



Ten of the Best Books to Introduce Children to the Holocaust

Article Author:

[Madelyn Travis](#) [1]

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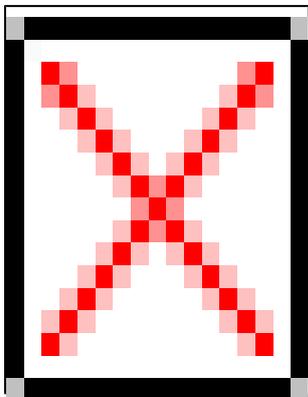
Ten of the Best

Byline:

Madelyn Travis chooses.

After many years as a taboo topic for young people, ever increasing numbers of children's books are being published about different aspects of the Holocaust. **Madelyn Travis** chooses ten books to inform children and young people about the Holocaust.

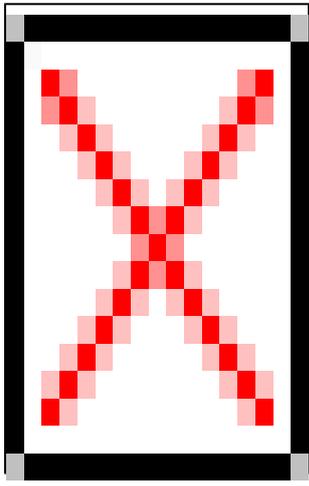
Books about resistance and refugees are likely to be somewhat less graphic than those set in ghettos and concentration camps though this is not a hard and fast rule. Even texts that are relatively simple in terms of reading level introduce or hint at information that many will feel makes them unsuitable for children under the age of 10. The titles are listed roughly in order of age or level of detail, younger/less graphic first.



Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust Eve Bunting, illus Stephen Gammell, Jewish Publication Society, 978-0827605077, £6.99 pbk.

Bunting's chilling picture book is inspired by Martin Niemoller's famous poem which begins, 'First they came for the Communists, and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist?' Here, the Terrible Things come to the forest and take away the animals one species at a time while those that are left turn a blind eye until, finally, just one white rabbit remains. The use of animal characters and the absence of specific reference to the Holocaust means that the broader themes can be approached with younger children at an age-appropriate level.

When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit Judith Kerr, illus Judith Kerr, HarperCollins, 978-0007274772, £6.99 pbk.



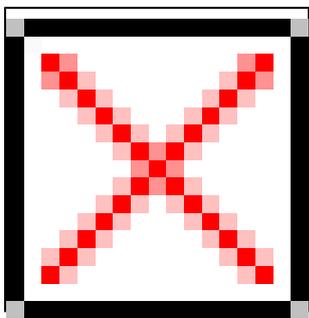
With illustrations by Kerr, this classic autobiographical novel ? the first in a trilogy ? is the most gentle of introductions to the Holocaust. Forced to flee Germany with her family in 1933, Kerr presents the refugee experience as something of an adventure, with persecution and hardship hinted at rather than spelled out by her optimistic literary alter ego, Anna. The second book, **Bombs on Aunt Dainty**, details the teenaged Anna?s life in England, while the final volume, **A Small Person Far Away**, was originally written for an adult readership; this is reflected in its style and some of its themes.

Anne Frank Josephine Poole, illus Angela Barrett, Red Fox, 978-0099409762, £5.99 pbk.

Anne Frank?s **Diary of a Young Girl** is so well known that it doesn?t need further recommendation here. For those too young for Anne?s own text, though, this picture book offers an excellent introduction to the story of the girl who, for many, has become an iconic symbol of the Holocaust. Poole narrates the story of Anne?s life and death in a matter-of-fact tone while also capturing the essence of her personality and spirit. As ever, Barrett?s carefully researched illustrations are evocative and compelling. The book includes a useful chronology and explanation of what happened to the diary after the Frank family?s capture by the Nazis.

Once Morris Gleitzman, Puffin, 978-0141320632, £5.99 pbk.

After three years in a Catholic orphanage in Poland, Felix runs away in search of his Jewish parents. Along the way, he meets new friends and encounters unimagined dangers, telling stories to keep his spirits up and to avoid facing the terrible truths around him. With great sensitivity, Gleitzman charts the endearing 10-year-old?s journey from innocence to knowledge ? a journey that will be paralleled by many of the book?s readers. **Once** has deservedly won many fans among children and adults; Felix?s story continues in the acclaimed sequels **Now**, **Then** and **After**.

