

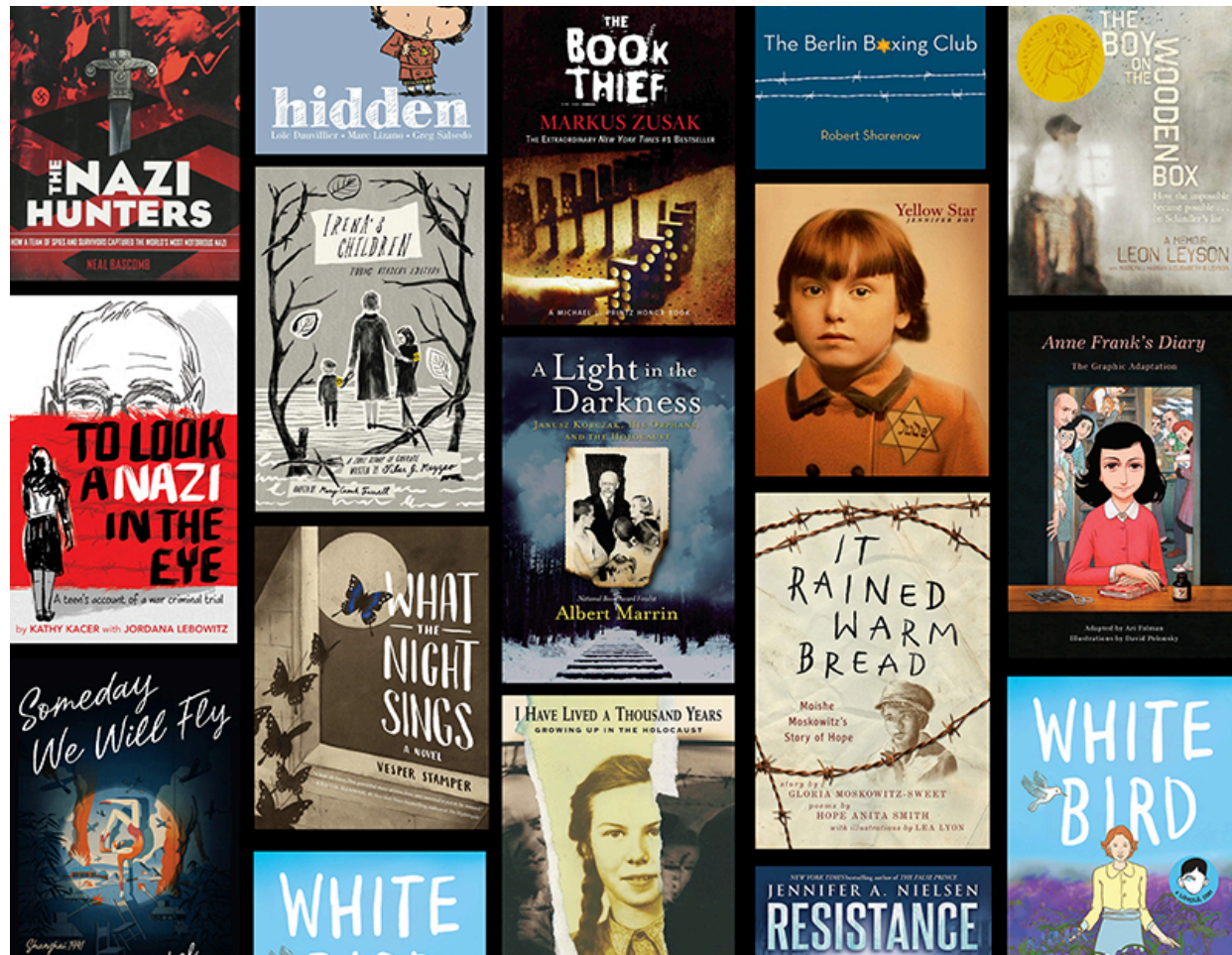
# Age-Appropriate Middle Grade and YA Books About the Holocaust

slj.com/story/Commemorate-Holocaust-Remembrance-Day-with-this-Booklist-libraries-students

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Only 12 U.S. states require Holocaust education as part of their secondary school curricula, and a 2018 Holocaust Knowledge & Awareness Study found significant gaps in knowledge of the Holocaust among Americans. Eleven percent of adults and 22 percent of millennials haven't heard of the Holocaust, while 58 percent of American adults believe something like the Holocaust could happen again. To deepen historical understanding, high-quality, age-appropriate, accurate, and authentic books about the Holocaust must be integrated into the curriculum and have a prominent place in classroom and library collections.

The Association of Jewish Libraries' Sydney Taylor Book Award is presented annually to outstanding books for children and teens that authentically portray the Jewish experience. Since its inception in 1968, more than 200 Holocaust-related titles, both fiction and nonfiction, have been recognized as Sydney Taylor Award Winners, Honor Books, and Notable Books.

Here is a sampling of YA and middle grade titles recommended by the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, and other suggested books, to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27.

***Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow.*** Susan Campbell Bartoletti. Scholastic. 2005.

Gr 7-10—This well-researched, large-format book describes the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party, and World War II and its aftermath, through the eyes of 12 ordinary young people in Germany, including those who participated in the Hitler Youth movement and those who resisted. In *The Boy Who Dared*, a 2009 Notable Book for Older Readers, Bartoletti turned one episode from *Hitler Youth* into a thought-provoking novel. (Nonfiction, 2006 Notable Book for Older Readers)

***The Nazi Hunters: How a Team of Spies and Survivors Captured the World's Most Notorious Nazi.*** Neal Bascomb. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine. 2013.

Gr 8 Up—With maps, photographs, and notes, Bascomb delivers a dramatic account of how an elite team of Israeli spies tracked down and prosecuted Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann, who was living in Argentina under an alias. (Nonfiction, 2014 Award Winner for Teen Readers)

***I Have Lived a Thousand Years: Growing Up in the Holocaust.*** Livia Bitton-Jackson. S. & S. 1997.

Gr 8 Up—The author describes her experiences during World War II, when she and her family were sent to the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz (Nonfiction, 1997 Honor Book for Older Readers). Bitton-Jackson continued her story in *My Bridges of Hope: Searching for Life and Love After Auschwitz*, a 1999 Notable Book for Older Readers, and *Hello, America: A Refugee's Journey from Auschwitz to the New World* (both S. & S., 1999, 2005).

***Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust.*** Loïc Dauvillier. tr. from French by Alexis Siegel. illus. by Marc Lizano & Greg Salsedo. First Second. 2014.

Gr 4-8—In this work of graphic nonfiction, a Jewish woman shares with her granddaughter her experiences hiding in Nazi-occupied France during the Holocaust. Though the gray and brown palette sets a dark tone, images and text combine for a gentle introduction to the Holocaust for elementary and middle grade readers. (Fiction, 2015 Award Winner for Older Readers)

***Someday We Will Fly.*** Rachel deWoskin. Viking. 2019.

Gr 8 Up—A 15-year-old girl escapes Warsaw with her father and baby sister in 1940. They find refuge with other Jewish refugees in Shanghai but face poverty, hunger, boredom, loneliness, worry, fear, and humiliation. Andrea Alban Gosline's *Anya's War* (Feiwel & Friends, 2011) and Kathy Kacer's *Shanghai Escape* (Second Story, 2013) also tell the story of the Jewish community in Shanghai during World War II.

***Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation.*** Adapted by Ari Folman. Illus. by David Polonsky. PRH/Pantheon. 2018.

Gr 8 Up—This graphic novel brings Anne Frank's diary to vivid life. Though the fear Anne and the other residents of the Secret Annex experienced is palpable, so are the moments of boredom and even humor—readers will be reminded that these were real people. (Nonfiction, 2019 Notable Book for Older Readers)

***The Librarian of Auschwitz.*** Antonio Iturbe. Tr. From Spanish by Lilit Thwaites. Godwin/Henry Holt. 2017.

Gr 8 Up—Conveying the importance of hope even during the darkest hour, this powerful story is loosely based on the life of 14-year-old Dita Kraus, who took possession of a handful of books smuggled into the Auschwitz concentration camp. (Fiction, 2018 Award Winner for Teen Readers)

***To Look a Nazi in the Eye: A Teen's Account of a War Criminal Trial.*** Kathy Kacer with Jordana Lebowitz. Second Story. 2017.

Gr 7 Up—The granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, Lebowitz blogged about attending the first week of the trial of Oskar Groening, a member of the German SS known as "the bookkeeper of Auschwitz." This stirring work chronicles both Lebowitz's account and the trial testimony. (Nonfiction, 2018 Honor Book for Teen Readers)

***The Boy on the Wooden Box: How the Impossible Became Possible...on Schindler's List.*** Leon Leyson with Marilyn J. Harran & Elisabeth B. Leyson. Atheneum. 2013.

Gr 4-9—With this inspiring memoir, the late Leyson shares his experiences as one of the youngest children on Oskar Schindler's list; Leyson's father, who worked for Schindler, escaped the camps (Nonfiction, 2014 Honor Book for Older Readers). Also see *My Survival: A Girl on Schindler's List* by Joshua M. Greene & Rena Finder (Scholastic, 2019).

***A Light in the Darkness: Janusz Korczak, His Orphans, and the Holocaust.*** Albert Marrin. Random House. 2019.

Gr. 7 Up—A pediatrician nicknamed the Old Doctor, Korczak cared for orphans in the Warsaw ghetto. Tragically, a Nazi patrol sent everyone in the orphanage to Treblinka and none survived. This fascinating work will terrify and educate readers about the dangers of autocracy and racism.—*SLJ* review by Katherine Koenig

***Irena's Children: Young Readers Edition: A True Story of Courage.*** Tilar J. Mazzeo. Adapt. by Mary Cronk Farrell. S. & S./Margaret K. McElderry. 2016.

