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The Librarian of Auschwitz

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Book Review

The Librarian of Auschwitz

Author

Antonio G. Iturbe

Illustrator

Reviewer

Abigail Packard

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Pages

432

Year

2012

Publisher

Henry Holt and

ISBN

9781627796187

Adita “Dita” Adler has been taken with both her mother and father to Auschwitz by the Nazis. There, the three of them live among the prisoners in the family camp. Life is miserable and Nazi atrocities occur every day as prisoners are brought to the camp while others are taken to the crematorium to be burned. It is in this horrible place that a spark of joy and even rebellion occurs. Freddy Hirsch has begun a school for the children of the family block. But what the Nazis don’t know is that Freddy Hirsch has a library—eight books that the prisoners must keep secret from the Nazis. Freddy enlists Dita to take charge of these precious books and carry them around from classroom to classroom so that the teachers and students can use them. Dita becomes the librarian of Auschwitz. Dita faces terrible loss and tragedy as she desperately tries to keep her charge and cling to the hope that one day the war will end.

Antonio Iturbe has taken a fascinating piece of history from one of the darkest eras of the world and turned it into a tale of courage, defiance, humanity, and hope. Moreover, the fact that Iturbe’s basis of this story comes from the real-life story of Dita Kraus makes this an incredibly powerful story. The writing is done well, and Iturbe both sensitively and honestly describes some of the horrors that Dita, her parents, and her friends undergo during their time in Auschwitz. The different stories of Dita, Freddy, and others that are woven together to create this novel makes the story both interesting and innovative. This book would work as a fantastic spring-board to in-depth discussions on these topics and would pair well with other well-known titles about the Holocaust. Iturbe’s writing about the distinct yet connected stories of Dita, Freddy, and others brings up many thought-provoking discussions on courage and family, loyalty and persistence. Truly, this novel is inspiring.

*Contains moderate language, minor sexual content, and moderate violence.