Glass by Meg Wiviott

- **SUMMARY:** A neighborhood cat observes the changes in German and Jewish families in its town during the period leading up to Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass that becomes the true beginning of the Holocaust. This cats-eye view introduces the Holocaust to children in a gentle way that can open discussion of this period.
- **REVIEW:** Told through the perspective of a neighborhood cat *Benno and the Night of Broken Glass* describes how life in Berlin was presiding Nazi occupation, the horrors of Kristallnacht, and life afterward. This event marked the beginning of the Holocaust and how it forever changed life in Europe and around the world. Written in as gentle as possible of way to allow discussion about this terrifying time in history with young readers and listeners.

The Butterfly by Patricia Polacco

- **SUMMARY:** Ever since the Nazis marched into Monique's small French village, terrorizing it, nothing surprises her, until the night Monique encounters the little ghost sitting at the end of her bed. She turns out to be a girl named Sevrine, who has been hiding from the Nazis in Monique's basement. Playing after dark, the two become friends, until, in a terrifying moment, they are discovered, sending both of their families into a nighttime flight.
- **REVIEW:** The reviews state that THE BUTTERFLY has a target audience of ages 6-9 but I disagree! Polacco's lovely stories have appeal for all generations. Today is my daughter's birthday; she is a new 2nd grade teacher. My favorite gifts to her are six Patricia Polacco books. THE BUTTERFLY was written in honor of Polacco's great aunt, Marcelle Solliliage and her Aunt, Monique Gaw. Marcelle was part of the French underground and resistance during World War II. She bravely hid Jews in her home during the Nazi occupation. Monique was oblivious to these happenings until she met a young Jewish girl, Sevrine who happened to be hiding in the basement. A friendship developed that has endured many decades, right up to today! Polacco's exquisite story teaches the reader about true bravery, honor, and self-sacrifice (not to mention the history of a time not so long ago). How many of us would do today, as these valiant heroes have done many times in the past?

Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust by Eve Bunting

- **SUMMARY AND REVIEW:** I was curious to see how Eve Bunting would turn the Holocaust into an allegory appropriate for young children, but as soon as I started reading "Terrible Things" the inspiration for her story became clear. The Terrible Things first come to the forest for every creature with feathers on its back. The frogs, squirrels, and other animals quickly declare that

they do not have feathers, that the forest is better without the birds, and that they are all glad that it was not them that the Terrible Things wanted.

Clearly Eve Bunting takes her text from the famous statement attributed to Martin Niemoeller. If I remember correctly Niemoeller was a pastor. He told about how in Germany the Nazis first came for the Communists, but since he was not a Communist he did not speak up. Then they came for the Jews, but again he did not speak up because he was not a Jew. The same rationale explained his silence when they came for the trade unionists and Catholics. "Then they came for me," Niemoeller said, "and by that time no one was left to speak up."

Niemoeller's words might be the most famous declaration about the Holocaust and its appropriateness for being the basis of an allegory for young children should be self-evident. Bunting is not talking as much about the mass exterminations by the Nazis as she is about the culpability of the ordinary citizens who looked the other way when terrible things happened in Germany. The rhetorical question Bunting asks is "If everybody had stood together at the first sign of evil would this have happened?" If young children do not know the answer to that question before they read "Terrible Things," they certainly will afterwards.

Before she tells the story, which is illustrated by Stephen Gammell with pencil drawings, Bunting provides the moral for her tale. Acknowledging that standing up for what you know is right is not always easy, especially when you are facing someone bigger and stronger than you are, Bunting admits to her readers that it is easier to look the other way, "But if you do, terrible things can happen." The strength of "Terrible Things" is that Bunting makes the lesson Niemoeller shared about the Holocaust easily recognizable and understandable to young children.

