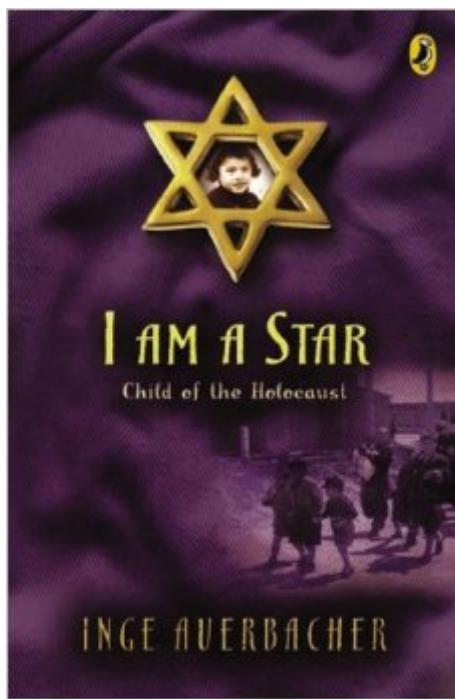


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I Am A Star: Child Of The Holocaust



Synopsis

In 1942, seven-year-old Inge Auerbacher's Jewish family was sent to a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. The Auerbachers defied death for three years, until they were freed in 1945. Without stressing the horrors she lived through, Inge's story allows even the youngest middle reader to understand the Holocaust.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Inge is just a child living in a small village in Germany when Hitler rises to power. Like so many other Jewish families, her family did not escape from Germany soon enough to be safe. By the time they think to get out, it is too late. They are sent from place to place until they are finally deported to Terezin, a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. Conditions there are horrible, and people live in constant fear of being shipped off to Auschwitz, where the gas chambers are. Because Inge's father is a disabled war veteran, shot in the shoulder in World War I while fighting for Germany, the family has special privileges in Terezin. Inge is able to stay with her mother and father, instead of being separated. However, the family is still fighting for survival, just like every other family in the camp. Miraculously, Inge and her parents survive the Holocaust in Terezin. They live to be liberated and to start a new life in the United States after the war. This is one of few stories about the Holocaust with a relatively happy ending. I liked that there was so much history included in this story. It isn't only Inge's story, but the story of the Holocaust in general. She tells of Hitler's rise to power

and the other things that were going on right before she was sent to the concentration camp. I didn't like the inclusion of the poetry in the book. I felt like it broke up the flow of the story, because it often was in the middle of a page where the narrative was.

Inge Auerbacher was only three years old, in 1938, when the massive pogrom called Kristallnacht, or the Night of the Broken Glass took place. At the age of seven she was sent to Terezin concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. In this incredible little book, Auerbacher tells of her experiences of being a little girl in Terezin concentration camp, one of the few young children who survived the death camps. As she recounts: "Of fifteen thousand children imprisoned in the Terezin concentration camps in Czechoslovakia, between 1941 and 1945, about one hundred survived. I am one of them. At least one and a half children were killed in the Nazi Holocaust. The reason most of these children died is that they were Jewish". Auerbacher takes the horror of these years, and imparts a message of hope. She has created an account for young readers of her experiences, in a book filled with moving poetry and with the aid of haunting illustrations by Israel Bernbaum. There are also several photographs of her home town and of Inge as a child and her family life. Auerbacher explains that the silent voices of the innocent children who died in the holocaust must be heard, and that is why she felt compelled to trace the historical events that made this great evil possible and to tell her own story. The author talks about her home town, Kippenheim, a village in southern Germany, where she was born in 1934. She recounts the idyllic existence of her family and community in Kippenheim, until the horrific events of Kristallnacht. She traces the roots of anti-Semitism for young readers, and summarizes the rise of Hitler, and the holocaust, before talking about her own story. "We still feel the pain and we weep. This nightmare will not let us sleep. A page in history; one must learn. Yesterday us, and tomorrow your turn?" She talks of her experiences of being forced to wear the yellow star at the age of six years old, the harsh circumstances of deportation, and the horrific conditions for children in Terezin in crowded and filthy cells infested with rats, mice, fleas and bedbugs, and of the other children who she befriended in the camp, such as Ada, a German Jewish child who longed to go to the Land of Israel, as did so many hundreds of thousands of Jews trapped in the Nazi inferno. Ada taught her a song about the Holy Land, and promised Inge that they would soon go to there, "Just hold on a little longer" she used to say. Ada's dream never came true-she died at the age of nine in Auschwitz. Another friend was Ruth, a beautiful blond little girl of mixed Jewish and Gentile blood, who was brought up as a Christian, and who loved to draw. Ruth died in Terezin because her Jewish heritage, even though she never considered herself Jewish. The final two chapters are about Inge's liberation from Auschwitz, and her hopes and afterthoughts: She closes

with a wonderful poem about the horrors and deaths and the hopes and dreams of those who survived and their descendants entitled NEVER AGAIN:"Minds were dulled by bombs of hate, Only the hero cared about our fate, We saw the truth, it began to unfold, You may kill the body but never the soul. Here we are with honour and pride, a new generation at our side, the silent voices join us today, Never, never again we hope and pray".

Good initial information on the Holocaust for Middle to High school ages. Half of the book is information on the Holocaust, and the other half is Inge's story. Although her story is moving because of the plight she was forced into, there are many more Holocaust stories written in books that are more captivating, many because of the writing style and details. This is a thin book and only half of it contains her personal experiences. However, I would recommend it for a first time reader, like a young person who is not used to the horrific details that are the realities of the Holocaust.

In Inge Auerbacher's haunting memoir, she recalls the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis during the second World War. As a child, she saw her family imprisoned and witnessed firsthand the deaths of hundreds of thousands of her people. Though Auerbacher is frank in her account of the Holocaust, her optimism shines through in the beautiful poems that litter this work. The book is short (about 80 pages) and the conversational tone makes it an easy read. "I Am a Star" should replace Anne Frank's diary as the authoritative classic on the Holocaust. My only complaint is that it wasn't longer.

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