



Catherine's War by Julia Billet

Look inside for

Discussion Questions

Author Interview/Biography

Reviews

Discussion Questions

1. How does Rachel's passion for photography provide a source of stability and purpose amid the chaos of the war?
2. Discuss the role of photography as a tool for remembering and bearing witness in the story. What is the significance of the photo exhibit at the end?
3. How do the back-and-white drawings of Catherine's photographs add to the emotional impact of the story?
4. Discuss the significance of Rachel's name change to Catherine. What does she lose or gain by taking on this new identity?
5. The story is a powerful coming-of-age narrative. How does Catherine's journey force her to mature beyond her years, and what parts of her innocence is she able to hold onto?
6. How does the use of a graphic novel format, rather than a traditional novel, enhance the storytelling? What details are conveyed more effectively through illustrations?
7. Consider the visual contrast between the muted, fatigue-inducing colors of wartime and the black-and-white drawings of Catherine's photos. What effect does this have while reading?
8. Catherine encounters numerous people who help her, often at great risk to themselves. Discuss the motives of these "everyday heroes".
9. The story shows both the chilling cruelty of the Nazi occupation and the selflessness of strangers. What does this reveal about human nature in a time of crisis?
10. The book is based on real-life events. How does this fact change or deepen your reading of the story?
11. How might a reader's background knowledge of the Holocaust and World War II affect their interpretation of the book?

Author Biography

Julia Billet is an acclaimed French novelist and author of short stories, children's books, and poetry. Her award-winning *La Guerre de Catherine* (Rue de Sèvres, 2012) was published in the United States as *Catherine's War* in January 2020.

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Reviews

"Many of the settings are beautifully detailed...and the characters undeniably expressive. Catherine's ability to find beauty in the world makes for a forward-looking read."

— **Booklist (starred review)**

"Billet has crafted a pictorial paeon to the everyday heroes of Vichy France, as seen through the eyes—and camera lens—of a Jewish teen...Almost every panel—especially those inspired by real photographs—could stand alone as a work of art...Fauvel's ink and watercolor illustrations are masterly." — **School Library Journal (starred review)**

"This story will make readers want to join the Resistance...Characters are drawn so vividly that, long afterward, readers will remember their names."

— **Kirkus Reviews**

"Thoughtful meditations on the importance of art and shared connection combine with historical fact to make Catherine's journey feel relevant." — **Publishers Weekly**

"Though the story covers Rachel/Catherine's adolescence, the smoothly translated text is clear...and gentle enough...to be comprehensible to readers younger than the character. The back matter is pitched to explain this story's context to young people with little or no background knowledge about WWII or the Holocaust." — **Horn Book Magazine**

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Read-Alikes

Resistance by Jennifer A. Nielsen

Resistance joins the Scholastic Gold line, which features award-winning and beloved novels. Includes exclusive bonus content!

Chaya Lindner is a teenager living in Nazi-occupied Poland. Simply being Jewish places her in danger of being killed or sent to the camps. After her little sister is taken away, her younger brother disappears, and her parents all but give up hope, Chaya is determined to make a difference. Using forged papers and her fair features, Chaya becomes a courier and travels between the Jewish ghettos of Poland, smuggling food, papers, and even people.

Soon Chaya joins a resistance cell that runs raids on the Nazis' supplies. But after a mission goes terribly wrong, Chaya's network shatters. She is alone and unsure of where to go, until Esther, a member of her cell, finds her and delivers a message that chills Chaya to her core, and sends her on a journey toward an even larger uprising in the works -- in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Though the Jewish resistance never had much of a chance against the Nazis, they were determined to save as many lives as possible, and to live -- or die -- with honor.

The Night War by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

It's 1942. German Nazis occupy much of France. And twelve-year-old Miriam, who is Jewish, is not safe. With help and quick thinking, Miri is saved from the roundup that takes her entire Jewish neighborhood. She escapes Paris, landing in a small French village, where the spires of the famous Chateau de Chenonceau rise high into the sky, its bridge across the River Cher like a promise, a fairy tale.

But Miri's life is no fairy tale. Her parents are gone—maybe alive, maybe not. Taken in at the boarding school near the chateau, pretending to be Catholic to escape Nazi capture, Miri is called upon one night to undertake a deadly task, one that spans the castle grounds, its bridge, and the very border to freedom. Here is her chance to escape—hopefully to find her parents. But will she take it? One thing is certain: The person Miri meets that night will save her life. And the person Miri becomes that night could save the lives of many more.

In her return to the era of *The War that Saved My Life* and *The War I Finally Won*, Kimberly Brubaker Bradley brings a new and different story, one with a mystical twist, that explores a little-known slice of World War II history, a highly unusual friendship, and the power of choosing courage even when—especially when—there are no good choices to be had.

When We Flew Away by Alice Hoffman

Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* has captivated and inspired readers for decades. Published posthumously by her bereaved father, Anne's journal, written while she and her family were in hiding during World War II, has become one of the central texts of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust, as well as a work of literary genius.