A Picture Book of Anne Frank by David A. Adler

- **SUMMARY:** A chronicle of the life of Anne Frank, a young Jewish girl, who kept a diary during her family's attempts to hide from the Nazis in the 1940s. Important dates in the life of Anne Frank and notes from the author are included.
- **REVIEW:** This most recent addition to the Picture Book Biography series balances candor with discretion in its presentation of heroine Anne Frank. Adler traces the intersection of Anne's brief life with the forces of Nazism, chronicling the girl's earliest years in Germany as well as her time spent in the now-famous Amsterdam attic and the months following arrest and deportation. He refuses to apply the standard encomiums about his subject's courage and genius, with the result that Anne Frank emerges all the more poignantly. Like Adler, Ritz conveys more than familiar icons: she has executed black-and-white drawings closely based on the well-known extant photographs of Anne and her family and friends, and set these into watercolors of, for example, 1930s Germany or Anne packing her diary. Even her picture of shaven-headed, hollow-eyed Anne and Margot huddled together at Bergen-Belsen avoids cliché and condescension. "Some people find it difficult to understand the Holocaust," Adler concludes with grace. "But when they read Anne's diary, it all becomes real. Then they know one of the victims. They know Anne Frank."

Hana's Suitcase by Karen Levine

- **SUMMARY:** In 2000, a suitcase arrived at a children's Holocaust education center in Tokyo, Japan, marked "Hana Brady, May 16, 1931." The center's curator, searches for clues to young Hana and her family, whose happy life in a small Czech town was turned upside down by the invasion of the Nazis.

Who Was the Woman Who Wore the Hat? By Nancy Patz

Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story by Dom Lee MOCHIZUKI, KEN.

PASSAGE TO FREEDOM: THE SUGIHARA STORY. ILLUS. BY DOM LEE. N

Middle School

The Hiding Place by Corrie Ten Boom THE HIDING PLACE BY CORRIE TEN BOOM

- **SUMMARY:** Corrie ten Boom was a woman admired the world over for her courage, her forgiveness, and her memorable faith. In World War II, she and her family risked their lives to help Jews escape the Nazis, and their reward was a trip to Hitler's concentration camps. But she survived and was released-as a result of a clerical error-and now shares the story of how faith triumphs over evil. For thirty-five years Corrie's dramatic life story, full of timeless virtues, has prepared readers to face their own futures with faith, relying on God's love to overcome, heal, and restore. Now releasing in a thirty-fifth anniversary edition for a new generation of readers, *The Hiding Place* tells the riveting story of how a middle-aged Dutch watchmaker became a heroine of the Resistance, a survivor of Hitler's death camps, and one of the most remarkable evangelists of the twentieth century.
- **REVIEW:** This is an absolutely extraordinary book. Never have I read a book in which the spiritual beauty of the author so resonated throughout the story. The purity of heart that manifests itself in this inspiring saga of a heroic, Dutch family in Nazi occupied Holland during World War II is stunningly beautiful.

This is the true story of the Ten Boom family who, during the Nazi occupation of The Netherlands, upon seeing what was happening to their Jewish neighbors and friends, asked themselves this age old question "If not us,...who; if not now,...when?" They answered it, ultimately at great cost.

The Ten Booms were devoutly Christian and lived a simple life. The patriarch of the family ran a

watch shop that had been in his family for a century. Some of the family members, the author among them, worked there, selling and repairing clocks and watches. They also lived in the house in which the shop was located.

When the Nazis occupied their country, the reality of what it meant slowly dawned upon them, as they saw the treatment given to their fellow Dutch citizens of the Jewish faith. Moved by their plight, the author at the age of fifty, together with other members of her family, including their father who was nearly eighty, became active in the Dutch underground.

When it became clear to the Ten Booms that Jews were being targeted for deportation and death, they had a false wall constructed in the author's bedroom, thereby creating a secret room. There, they would hide the terrified Jews who were staying with them, in the event of a Nazi raid upon their home.

Eventually denounced by someone to the Nazis, the Ten Booms were arrested and their home raided and torn apart by the Gestapo, in their search for the Jews they believed to be hiding there. At the time of the raid, the Ten Boom home was filled to capacity with Jews in hiding. So well concealed was the hidden room that had been created by the erection of the false wall that these poor, terrified Jews managed to escape detection.

The Ten Boom family did not fare so well. It was upon their arrest that they learned first hand of man's inhumanity to man, and their faith was put to a test that they had never dreamt possible. It was faith, however, that sustained the author in what was to be her darkest hour of deepest despair. To find out what happened to the Ten Booms, read this book. It is the story of an incredible family, who had the courage to put their convictions to the test.

This book is a masterpiece. The reader is sure to be captivated by the goodness and spiritual beauty contained within its pages.

