

Jacob's Rescue, A Holocaust Story, by Malka Drucker and Michael Halperin. New York: Dell-Yealing Books, 1993.

Story Summary: Once Jacob Gutgeld lived with his family in a beautiful house in Warsaw, Poland. He went to school and played hide –and –seek in the woods with his friends. But everything changed the day the Nazi soldiers invaded in 1939. Suddenly it wasn't safe to be Jewish anymore. They had to leave their home and move to the ghetto. One afternoon, eight- year- old Jacob slipped through a hole in the ghetto wall to meet Alex Roslan, a kind Christian man who agreed to be his new "uncle". The Roslan family, at the risk of their own lives, kept Jacob's identity as a Jew hidden. Every day of hiding meant a new danger and a threat of discovery. Jacob worried about his real family and longed to go to school and play outside like the Roslan children. The fear, the hunger, and the hardships brought Jacob closer to the Roslan family – until at last they were able to begin a new chapter in their lives. This book explores actions and feelings of people involved in a terrible time in history. Heroism and goodness are demonstrated by the Roslan family, who risked their own lives to protect children who were not even related to them. This story gives authenticity not only to the harsh physical dangers, but also to the candid characterizations, and the honesty about how fear made people act.

Objectives: Students should be able to:

- understand what a hero does, and what a heroic act is;
- understand the concepts of persecution, and hiding;
- identify ways the Nazis persecuted Jews;
- understand the concept of being a victim;
- recognize and understand the courage and heroism of the Roslan family; and
- analyze and understand the reasons and motivations that caused certain people to take a stand.

Suggested Topics for Literature Circle Discussion and Responding:

- Write a prediction as to who the two gentile (non-Jewish) guests are at the Seder table.
- Discuss the story frame – how it begins in the present and flashes back to the past.
- Why would Marissa finally learn about her father's mysterious childhood? Why was it kept a secret?
- Respond to the following quote on p.9, "If the Nazis aren't following their laws anymore, why should we?" What is meant by this quote?
- What did Alex promise to do? Will he be able to keep his promise? Give page numbers and text to support that he will or will not.
- How would Alex explain what was happening to his family? (p.19)
- Explain how you would feel if you were in Jacob's situation. Tell why.
- Discuss the chance that Alex and his family are taking. What would be the consequences if the Nazis found out. What about the neighbors?
- Why was Alex willing to risk himself and his family? What would you have done? Tell why.
- Explore what it means to be resourceful.
- Who were the Gestapo?

- How would you have reacted if you were Jacob? What if the Gestapo found him? What would happen?(p.33)
- Predict the ending of the story.

Suggested Activities:

- Invite a Hidden Child survivor into the classroom. Ask to share his or her story.
- Create a timeline of historical events. Include the events of the characters in the story. Use adding machine tape or long pieces of paper. Hang them in the classroom. Students can add on as they read.
- Research where the story takes place. Draw a map, and locate the specific places on the map.
- Create collages that express a feeling about the passage of time, such as the notion of time passing quickly or standing still. Students could use old calendars, magazine pictures, newspaper, bits of torn paper.
- Retell Jacob's story in a creative way.
- Discuss the ways in which the authors develop the characters in their work. Ask students to analyze the way the authors develop at least two of the main characters. Give specific examples from the text with page number references.
- Research other ways Jews were helped and how they defied the Nazis.
- Compare/contrast with other pieces of literature being read.
- Have students create an original artwork that reflects their feelings about the persecution of Jews by the Nazis.
- Have students select several different events from the story, give page reference and quotes that illustrate and describe persecution and hiding.
- Research information on Passover and other Jewish observances.
- Trace the historic events on a timeline.
- Research why it is customary for Jewish people to not eat pork.
- Research facts about other heroes during this time in history.