

Jacob's Rescue

by Malka Drucker & Michael Halperin

Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by Kathy Sammis

A Perma-Bound Production

SYNOPSIS

In a true story, two non-Jewish strangers, Alex and Mela Roslan, join the Gutgeld family for Passover. Eight-year-old Marissa asks her father, Jacob, to explain how he knows the Roslans. Marissa's uncle, her father's brother David, urges Jacob to tell Marissa the story she has never heard, of Jacob and David's childhood in German-occupied Poland and how the Roslans saved the boys' lives.

In the summer of 1941, eight-year-old Jacob is living with his Aunt Hannah and his grandmother in the Warsaw ghetto. His mother died three years ago in childbirth; his father, grandfather, and uncles left Poland the year before because Jewish men were no longer safe. They felt confident the cultured Germans would not harm women and children and so they left those family members behind. Jacob's two younger brothers have been sent to live in the country. Now, as increasing numbers of Jews are being arrested in the ghetto and sent away to death camps, Aunt Hannah arranges for Jacob to go to live with the Roslans, a Christian Polish family, who pledge to hide Jacob from the Nazis.

Jacob soon begins his new life, with a new Polish name, Genyek. Alex and Mela Roslan are strong, caring parents who gently integrate Jacob into their close family – an eleven-year-old boy named Yurek and an eight-year-old girl, Marishka. The Roslans live in a small, plain apartment that Jacob must never venture out of; he cannot even go near the windows. When anyone outside the family comes to visit, Jacob must squeeze himself into a hiding place under the kitchen sink. Still, suspicious neighbors prompt a visit from the Polish police, who are persuaded by Mela's affable brother Vladék that the Roslans would never harbor a Jew. This close call, in turn, prompts the family to move to a new apartment; Jacob makes the move burrowed into a hole carved in the couch.

Uncle Vladék, questioning why his sister should risk the lives of the whole family for one Jewish boy, returns to his home village. Mela struggles with her conflicting desires to save Genyek and keep her own children safe but ultimately agrees when Jacob's Uncle Galer, a physician, asks the Roslans to take in Jacob's emaciated five-year-old brother Sholom, whose frightened Polish "protectors" have him living in a shed with a goat.

By now, in 1942, all of Warsaw is beginning to look like the ghetto, and many people are sick. Yurek and Sholom – renamed Orish – come down with scarlet fever. Yurek, treated in the hospital, recovers, but weak little Sholom must remain at home and dies. When Jacob catches the fever, he develops a life-threatening mastoid infection; he must be operated on in the hospital, but this is forbidden for Jews. Uncle Galer finds a Polish doctor to

treat Jacob secretly in the hospital; the boy's life is saved, but to secure the money with which to bribe the operating nurse, Alex must sell the family's apartment. Their new home is a dilapidated one-room basement apartment without running water in a half-bombed-out building; from the roof in April 1943, Alex and Yurek watch as the Warsaw ghetto is destroyed. When Yurek asks how people can let all the Jews be destroyed, Alex responds that most people are like Uncle Vladék: "As long as nothing happens to them, they don't care what happens to anyone else."

Now Uncle Galer brings Jacob's five-year-old brother David to join the Roslan family. Jacob's delight soon turns to jealousy, as blond little David – now called Tedek – can play outside and pass for Polish, even when the Gestapo come to search the Roslans' apartment (Jacob, hidden in a bathroom cabinet, escapes notice).

In August 1944 the people of Warsaw revolt against the German occupiers. Yurek rushes out the door in celebration and is instantly shot to death by a German sniper. As the Germans seem bent on destroying Warsaw in retaliation for the uprising, the Roslans flee the city and make their way to Vladék's little village of Kaminsk where Vladék, in spite of his fears, agrees to shelter them. When Alex proves by his lack of circumcision that he is not Jewish, the entire Roslan family is unquestioningly accepted by the villagers. Finally, after months of waiting, the Russian army moves into Poland.

After the war's end in May 1945, Alex takes the family to Berlin and registers with Jewish agencies looking for surviving relatives of Jewish families. Against the wishes of Alex and Mela, who consider the boys their own sons, and of Jacob and David, who consider the Roslans their real parents, the boys are sent to rejoin their father in Palestine.