Gr 6-10—Irena Sendler was a Christian Polish woman who rescued thousands of Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto (Nonfiction, 2017 Notable Book for Older Readers). Sendler's story is also portrayed in two excellent picture books, *Irena Sendler and the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Holiday House, 2011), a 2012 Notable Book for Older Readers by Susan Goldman Rubin, illustrated by Bill Farnsworth, and *Irena's Jars of Secrets*, a 2012 Honor Book for Older Readers by Marcia Vaughan, illustrated by Ron Mazellan (Lee & Low, 2011).

***It Rained Warm Bread: Moishe Moskowitz's Story of Hope.*** Gloria Moskowitz-Sweet and Hope Anita Smith. Illustrated by Lea Lyon. Henry Holt. 2019.

Gr 5-8—This potent novel in verse tells the story of Moskowitz-Sweet's father, who was sent to the concentration camps when the Nazis invaded Poland. Despite the cruelty he endures, he's reminded of humanity's capacity for good, too. Watercolor wash sketches accompany the poems.

***Resistance.*** Jennifer A. Nielsen. Scholastic. 2018.

Gr 6-10—When her family is uprooted in Nazi-occupied Poland, teenager Chaya Linder is determined to make a difference. Chaya works as a courier to Jews trapped in various ghettos throughout Poland, bringing them food and supplies and smuggling out children. When she is forced to flee North, she takes part in the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, helping the rebellion's leader, Mordechai Anielewicz. (Fiction, 2019 Notable Book for Teen Readers)

***White Bird: A Wonder Story.*** R.J. Palacio (text) & illus. by R.J. Palacio. Knopf. 2019.

Gr 4-6—In this graphic novel that's a part of Palacio's "Wonder" universe, Sarah's happy life in France changed in the summer of 1940, under German occupation. One day Nazi soldiers arrive at school to take the Jewish children; Sara is rescued by a classmate who leads her to safety. In hiding, she becomes friends with a boy who uses crutches to walk because his legs were affected by polio.—*SLJ* review by Mindy Rhiger

***Beyond Courage: The Untold Story of Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust.*** Doreen Rappaport. Candlewick. 2012.

Gr 6 Up—The authors highlight 21 stories of resistance and defiance by Jewish adults and children during the Holocaust. Five years of research resulted in an important informational book, with back matter that includes a pronunciation guide, chronology, source notes, detailed bibliography, and an index. (Nonfiction, 2013 Honor Book for Teen Readers)

***Yellow Star.*** Jennifer Roy. Marshall Cavendish. 2006.

Gr 5-9—Told in verse, this is the story of Sylvia Perlmutter, one of only 12 surviving children of the Lodz Ghetto in Poland. She and her family were among the 245,000 Jews forced to live there under Nazi rule (Fiction, 2007 Honor Book for Older Readers). Pair with *My Secret Camera: Life in the Lodz Ghetto* by Frank Dabba Smith with photographs by Mendel Grossman (Gulliver Books, 2000).

***The Berlin Boxing Club.*** Robert Sharenow. Harper Teen. 2011.

Gr 9 Up—Karl Stern, an assimilated 14-year-old Jew living in 1930s Berlin, becomes the unlikely student of Max Schmeling, a boxing champion and source of German pride. This coming-of-age novel entwines Karl's personal struggles with historical events as he tries to protect his family. Well-developed characters and a tense plot propel this page-turner. (Fiction, Award Winner for Teen Readers)

***What the Night Sings.*** Vesper Stamper. Illus. by Vesper Stamper. Knopf. 2018.

Gr 7 Up—This beautifully illustrated novel tells the story of teen Holocaust survivor Gerta Rausch, who finds out she is Jewish on the day she is taken to a concentration camp with her father. Gerta plays the viola with an orchestra at the camp and struggles to reconcile her identity and desires in the wake of tragedy. (Fiction, 2019 Award Winner for Teen Readers)

***The Book Thief.*** Markus Zusak. Knopf. 2006.

Gr 8 Up—Death narrates the story of Leisl Meminger, a Lutheran girl in Nazi Germany who sustains herself and those close to her, including the Jewish man hidden in her basement, with her love of books and reading. This engaging story conveys the full spectrum of human emotions and experiences. The 10th anniversary edition (published in 2016) includes 26 new pages of bonus material. (Fiction, 2007 Award Winner for Teen Readers)

For a complete list of all Holocaust books recognized by the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, as well as all of the award, honor, and notable books from 1968 to the present, visit [jewishlibraries.org](http://jewishlibraries.org). Additionally, the Association of Jewish Libraries created the "Love Your Neighbor" book lists in response to the horrific act of domestic terrorism at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA in October 2018, and to rising anti-Semitism in the United States. It is our hope that meeting Jews on the page will inspire friendship when readers meet Jews in real life.

*Rachel Kamin, Chava Pinchuck and Heidi Rabinowitz are past-chairs of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee. Kamin is the director of the Gray Cultural & Learning Center at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El in Highland Park, IL. Pinchuck lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel, and is co-editor of children and teen book reviews for the Association of Jewish Libraries. Rabinowitz is director of the Feldman Children's Library at Congregation B'nai Israel in Boca Raton, FL.*