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Irena's Children: Young Readers Edition; A True Story Of Courage



Synopsis

From New York Times bestselling author Tilar Mazzeo comes the extraordinary and long forgotten story of Irena Sendler—the “female Oskar Schindler”—who took staggering risks to save 2,500 children from death and deportation in Nazi-occupied Poland during World War II—now adapted for a younger audience. Irena Sendler was a young Polish woman living in Warsaw during World War II with an incredible story of survival and selflessness. And she’s been long forgotten by history. Until now. This young readers edition of Irena’s Children tells Irena’s unbelievable story set during one of the worst times in modern history. With guts of steel and unfaltering bravery, Irena smuggled thousands of children out of the walled Jewish ghetto in toolboxes and coffins, snuck them under overcoats at checkpoints, and slipped them through the dank sewers and into secret passages that led to abandoned buildings, where she convinced her friends and underground resistance network to hide them. In this heroic tale of survival and resilience in the face of impossible odds, Tilar Mazzeo and adapter Mary Cronk Farrell share the true story of this bold and brave woman, overlooked by history, who risked her life to save innocent children from the horrors of the Holocaust.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 6—10—Irena Sendler, a righteous Gentile who rescued approximately 2,500

Jewish children in the Warsaw ghetto, is the focus of this volume. Sendler's father, a Catholic doctor who treated Jews others turned away, grew up speaking Yiddish with close Jewish friends. Her senior role at a government agency positioned her to offer help following the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland. Sendler and an inner circle of trusted friends, Jewish and Christian alike, used creative means to spirit Jewish children away to safety in orphanages and foster homes. Tortured by the Nazis, she gave up no secrets, keeping the children and her network safe. While the book is strong on general historical context, featuring descriptions of socioeconomic divisions among Jews in occupied Warsaw, it suffers from the wartime loss of direct historical evidence. Many of the individuals portrayed—Sendler included—do not feel fully fleshed out, making the narrative somewhat confusing and lessening the emotional impact. This is a story better suited to shorter treatments, such as Marcia Vaughan's *Irena's Jars of Secrets*. More readable, engaging volumes on similar individuals exist, such as Irene Gut Opdyke's *In My Hands* and Alison Leslie Gold's *A Special Fate*. VERDICT Purchase where there is a high demand for Holocaust nonfiction.—Laura Simeon, Open Window School Library, WA --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“Farrell’s adaptation of Mazzeo’s adult title (2016) clearly presents [Irena Sendler’s] life and the ever present reality of death in a sobering, heartbreaking narrative. Readers will understand how Sendler came to be honored by Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial as one of the Righteous Among the Nations.” (Kirkus Reviews)

Though no longer a young reader, I am a huge fan of Mary Cronk Farrell, who authored *Pure Grit: How American World War II Nurses Survived Battle and Prison Camp in the Pacific*, *Fannie Never Flinched: One Woman's Courage in the Struggle for American Labor Union Rights*, and now, as an adapter, *Irena's Children: Young Readers Edition; A True Story of Courage*. The story of Irena Sendler, who with her network of courageous Polish patriots, Christians and Jews alike, helped save 2,500 mostly Jewish children from overwhelming evil in the form of the Nazi SS, Gestapo, and Polish Nazis during the German occupation of her native Poland, had me often in tears. Farrell never flinched in describing the terror, torture, and fates of tens of thousands of Poles (in all, four million Polish civilians died between 1939 and 1945), and I often had to close the book, recover from what I had just read, before I could continue reading. While the reading level is appropriate for young readers especially, readers of all ages must have the strength the Polish heroes of this book had in order to read to the end. The reward for reading through the last pages is to know that Polish

resistance fighters like Irena Sendler altered the course of World War II right up to today. The perpetrators of the death and concentration camps, as well as those that brought their victims to their captivity and deaths, and those that rained death and destruction on Jewish ghettos from the air or on the ground--all vividly described in this book--may mostly be dead now, but fortunately German courts have recently decreed that those who even witnessed the Holocaust were accomplices, too--that it was impossible for most of them not to be aware of their role, modest or not, in the machinery of death that led to the destruction of six million European Jews in six years. Thank you Mary Cronk Farrell for bringing us the story of "the female Oskar Schindler."

Excellent read about brave Irena as well as the network of the Polish resistance. It is hard to believe the cruelty of the Nazis, a grim reminder of how Germany started the last 2 major wars. It reflects how very evil a human can be. I think the atrocities of the Nazis should be a major read for all.

This book should be mandatory reading for everyone! Although this was adapted by Mary Cronk Farrell for young readers, I was quickly entranced and read it in a day. I think it also has a lesson we all need to be refreshed on, the horrific atrocities we do to those who are different from us. It will make you sad, cry, sad, and sick over the senseless cruelty, but you will feel hope when you read of the courage of Irena and her friends. I highly recommend this well written and thought provoking book for all ages!

When a book captures my interest I usually finish it in short order. Not so with this Young Readers Edition of *Irena Sendler's Children*. I had to read this one in segments, allowing myself breaks to breathe fresh air and seek sunshine after being immersed in the darkness that shrouded Warsaw, Poland during World War II. I've read other books about the Nazi's horrendous ethnic cleansing campaign, but I think like many readers I chose to picture the victims as adults, suppressing the fact that the children of those adults faced the same fate. That isn't possible with *Irena Sendler's Children*. Never gratuitous in its depictions, it nevertheless doesn't shy from portraying the realities of what was at stake for those seen as undesirable, as less than human. Nor does it soften the extreme danger Irena and everyone in her network faced by choosing to risk their lives to save the lives of others. Humanity snatching victory from inhumanity. So who should read this Young Reader's version? Any and all adults, especially those parents and teachers whose children will be reading it. And as for those children reading it, I think it best suited to readers

12+ due to the intense nature of the subject matter. It's definitely a book that should be discussed and the historical background explored for a fuller understanding of its topic. Note: I received a copy of this book from the author, Mary Cronk Farrell. Mary is also a friend of mine, but that in no way influenced my review. Mary always has and always will tackle hard topics with skill and finesse.

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