At the present-day seder, the rest of the history is revealed. Jealous of his parental rights, Marissa's grandfather had blocked all communication between the Roslans and Jacob and David, but the boys finally located the Roslans – who had moved to the United States – sixteen years later. Jacob and David then arranged for the Israeli government to give Alex and Mela the Righteous Among the Nations medal, inscribed, "Whoever saves a single life is as one who has saved the entire world."

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Malka Drucker writes most of her children's books on Jewish themes, especially Jewish holidays. She was born in Tucson, Arizona, in 1945, the daughter of a clothing manufacturer and a writer. She married Steven Drucker, a certified public accountant, in 1966 and earned her B.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1967 and a teaching credential from

the University of Southern California in 1968. Drucker and her husband had two sons, and divorced in 1987. She has been a full-time writer since 1975 and has also taught at the University of Judaism and USC. Drucker has told *Something About the Author*, "I love to write about those things that have interested me since childhood...going to baseball games and celebrating Jewish holidays are both vivid, sweet memories for me."

Michael Halperin is a writer, producer, and director for television and film. After he heard Jacob's story, he tracked down all the people involved. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife Marcia; they have two sons.

CRITICS' CORNER

Critics praised the authors' depiction of both the terror and the courage displayed by the Roslans and the children, creating a vivid picture of life during the Holocaust for ordinary people who rise to heroism. *School Library Journal* remarked, "Characters are well developed and multidimensional, and the story is a poignant one....Powerful emotions are described and presented in an understandable format." *Booklist* found the story "riveting" and added, "What gives the story authenticity is not only the harsh physical danger, but also the candid characterization, the honesty about how fear made people act." *The Horn Book Magazine* concluded, "This is a heartening story of great courage in the midst of the madness of war."

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To gain an understanding of the Holocaust
2. To develop a definition of heroism
3. To note the effects of war on the civilian populations of occupied territory
4. To understand the mechanics of persecution and the ways in which ordinary people support it, fail to oppose or prevent it, or work against it
5. To study the nature of courage and the extent of people's obligation to help their fellows
6. To explore the physical and emotional stresses of confinement

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To note the ways in which the Roslans save Jacob, both physically and emotionally
2. To understand Jacob's feelings about the Roslans and his biological father, and the reasons why Mr. Gutgeld left his family
3. To identify the reasons why Alex and Mela decide to shelter Jacob and his brothers in spite of the danger this places them and their children in
4. To analyze Vladek's attitude toward helping Jewish children and the way in which this attitude is typical of the vast majority of Polish civilians
5. To learn about the effects of the Nazi occupation of Poland on the Polish people
6. To discuss the nature of the family relationships in the Roslan household and the ways in which emotional stress affects individual members of the family
7. To examine the ways in which Alex and Mela are heroic

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. Passover...seder (p. 1)
(*Passover is a springtime holiday that celebrates the release of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, when the angel of death passed over – spared – Jewish homes in the final plague. The first two nights of Passover, the family gathers for the seder celebration, which includes a holiday meal and the telling of the Passover story. At this seder, Marissa's father Jacob will tell the story of his own escape from death, the story of his childhood that Marissa has never heard before.*)
2. the Four Questions...the Haggadah (pp. 2-3)
(*The Haggadah is the book that contains the story of the exodus from Egypt and guidelines for how to conduct the seder. The Four Questions are asked by the youngest child at the seder; the answers to the questions explain why certain rituals are followed for the seder. Marissa asks the questions this year, and she adds a fifth: How does her father know the strangers who have joined them for this Passover?*)
3. Nazis (p. 3), Gestapo (p. 5), SS officer (p. 69)
(*The Nazi party was the political party of Adolf Hitler that promoted anti-Semitism. The occupying Germans are Nazis, devoted to eliminating Poland's Jewish population, including Jacob and his family. Originally Hitler's own bodyguard, the SS [Schutzstaffel] became an elite, highly trained force in charge of security for the Nazi state. Hitler placed the merciless, semiautonomous SS completely in charge of Jews; an SS officer directs the search of the Roslans' apartment for hidden Jewish children. The Gestapo, a division of the SS, was a secret police force, much feared; it was in charge of imprisoning all enemies of the Nazi state, including Jews, and could send anyone to a concentration camp for any length of time. The Roslans are always in great danger of being reported to the Gestapo for sheltering Jewish children.*)
4. Treblinka, Auschwitz, Maidanek (p. 7)
(*Note: The correct spelling is Maidanek. These were all concentration camps established by the German Nazis in Poland to which Jews – as well as other "undesirables" – from Germany and German-occupied countries were sent, both to be worked [often to death] and to be exterminated in gas chambers, then burned in crematoria. Most of the inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto were sent to Treblinka and killed there. Jacob and the other ghetto dwellers know that these camps are not factories, but rather death camps.*)
5. Good Friday, Easter (p. 37)
(*Easter is an important Christian springtime feast that commemorates Christ's resurrection from the dead. Good Friday immediately precedes Easter Sunday and commemorates the day that Christ was crucified and died on the cross. Jacob is relieved that he does not have to join the Roslans in religious rituals such as Easter, with which he is unfamiliar.*)