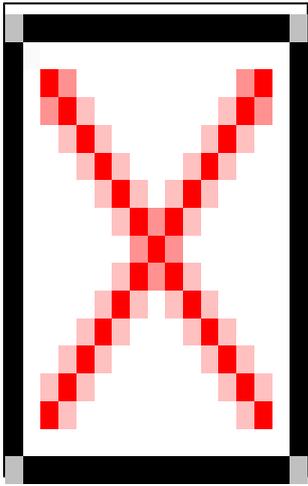


Fireflies in the Dark: the Story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and the Children of Terezin Susan Goldman Rubin, Holiday House, 0-92341681X, £6.99 pbk.

This non-fiction text tells the story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, a Jewish artist from Czechoslovakia who taught art to children at Terezin, the ?model? concentration camp used by the Nazis as propaganda. Short chapters detailing life in Terezin and Friedl?s therapeutic work with the children are enhanced by diary entries, poems and interviews with some

of the very few survivors. The highlight of this poignant book is the many full-colour reproductions of the children's artistic responses to their incarceration. A list of references is included.

War Games Jenny Koralek, Egmont, 1-40520074X, £4.99 pbk.



In 1938 and 1939, Koralek's uncle helped to rescue Jewish children from Czechoslovakia, one of whom came to live with her grandmother. The author's family history forms the backdrop for **War Games**, about the friendship between two exiles in England: Hugo, a Czech Jewish boy, and Holly, a non-Jewish South African. This moving novel deals sensitively and openly with the challenges and well-meaning ignorance that Hugo faces. Koralek avoids a tidy happy ending, wisely leaving the conclusion bittersweet and open-ended.

The Devil's Arithmetic Jane Yolen, Puffin, 0140345353, £4.99, pbk.

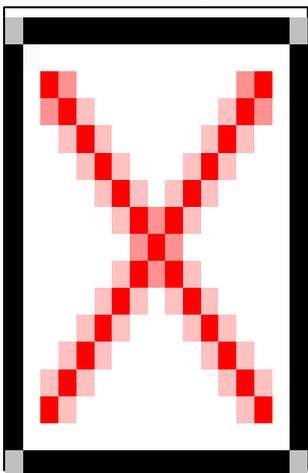
Bored by Jewish holidays and 'tired of remembering' Jewish history, Hannah opens the front door during the family Passover *seder* and finds herself back in 1942 Poland. Transported to Auschwitz along with the rest of the village, Hannah returns to the present inevitably changed by the experience. Containing some details of concentration camp life and death, the time-slip element with its final twist make this Jewish Book Award winner gripping for readers of 10 and up.

The Book Thief Markus Zusak, Black Swan, 978-0552773898, £7.99 pbk.

The eponymous book thief is 12-year-old Liesel, who is sent to live with foster parents Hans and Rosa after her Communist parents are taken away by the Nazis. Decent, humane Hans, who could never quite bring himself to join the Nazi party, hides Max, a Jewish boxer, in the basement; Max and Liesel form a strong bond. Lyrical and imaginative, and narrated by Death, the focus of this sophisticated crossover novel is on Germans who did not subscribe to Nazi ideology and how acts of compassion became dangerous acts of resistance.

The Wrong Boy Suzy Zail, Walker, 978-1406349276, £6.99 pbk.

Sent first to the ghetto and then to Birkenau, aspiring concert pianist Hanna finds herself playing the piano for the



camp commandant, a role that helps her to survive. The commandant's son, Karl, aids the

Jewish inmates, but despite the title's suggestion of a love-across-the-divide central theme, the relationship between Hanna and Karl is, rightly, a secondary focus. Hanna's contemporary voice is particularly effective for its teenage readership, giving the novel a startling immediacy.

Maus: A Survivor's Tale Art Spiegelman, Random House, 978-0394747231, £9.99 pbk.

Spiegelman depicts Jews as mice, Germans as cats and Poles as pigs in this ground-breaking biographical graphic novel. Art interviews his father, Holocaust survivor Vladek, about his life and experiences during the war, and in the process illuminates their troubled relationship and the effects of the Holocaust on the next generation. For a crossover readership, **Maus** is the only graphic novel to have won a Pulitzer Prize.

Madelyn Travis is the author of **Jews and Jewishness in British Children's Literature** (Routledge, 2013). She has a PhD in children's literature and has contributed to publications including **The Ultimate Book Guides**, **The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature** and the Booktrust children's books website.

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