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

- **SUMMARY:** As the German troops begin their campaign to "relocate" all the Jews of Denmark, Annemarie Johansen's family takes in Annemarie's best friend, Ellen Rosen, and conceals her as part of the family. Through the eyes of ten-year-old Annemarie, we watch as the Danish Resistance smuggles almost the entire Jewish population of Denmark, nearly seven thousand people, across the sea to Sweden. The heroism of an entire nation reminds us that there was pride and human decency in the world even during a time of terror and war.
- **REVIEW:** Though I was a child when this book was first published, somehow I managed to avoid reading any Lois Lowry until 2003 (much to the shock of my friends). It was worth the wait. This story departs from the usual World War Two fiction genre by placing the story in a unique setting with a different perspective. Everything occurs in Denmark, and we see the story unfold through the eyes of young Annemarie Johansen. Though she is not directly threatened by the actions of

the Nazis that have invaded her peaceful country, her best friend Ellen Rosen is. Annemarie must use her head to save her friend from the concentration camps while endangering herself. I was impressed with the fact that the threat presented by the Germans in this book was made real without relying on gory details. In this way, Lowry has created a book about the Holocaust that is appropriate for juvenile readers. Be warned: There is no perfectly happy ending at the end of this story (the reader is not absolutely certain that the Rosenbergs have escaped and are coming back) but it should satisfy most children. Well worth a read.

Daniel's Story by Carol Matas

- **SUMMARY:** Daniel barely remembers leading a normal life before the Nazis came to power in 1933. He can still picture once being happy and safe, but memories of those days are fading as he and his family face the dangers threatening Jews in Hitler's Germany in the late 1930's. No longer able to practice their religion, vote, own property, or even work, Daniel's family is forced from their home in Frankfurt and sent on a long and dangerous journey, first to the Lodz ghetto in Poland, and then to Auschwitz —, the Nazi death camp. Though many around him lose hope in the face of such terror, Daniel, supported by his courageous family, struggles for survival. He finds hope, life and even love in the midst of despair.
- **REVIEW:** Daniel, 14 in 1941, describes first his family's sense of belonging in Germany and their refusal to flee their country despite the initial instances of anti-Semitism they experience. By the time the family is ready to acknowledge the seriousness of their situation, no country is willing to accept them. They are first deported from Frankfurt to the Lodz ghetto in Poland; from Lodz they are sent to Auschwitz, and finally, Daniel and his father are marched to Buchenwald. They are the only two members of the family who survive, and are liberated by the Americans. Daniel tells his story through the "pictures" he has; at first real photographs, and then the images in his head. He is a courageous, sensitive, heroic individual who personalizes the events of the Holocaust. His voice rings true; he is portrayed as an extraordinary youth, but these were times that demanded an exceptional response to increase the likelihood of survival. There are many excellent autobiographies of Holocaust survivors. However, this is historical fiction, drawing on the experiences of many. This short book, written toward a young teen audience, not only tells a personal story but includes historical references to make it highly accessible and educational. It is a great complement to autobiographies, such as *Night* and *Diary of Anne Frank*, which are also accessible to teens. One of the reviews recommends this for grades 4 and up. Though this is a hopeful story and not graphic, many kids younger than 12 are not ready to read about this much darkness.

The Island on Bird Street by Uri Orlev

- **SUMMARY:** During World War II a Jewish boy is left on his own for months in a ruined house in the Warsaw Ghetto, where he must learn all the tricks of survival under constantly life-threatening conditions.
- **REVIEW:** This story of struggle for survival in the Warsaw Ghetto does not dwell on the horrors and detail the sufferings of the Ghetto. Instead it presents a kind of Robinson Crusoe-like

adventure tale in which young Alex, his mother having died, and his father having been taken away, must learn to fend for himself. He goes through a series of adventures in which his mettle is tested, and in the end the longed- for reunion with his father takes place.

The resourcefulness and resilience of the major character are exemplary. It is possible to question the authenticity of having such a buoyant spirit in such difficult circumstances. But the work is well told, and credible on that level.

High School

Night by Elie Wiesel

The Champion of Children: The Story of Janusz Korczak by Tomek Bogacki

Adult

Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust by Alexandra Zapruder

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl

Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland

All but My Life: A Memoir by Gerda Weissmann Klein