6. contaminated the wells (p. 50)
(German bombings have allowed contaminants such as bacteria to get into the well water the people of Warsaw depend on, and as a result many people in the city are becoming sick. The children in the Roslan household are infected with scarlet fever.)
7. scarlet fever (p. 51)
(Scarlet fever is an acute contagious disease caused by a streptococcus and characterized by fever, inflammation of the mouth, nose, and throat, and a red rash. Severe cases need treatment in the hospital; which is possible for Yurek but not for frail little Sholom – Jews may not be admitted to hospitals, and as a result Sholom dies. When Jacob contracts a severe case of scarlet fever, Alex and Yurek smuggle him into the hospital so he can have a life-saving operation.)
8. Molotov cocktails (p. 90)
(These are crude hand grenades made of a bottle filled with flammable liquid like gasoline; a wick or soaked rag is ignited and the bottle is hurled at the target. Yurek has been going out at night with other members of the Resistance and throwing Molotov cocktails at German soldiers.)
9. “Really, he wants to hide his circumcision from them.” (p. 41)
(Circumcision – the removal of the foreskin from the head of the penis – is a Jewish rite performed on male infants, signifying the child’s inclusion in the Jewish religious community. During World War II in Poland, only Jewish males were circumcised, so David does not want anyone to see his circumcision, which would reveal him to be Jewish.)
10. “A wire was sent.” (p. 107)
(The worker for the Jewish agency is saying that a telegram or cablegram has been sent from Jacob’s and David’s father in Palestine to Berlin asking that the boys be sent to him.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important, and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Literal Level

1. Describe the different places the Roslan family lives while Jacob is with them.
(At first, they live in a three-room apartment with a living room, kitchen, and one bedroom. After the police raid this apartment because of neighbors’ suspicions, the family moves to a different location, to a larger, four-room apartment. Later, Alex is forced to sell this apartment to raise money to bribe the nurse for Jacob’s operation, and the family is forced to move to a dismal one-room basement apartment without running water in a partially bombed-out building. When the Germans seem intent on destroying Warsaw, the family flees the city and goes to live with Uncle Vladek in his remote little village of Kaminsk. After the war, they go to Berlin to see if any relatives of Jacob and David’s have survived)
2. How does life in Warsaw during the war affect the Roslan family’s physical health?
(No one gets enough to eat, so their bodies and immune systems are weakened. When scarlet fever hits, all the children

are affected to some degree, but poor little Sholom is so weak from his ordeal of living in a goat shed that he dies even though his case of fever is mild. Jacob is especially at risk of illness, because he cannot remain robust without fresh air and sunshine and exercise. Yurek, too, dies, but from a German sniper’s bullet rather than from illness.)

3. How do the Roslans hide Jacob from the Nazis?
(In their first apartment, Alex makes Jacob a hiding place underneath the kitchen sink cabinet; in the basement apartment, Jacob hides in a bathroom cabinet, barely escaping discovery. When the Roslans are moving to the new apartment, and when Jacob must be smuggled into the hospital, Alex makes a hiding place for Jacob in the couch, hidden under a cushion.)