With the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, the Frank family's life is turned inside out, blow by blow, restriction by restriction. Prejudice, loss, and terror run rampant, and Anne is forced to bear witness as ordinary people become monsters, and children and families are caught up in the inescapable tide of violence.

In the midst of impossible danger, Anne, audacious and creative and fearless, discovers who she truly is. With a wisdom far beyond her years, she will become a writer who will go on to change the world as we know it.

Critically acclaimed author Alice Hoffman weaves a lyrical and heart-wrenching story of the way the world closes in on the Frank family from the moment the Nazis invade the Netherlands until they are forced into hiding, bringing Anne to bold, vivid life.

White Bird by R. J. Palacio

In R. J. Palacio's bestselling collection of stories *Auggie & Me*, which expands on characters in *Wonder*, readers were introduced to Julian's grandmother, Grandmère. Here, Palacio makes her graphic novel debut with Grandmère's heartrending story: how she, a young Jewish girl, was hidden by a family in a Nazi-occupied French village during World War II; how the boy she and her classmates once shunned became her savior and best friend.

Sara's harrowing experience movingly demonstrates the power of kindness to change hearts, build bridges, and even save lives. As Grandmère tells Julian, "It always takes courage to be kind, but in those days, such kindness could cost you everything." With poignant symbolism and gorgeous artwork that brings Sara's story out of the past and cements it firmly in this moment in history, *White Bird* is sure to captivate anyone who was moved by the book *Wonder* or the blockbuster movie adaptation and its message.

I Survived the Nazi Invasion, 1944: A Graphic Novel by Lauren Tarshis

It's been years since the Nazis invaded Max Rosen's home country of Poland. All the Jewish people, including Max's family, have been forced to live in a ghetto. At least Max and his sister, Zena, had Papa with them . . . until two months ago, when the Nazis took him away. Now Max and Zena are on their own.

One day, with barely enough food to survive, the siblings make a daring escape from Nazi soldiers into the nearby forest. They are found by Jewish resistance fighters, who take them to a safe camp.

But soon, grenades are falling all around them. Can Max and Zena survive the fallout of the Nazi invasion?

With art by Álvaro Sarraseca and text adapted by Georgia Ball, Lauren Tarshis's New York Times bestselling *I Survived* series takes on vivid new life in this explosive graphic novel edition. Includes nonfiction back matter with historical photos and facts about World War II and the Holocaust.

Projekt 1065: A Novel of World War II by Alan Gratz

Infiltrate. Befriend. Sabotage.

World War II is raging. Michael O'Shaunessey, originally from Ireland, now lives in Nazi Germany with his parents. Like the other boys in his school, Michael is a member of the Hitler Youth.

But Michael has a secret. He and his parents are spies.

Michael despises everything the Nazis stand for. But he joins in the Hitler Youth's horrific games and book burnings, playing the part so he can gain insider knowledge.

When Michael learns about Projekt 1065, a secret Nazi war mission, things get even more complicated. He must prove his loyalty to the Hitler Youth at all costs -- even if it means risking everything he cares about.

Including... his own life.

Code Name Kingfisher by Liz Kessler

Thirteen-year-old Liv's beloved ninety-two-year-old grandmother, Bubbe, is moving into a home where she can be cared for as her dementia worsens. As Liv helps her father empty Bubbe's house, she finds an old chest which opens up a whole world that Liv never knew about: the hidden world of Bubbe's childhood.

Through the letters and other mementos, Liv learns that her bubbe, given name Mila, had a sister, Hannie, that no one in Liv's family ever knew about. In 1942, Mila and Hannie are sent away from their parents to a non-Jewish family so they will survive the war. Twelve-year-old Mila believes that they will soon be reunited with their parents and go back to their normal lives, but fourteen-year-old Hannie knows better, and soon gets involved in the Resistance.

Hannie takes on more and more dangerous assignments until a betrayal forces her to decide between running away with her sister or fully committing to mission. Tragedy strikes, and Mila goes to England on her own to restart her life from scratch, vowing never to talk about her childhood again.

In the present day, Liv reads how Mila builds something new from the shattered pieces of her childhood while giving beloved Bubbe all the support she can. Both Liv and Mila grapple with loyalty, family, and love as they discover what it means to be brave and go above and beyond to offer someone else a life of dignity, happiness, and freedom.

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

The unforgettable Newbery Medal–winning novel from Lois Lowry. As the German troops begin their campaign to "relocate" all the Jews of Denmark, Annemarie Johansen's family takes in Annemarie's best friend, Ellen Rosen, and conceals her as part of the family.

Through the eyes of ten-year-old Annemarie, we watch as the Danish Resistance smuggles almost the entire Jewish population of Denmark, nearly seven thousand people, across the sea to Sweden. The heroism of an entire nation reminds us that there was pride and human decency in the world even during a time of terror and war.

A modern classic of historical fiction, *Number the Stars* has won generations of fans and continues to speak to today's readers. Jessica Grose wrote in a November 2022 *New York Times* essay entitled "This Perfect Mother-Daughter Read Holds a Powerful Lesson for Fighting Antisemitism": "*Number the Stars* is particularly relevant to our family, and to this moment."