

Grace Rivkis
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Dear Jennifer Roy,

Thank you for writing *Yellow Star*. Many books will teach you something, but *Yellow Star* slapped me in the face and knocked me over with its reality, and then helped me up again with the beautiful way it was written. It told a story that needed to be told, in a way that made it accessible. It's a reminder of the Holocaust and why we need to keep that from ever happening again.

I'm Jewish, and have always had some connection to the people who died in or survived that massacre. But *Yellow Star* brought me closer to this horror because it's different from the other books I've read about the Holocaust. It told what it was like to survive the ghettos instead of the concentration camps or the time spent in hiding. When I read *Yellow Star*, I cry. I must have read it 20 times by now, but I've never gotten tired of it. It touches an emotional wellspring in me and probably every Jew. That drives me to make sure that nothing like the Holocaust happens again, ever, to anyone.

I particularly remember how you told about Sylvia's father's sense of humor. It reminded me of something my father says. "When the whole world is out to get you, you develop a sense of humor pretty fast. That or you go crazy." In the same way, Sylvia's father makes little jokes all the time. I remember one time when Sylvia and her dad were hiding in different places every night and as they went he would always ask "Are you ready for a night in the most uncomfortable of circumstances?" Both of them are always able to make (or take) a joke.

Going back to what my father says, it does sometimes seem like the whole world is out for Jewish blood, and it was more true in WWII than in almost any other time. I remember one exchange

between Sylvia's parents as they enter the ghetto: "Good, now we are safe from the Poles." "No, now we are at the mercy of the Germans." The way you described it, I get the impression that there wasn't much mercy there. That exchange was a brief reminder of the fact that at the time they faced hatred wherever they turned. It taught me to feel grateful that the world isn't like that to Jews anymore.

Your book, *Yellow Star*, was one of the first books about the Holocaust I read, and since then I've read many, many more. It sparked my interest and made me think. I like that you wrote a true story like it was a true story, without frills or heroism. Sylvia was obviously very brave, but you didn't try to conceal the fact that she spent a lot of time hiding. You also let her actions speak her bravery without emphasizing how brave she was. That time near the end when she woke up and heard planes flying over, she was terrified and you made sure the reader knew it. But she did what she needed to anyway. You let that stay as it was; let the reader see that her actions were brave. You didn't go on about it. Instead, you let simplicity speak for itself.

One last thing I loved about your book was the fact that you wrote it in the first person. That somehow made it more real to me, closer. It reminded me that this was a true story, not a work of fiction.

Yellow Star touched me more than any other book about the Holocaust. It made me think, and any book that does that is a treasure. So thank you for telling Sylvia's story, and thank you for opening my eyes. Shalom.

Sincerely,

Grace Rivkis, Grade 6
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