Interpretive Level

4. What attitude does Mela’s brother Vladek have toward sheltering Jews from the Nazis?
(Vladek’s attitude is typical of most Poles, Germans, and others living under Nazi rule: Keep yourself safe, and don’t risk your neck – or the lives of your family – for the sake of a Jew, even a small Jewish child. Vladek asks Mela, why must her husband be a hero? Why must she risk her own children for the sake of a strange Jewish child? Why should they keep sheltering the Jewish children – isn’t three years enough? As he says when Alex, Mela, and the children arrive at Kaminsk, “No one here wants trouble.”)
5. Why isn’t Jacob living with his father and mother? How does Jacob feel about this?
(Jacob’s mother died giving birth to David. Jacob’s father, grandfather, and uncles left Poland when it became clear to them that Jewish men were not safe under Nazi rule. The men left their families behind because they believed the Germans, as a civilized and sophisticated people, wouldn’t harm women and children. Jacob resents his father’s departure; he considers that his father has deserted him, left him as defenseless prey for the Nazis. Alex and Mela have taken him in, loved him, treated them as their own son, and protected him as parents ought to do. Jacob now considers them his father and mother and wants to stay with them after the war, not go to his birth father in Palestine.)
6. Why are Alex and Mela willing to shelter Jacob and, later, his brothers?
(Because they believe it is the right thing to do. What the Nazis are doing to the Jews is terribly wrong; Alex and Mela can, at least, save one innocent life. Mela has her doubts and fears about risking her own children’s lives to do this, but her firm conviction that they cannot just let Jacob die allows her to overcome those doubts and fears. She agrees to take Jacob’s brothers also, when Alex asks her to, because they will suffer the same consequences regardless of how many Jewish children with whom they are caught.)

Critical Level

7. Everyone in the Roslan family is living under emotional stress. What signs of this eventually appear?
(Mela has many doubts and fears about the risks they are taking. Finally, when they are forced to move into the dismal basement apartment, she snaps and runs out saying she is going to tell the Germans everything, although she later returns

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

and resumes her place in the family. Alex's optimism is shattered by Yurek's death. Jacob becomes desperately jealous of David for taking center stage and being able to go out to play. The uncomplaining Marishka sometimes breaks down, jealous of the extra food Jacob gets in the beginning and later anxious to get out of the confining apartment to play even when her mother doesn't want her to. Yurek takes out his frustrations by going out at night with other Resistance members and throwing Molotov cocktails at the Germans.)

8. In what ways are Alex and Mela heroic?
(*Ordinary people, Alex and Mela risk their lives and the lives of their own children to save the lives of Jewish children they never even knew before; they keep Jacob and his brothers with them in spite of constant fear of informants and discovery by the Nazis. They even sell their apartment so Jacob can have an operation to save his life. In the face of overwhelming evil, Alex and Mela hold to their own standards of moral conduct at the peril of their lives and those of their children.*)
9. What dramatic reversals take place in the novel in the last year of the war?
(*Yurek, wildly excited at what he thinks is freedom from the Germans as the Polish army rises up in Warsaw, runs outside shouting they are free – and is promptly shot dead by a German sniper. Alex, Mela, and the children flee Warsaw for Uncle Vladek's little village – where Alex, not Jacob, is accused of being Jewish; he proves he is not by his lack of circumcision, so the family is now safe. When the Russian army finally advances into Poland, a huge, dark-bearded Russian soldier appears at the door of Vladek's home and swings Jacob around. After he recognizes Jacob as a Jew, he delightedly declares, "Me, too!"*)
10. Describe Alex's role in the family. Describe Mela's role.
(*Alex is the problem-solver; when a problem arises, he leaves, saying, "I'll be back in a few minutes," and he returns with a solution. He is also the optimist, never questioning – until Yurek's death – that they will all get through the war, giving hope and strength to all the other family members. Mela is the grounding strength of the family, coping with the hour-by-hour and day-by-day stress and fear of making sure no one finds Jacob and his brothers, making the home life seem somehow normal and loving in spite of the abnormal and very difficult wartime conditions.*)

Creative Level

11. Write a series of diary entries for Yurek or Marishka describing some of the novel's events from his or her point of view.
(*Answers will vary.*)
12. Role-play dialogue between Jacob and his father (and perhaps David) on the topic of Mr. Gutgeld leaving his sons behind in Poland when he himself left the country.
(*Answers will vary.*)
13. Write some of the undelivered letters between Jacob and Marishka, or between Jacob and Alex and Mela, after the war.
(*Answers will vary.*)

Science

1. Officials in Berlin communicate with Jacob's father in Palestine via "wire." Find out what this is and how it works. What methods of long-distance communication do people use today much more frequently than "wire"? Explain how one of these technologies works.
2. Alex remarks, "It's a new moon, a dark night." Create a poster explaining the phases of the moon and demonstrating why the night would be dark when the moon is new. (Also *Art.*)

Geography

1. Create a map of Poland and locate Warsaw and Kaminsk, or a village similar to it. Also locate the Nazi concentration camps in Poland. (Also *Art.*)
2. Create a poster with a map of Europe showing the countries occupied by the Nazis during World War II, the dates of each occupation, and the locations of all Nazi concentration/death camps. (Also *Art, Social Studies.*)
3. On a map, trace Jacob's father's trip from Warsaw through Turkey to Palestine. Then trace Jacob and David's journey from Berlin to Palestine as described on page 109 of the novel. What forms of transportation would the travelers take for each stage of their journey? Note this on the map.

