



2009

Tropical Secrets: Holocaust Refugees in Cuba

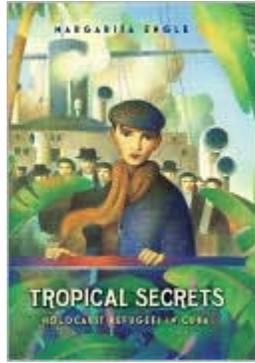
Alison Canar

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Canar, Alison (2009) "Tropical Secrets: Holocaust Refugees in Cuba," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 30 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol30/iss1/14>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.



Engle, Margarita. *Tropical Secrets: Holocaust Refugees in Cuba*. Henry Holt, 2009. ISBN 9780805089363. \$16.99. 199 p.

Reviewer: Alison Canar

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Historical fiction; Historical poetry;

Subject: Jews--Cuba--20th century--Juvenile fiction; Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Juvenile fiction; Novels in verse; Books--Reviews

Daniel's parents can only afford one trip away from Nazi Germany to safety, and they send him. Rejected at the United States and Canada, Cuba is the last hope for the passengers of Daniel's ship. "El Gordo", a Cuban official, allows them to enter, but only after charging exorbitant fees. His daughter, Paloma, is secretly doing her best to help the refugees feel at home while her father profits off of them. David, an adult who fled from Russia several years ago, offers his wisdom as the two young people, Daniel and Paloma, slowly begin to form a friendship. The three of them unite to help a Christian man stay with his Jewish wife in the midst of religious intolerance. Daniel doesn't want to forget his heritage, but gradually he becomes more open to the Cuban way of life, and takes another young refugee under his wing.

This novel is written in verse, alternating between the voices of the main characters to tell the full story. The poetic style makes for a quick, yet meaningful, read. There are two blended themes, one of preserving identity, and one of putting selfishness aside to serve others. At first, they can seem to be oppositional; but, as Daniel learns throughout his experiences, they can become one in the same. Throughout her writing, Engle emphasizes the importance and symbolism of names. For instance, Paloma is the Spanish word for dove, which represents peace. When Daniel chooses a new refugee to help, he finds a boy who carries his same name. All of these elements combine to create a pleasant, informative, and uplifting historical tale.

Volume 30. no.1 (September/October 2009)