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### Milkweed by Jerry Spinelli

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Author: Spinelli, Jerry

Title: *Milkweed*

Year of Publication: 2003

Publisher: Alfred A. Knopf

ISBN: 9780375813740

Number of Pages: 208

Rating: Excellent

Reading/Interest Level: Intermediate; Young Adult

Keywords: Holocaust; Historical Fiction; World War II; Poland; Judaism

Review:

Misha wants to be a Jew like his friend Janina. Jews get lots of attention in Warsaw, Poland, and Misha's always been a nobody—just an orphan and a thief. So when Janina's family is forced to move into the Warsaw Ghetto, Misha joins them and puts his thievery to good use, smuggling food across the ghetto wall to keep his new family alive. But soon even the food outside the ghetto is disappearing, and the trains that empty street after street of Jews aren't going away to the countryside—they're going somewhere much, much worse. Misha tries to save his family and friends, but ultimately, he can never forget the things he has seen.

*Milkweed* conveys the horrors of World War II from the perspective of a young child. The first half of the book is highly episodic as readers follow Misha's exploits in pre-war Warsaw and sense the building tensions of the Nazi invasion. The second half is more narrative as Misha and Janina experience life in the ghetto, from starvation and beatings to dead bodies in the street. Misha's matter-of-fact reporting provides very little interpretation, so readers must be able to infer meaning and provide historical context. This book is best suited for older readers learning about the Holocaust.

Reviewer: Lauren E. Johnson

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