Art

1. Illustrate or build a model of one of the Warsaw apartments the Roslan family lives in.
2. Create a class display of World War II photographs showing cities and countryside before and after bombing raids. Try to include photographs of Warsaw. (Also *Social Studies.*)
3. Illustrate or model for the class an example of Tyrolean dress, like the clothing Uncle Galer wears.

Social Studies

1. As a small group activity, find out and discuss what various ordinary citizens and government officials in Europe, Canada, and the United States knew about the Holocaust while it was happening, before the first Allied soldiers liberated the death camps. Could anything have been done to stop the Holocaust while the war was still being fought?
2. Report on life in Warsaw, both inside and outside the Jewish ghetto, during World War II, and describe the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Illustrate the report with photographs from those years.
3. Explain what was ironic about the Russian "liberation" of Poland.
4. Research and prepare reports (oral or written) on the following historical subjects:
 - a. the Holocaust, or a particular aspect of it.
 - b. Jewish life in Poland just before World War II, in both cities like Warsaw and villages like Kaminsk, and Jewish life after the war.
 - c. the fate of individual Nazis after World War II ended.
 - d. the postwar division of Berlin into four zones and later political changes in Berlin.
 - e. how Palestine became the nation of Israel, and the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
 - f. the history of one of the three concentration camps Jacob

mentions: Auschwitz, Treblinka, or Maidanek, all in Poland.

Mathematics

1. Alex must pay the hospital nurse a bribe of 10,000 zlotys. What is this in U.S. or Canadian currency?
2. Figure out how much everyday items like hamburgers, CDs, or movie tickets would cost in Polish zlotys.
3. Estimate how many miles or kilometers Alex, Mela, and the children traveled to get from Warsaw to Kaminsk. How many mph or kph did they walk?
4. On the map of World War II Europe prepared as one of the *Geography* projects above, add these facts:
 - the approximate number of people killed at each camp
 - the number of known survivors of each camp
 - the numbers of Jews in each country before World War II
 - the number after the war

Use the last two numbers to figure how many Jews from each European country died during the war.

Health

1. Research and report on scarlet fever – its causes, symptoms, and treatment. Is this disease as serious a threat today as it was in the 1940s?
2. Explain why a lack of fresh air and sunlight is dangerous for a person's health.
3. Non-Jewish male infants are also often circumcised. Why is this done? What are the medical arguments for and against the procedure?

Language Arts

1. Read other books about the pressures of being in hiding, like *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and *The Upstairs Room*. What similarities do you find in these people's experiences?
2. One reviewer complained about the sometimes inappropriate changes in point of view in the novel. Try to find examples of these.
3. Find out about the origins of the words *Holocaust* and *genocide*.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss coping with being in hiding for a long time. What might help?
2. In a small group, develop a definition of a hero. Who is a hero? What does a hero look like? What is a heroic act? Do Alex and Mela fit this definition? Identify other heroes.
3. Find out about and report to the class on the stories of other recipients of the Israeli government's Righteous Among the Nations award.
4. Prepare for a class discussion about why the Nazis decided to exterminate Europe's Jews, and why so many individuals participated in the process of carrying out that decision.
5. Conduct an oral history project, recording the reminiscences of older family members or friends about a time before your birth.
6. Mela struggles constantly with her fear and the question of whether it is right to risk the lives of her own children to save Jacob and his brothers. Alex firmly believes they have a moral obligation to save at least one child's life. Discuss

the pros and cons of Alex and Mela's dilemma. What do you think you might do in similar circumstances?

7. Invite one or several Holocaust survivors to speak to the class about their experiences. (Try a local synagogue for help with this, if necessary.)
8. Read and take notes from three short references on the Holocaust. Participate in a class discussion about these questions: What was different about the Holocaust from any previous event in world history? Could it happen again? Has it happened again?
9. Prepare for a class discussion on the question of whether the Jews of Eastern Europe could have or should have offered more resistance to the Nazis and their shipments to the camps. How could such resistance have been more effective?

