

## Introduction and Editor's Note

*WOW Review* is pleased to have Dr. Melissa Wilson as guest editor for this themed issue on the Holocaust. Melissa's extensive and focused research on this literature provides a framework for these powerful reviews and invites readers to consider unique perspectives on this many faceted topic.

## Holocaust around the World

This issue is devoted to international children's books about the Holocaust. "Children's books" signals that these are not Holocaust books that children may read, but rather, books specifically written and published for children about the Holocaust- a seemingly small, but important distinction. Because the intended audience is children, the protagonists are often children and the endings, if not fairy-tale happy, are, at the very least, hopeful. The reality of children in the Holocaust was not hopeful at all. In Poland, for example, only .5% of all the one million children aged fourteen and under survived. This means that 995,000 Polish-Jewish children were murdered directly or indirectly by adults. Anne Frank was the norm, not the exception. This issue deals with the stories about the exceptions.

The Holocaust is a strange genre of children's literature for the very reason that the subject is horrific in the truest sense. It is a story of senseless murder that must be told in ways in which children and adults can make sense (if that is even possible). It is also an international story belonging to many nations of murderers, collaborators, victims, survivors, and heroes. Our text set comes from Denmark, Poland, France, Sweden, Cuba, and Germany. Some authors are Jewish, some aren't. All are stories of hope and humanity.

Some of these stories are narratives of righteous Gentiles. *Number the Stars* and *The Yellow Star: The Legend Of King Christian X Of Denmark* highlight the incredible daring of the Danish people and its leaders to make a conscious decision not to collaborate in genocide despite being an occupied country. *Resistance: Book 1* concentrates its focus on the French resistance movement in which ordinary people showed unbelievable courage as France's government were Nazi collaborators at that time. This sub text set's focus is on the Gentile experience of WWII.

*Tropical Secrets* and *A Faraway Island* deal with the theme of identity. In these novels the Jewish characters escape the Nazis but find themselves unable to flee their own Jewishness and other's anti-Semitism. These are stories of growing up and making sense of the world, but not directly of the Holocaust.

Set in the ghettos and concentration camps of the actual Holocaust are stories of the Jews themselves. In order from least to most graphic and realistic, are *Milkweed*, *Emil and Karl*, and *Hidden Letters*. The reader experiences a part of the Holocaust, the danger, privations, and suffering, but also the humanity, hope, and being a kid during a tragic time in history.

*T4: A Novel in Verse* is the outlier in this text set as the novel features a Gentile (and German) protagonist who is being targeted by the Nazis for being deaf. One of the few children's Holocaust books that deal with non-Jewish victims, *T4: A Novel in Verse* is also unique in that it tells the rarely told story of Hitler's war against his own people.

I invite you to read this issue to experience new books and revisit old favorites. What these reviews reveal is that the need to survive, to rebel, to make difficult decisions, to be yourself, and to find meaning knows no borders. The exceptional stories included are a collective narrative of good and evil and fictional children filling in for those who can never speak again. Sachsenhausen, a Holocaust survivor, famously said, "I have told you this story (the Holocaust) not to weaken you, but to strengthen you. Now it is up to you."

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