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Make a list of all the main characters in the novel. Next to each name, give the members of that person's family and his or her role in the novel. Also discuss the person's importance in the novel and his or her relationship with Jacob.
2. Describe the effects of the novel on each of its main characters.
3. Create a time line of the novel's events. Extra credit: Add World War II historical events to the timeline.
4. List and describe all the times Jacob is in danger of being discovered by the Nazis.

OTHER BOOKS BY MALKA DRUCKER

Tom Seaver: Portrait of a Pitcher (1978; with Tom Seaver)
The George Foster Story (1979)
Hanukkah: Eight Nights, Eight Lights (1980)
Passover: A Season of Freedom (1981)
Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: Sweet Beginnings (1981)
Sukkot: A Time to Rejoice (1982)
Shabbat: A Peaceful Island (1983)
Series TV: How a Television Show Is Made (1983; with Elizabeth James)
Celebrating Life: Jewish Rites of Passage (1984)
Frida Kahlo: Her Life and Art (1991)
Grandma's Latkes (1992)
A Jewish Holiday ABC (1992)
Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust (1992)
The Family Treasury of Jewish Holidays (1994)

RELATED READING

Fiction

Along the Tracks (Tamar Bergman)
Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl (Anne Frank)
Daniel's Story (Carol Matas)
The Devil's Arithmetic (Jane Yolen)
Friedrich (Hans Peter Richter)
Gideon: A Novel (Chester Aaron)
Hear O Israel: A Story of the Warsaw Ghetto (Terry Walton Treseder)
Hide and Seek and *Anna Is Still Here* (Ida Vos)
The Island on Bird Street (Uri Orlev)
Journey to America (Sonia Levitin)
Night (Elie Wiesel)

North to Freedom (Anne Holm)
Number the Stars (Lois Lowry)
Rose Blanche (Roberto Innocenti and Christophe Gallaz)
Shadow of the Wall (Christa Laird)
Sheltering Rebecca (Mary Baylis-White)
The Silver Sword (C. Walter Hodges)
Star Without a Sky (Leonie Ossowski)
Touch Wood: A Girlhood in Occupied France (Renee Roth-
Hano)
Twenty and Ten (Claire Huchet Bishop)
The Upstairs Room (Johanna Reiss)

Nonfiction

Anne Frank: Life in Hiding (Johanna Hurwitz)
Hitler's War Against the Jews (David A. Altshuler)
Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust (Milton
Meltzer)
A Nightmare in History: The Holocaust 1933-1945 (Miriam
Chaikin)
*Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews in the
Holocaust* (Milton Meltzer)
Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust (Barbara
Rogasky)
We Remember the Holocaust (David Adler)

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The Horn Book Magazine, September-October 1993,
pp. 596-97.
Publisher's Weekly, May 10, 1993, p. 72.
School Library Journal, May 1993, p. 104.
Something About the Author, Vol. 39. Detroit: Gale, 1985.
VOYA, June 1993, p. 88.

VOCABULARY TEST

Match each underlined word with the meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| a. forcefully | f. ridiculed | k. angry speech | p. unbeatable |
| b. shrinking | g. clever | l. spoke sharply | q. comfort |
| c. worn out | h. more dreary | m. rudely | r. starved |
| d. perfectly | i. wheeled cot | n. bring back | s. breathed in |
| e. burned | j. moldy | o. untied | t. drink |

- _____ 1. Jacob inhaled deeply, and his usually calm face became tense.
- _____ 2. Jacob's grandmother gave him little candies from a slowly dwindling supply.
- _____ 3. "I'll show you where you sleep," Yurek said gruffly.
- _____ 4. "You looked out the window! How stupid can you be!" A knock on the door stopped Alex's tirade.
- _____ 5. Yurek's eyes looked friendly as he came to retrieve Jacob.
- _____ 6. Alex had indeed created an ingenious hiding place.
- _____ 7. Alex pulled the threadbare curtains aside and looked down into the street.
- _____ 8. "A rat? Are you sure? This isn't just a story?" Gregory shook his head emphatically and told in detail what he had seen.
- _____ 9. The musty smell of his suitcase reminded Jacob of Aunt Hannah.
- _____ 10. Jacob blamed himself. Galer had no words to console his nephew.
- _____ 11. Vladek took a swig from his flask to celebrate his relief at being out of danger.
- _____ 12. Marishka had never seen such an emaciated child.
- _____ 13. "You're not going to die. We're invincible, remember? Nothing can happen to us."
- _____ 14. All of a sudden the pain seared through Jacob's head like a hot needle.
- _____ 15. Alex let go of his breath, winked at Yurek, and untethered the horse.
- _____ 16. "We don't have a second to lose," Dr. Masurik said, lifting Jacob onto a gurney.
- _____ 17. An SS officer barked into a bullhorn: "All males over the age of sixteen will report to the square immediately!"
- _____ 18. A constant April drizzle made the day even bleaker.
- _____ 19. "You're still a baby, Tedek," Jacob taunted, causing David to cry and scream.
- _____ 20. Mela watched the three men exit before she spat at the backs of their impeccably tailored uniforms.

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number. You will use each name only once.

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| a. Jacob | f. David |
| b. Alex | g. Sholom |
| c. Mela | h. Uncle Vladek |
| d. Yurek | i. Marissa |
| e. Marishka | j. Aunt Hannah |

- _____ 1. Plump and small, with twinkling blue eyes.
- _____ 2. A child the same age as Jacob who becomes his study partner.
- _____ 3. Asks five questions at the Passover seder.
- _____ 4. Five years old, with deep dimples in his cheeks and blond ringlets covering his head.
- _____ 5. Tall and fair, and exudes strength – a fabric seller.
- _____ 6. Smuggles Jacob out of the ghetto to meet with Alex.
- _____ 7. Goes from sneaking out at night to smoke and drink to sneaking out to fight the Germans.
- _____ 8. His face is so thin, all you see are his eyes; five years old but looks three.
- _____ 9. With curly black hair and brown eyes, he doesn't look at all Polish.
- _____ 10. Sometimes a little bit drunk, but always a lot of fun.

Part II: True/False (20 points)

In the spaces provided, write T if the statement is completely true, or write F if any part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. Jews are sent to Auschwitz and Treblinka to be farm and factory workers.
- _____ 2. The main events of the novel occur in the 1940s.
- _____ 3. Polish people turn in Jews to the police because they get big rewards for doing so.
- _____ 4. Dr. Masurik is Jacob's uncle.
- _____ 5. Jacob and David's mother dies in a concentration camp.
- _____ 6. Jacob has three brothers.
- _____ 7. The neighbors of Alex and Mela suspect the couple may be hiding a Jewish child.
- _____ 8. Yurek dies fighting in the Polish Resistance movement.
- _____ 9. For Jacob, hide-and-seek has become a terrible game of survival.
- _____ 10. In Uncle Vladek's village, Alex is accused of being a Jew.

Part III: Fill-In (30 points)

Write one or two words in each blank to make each statement true.

1. The Roslans live in the city of _____.
2. Jacob's last name is _____.
3. On Jacob's first night with his new family, Yurek calls him "_____ boy."
4. Alex and Mela fear being turned in to the secret police, called the _____.
5. Jacob's new, Polish name is _____.
6. In the ghetto, Jacob lives with his aunt and his _____.
7. Alex makes a hiding place for Jacob in their first apartment under the _____.
8. Jacob cannot leave the apartment; he can't even go near a _____.
9. Yurek is killed by a(n) _____.
10. The _____ army invades Poland to free it from the occupying German army.
11. Jacob almost dies from an infection in the bone behind his _____.
12. Uncle Vladék lives in the village of _____.
13. After the war, Jacob and David have to move to the country of _____.
14. Jacob feels that his _____ has deserted him.
15. Jacob is hidden inside a _____ when he is smuggled in and out of the hospital.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose any three to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Why do Alex, Mela, and the children leave the city and go to Uncle Vladék's village? Why is it safe there?
2. For what reasons do some Poles risk their lives to help Jews?
3. How do Alex and Yurek work to help their country against the occupying Germans?
4. Why isn't Jacob living with his parents during the war?

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each quotation. In the list below, find the character who spoke the words. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the quotation number. You will use each name only once.

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| a. Jacob | f. David |
| b. Alex | g. Uncle Galer |
| c. Mela | h. Uncle Vladek |
| d. Yurek | i. Marissa |
| e. Marishka | j. Aunt Hannah |

- _____ 1. "I promise you'll be safe with me."
- _____ 2. "I have a fifth question. How do you know them?"
- _____ 3. "All that matters is that I helped get my sister's children out."
- _____ 4. "Mama! Why does Genyek get everything?"
- _____ 5. "Please, let me tell the rest of the story, because this is the only part I know."
- _____ 6. "To save a child we risk our own! How can I make such a choice?"
- _____ 7. "When Uncle David and I were children, the Nazis hunted the Jewish people and killed many of them."
- _____ 8. "Stasek knows a Polish family, very nice people, and they want you to live with them."
- _____ 9. "Papa, we're free! Free! I'm going to get some sugar and horsemeat for us, so we can have a real dinner."
- _____ 10. "Why does your husband have to be a hero? How long will you keep this Jew boy?"

Part II: True-False (20 points)

In the spaces provided, write T if the statement is completely true, or write F if any part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. Jacob lives in the ghetto with his aunt and uncle.
- _____ 2. Jacob is very good with numbers and helps Yurek with his math homework.
- _____ 3. Mela has no doubts about taking in Jacob and his brothers.
- _____ 4. Jacob's health suffers because he gets no fresh air or sunlight.
- _____ 5. A neighbor's child sees a giant rat in Alex and Mela's apartment.
- _____ 6. Jacob's middle brother dies in a concentration camp.
- _____ 7. Yurek joins the Russian army.
- _____ 8. Jacob becomes very jealous of his little brother.
- _____ 9. Alex, Mela, and the children spend the last months of the war living with Uncle Vladek in his small village.
- _____ 10. Jacob is smuggled in and out of the hospital hidden inside a couch.

Part III: Short Answer (30 points)

Write a one- or two-word answer for each of the following questions.

1. At what holiday meal does Jacob tell the story of his childhood? _____
2. What is Alex and Mela's last name? _____
3. Who is one of the authors of this novel? _____
4. In what country does the main action of the novel take place? _____
5. What army has occupied and is ruling Warsaw in the book? _____
6. What is David's new, non-Jewish name? _____
7. Who smuggles Jacob out of the ghetto and hands him over to Alex? _____
8. What is the religion of Alex and Mela? _____
9. What is Uncle Galer's profession? _____
10. What kills Jacob's younger brother? _____
11. What group does Yurek go out at night to be with? _____
12. In the basement apartment, Jacob hides in a cabinet in which room? _____
13. On whom does Dr. Masurik operate? _____
14. Whom does Jacob plan to marry when he grows up? _____
15. What city does Alex take the family to when the war has ended? _____

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose any three to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Why does Alex sell their nice four-room apartment? What is their next apartment like?
2. How does Uncle Vladek feel about protecting Jews from the Nazis?
3. Why can David play outside while Jacob cannot?
4. In what ways are Alex and Mela heroes?

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. s | 6. g | 11. t | 16. i |
| 2. b | 7. c | 12. r | 17. l |
| 3. m | 8. a | 13. p | 18. h |
| 4. k | 9. j | 14. e | 19. f |
| 5. n | 10. q | 15. o | 20. d |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. c | 6. j |
| 2. e | 7. d |
| 3. i | 8. g |
| 4. f | 9. a |
| 5. b | 10. h |

Part II: True-False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F |
| 2. T | 7. T |
| 3. T | 8. F |
| 4. F | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part III: Fill-In (30 points)

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1. Warsaw | 9. sniper |
| 2. Gutgeld | 10. Russian (Soviet) |
| 3. Jew | 11. ear |
| 4. Gestapo | 12. Kaminsk |
| 5. Genyek | 13. Palestine |
| 6. grandmother | 14. father |
| 7. kitchen sink | 15. couch |
| 8. window | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. c |
| 2. i | 7. a |
| 3. g | 8. j |
| 4. e | 9. d |
| 5. f | 10. h |

Part II: True-False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F |
| 2. T | 7. F |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part III: Short Answer (30 points)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. (Passover) seder | 9. doctor |
| 2. Roslan | 10. scarlet fever |
| 3. Malka Drucker/
Michael Halperin | 11. Partisans |
| 4. Poland | 12. bathroom |
| 5. German | 13. Jacob |
| 6. Tedek | 14. Marishka |
| 7. Aunt Hannah | 15. Berlin |
| 8. Christian | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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