

## Malka

Mirjam Pressler, translated Brian Murdoch

### About the Book

Malka cannot understand what is happening. Her home is no longer safe. Children won't play with her, even though they were once her friends. Jews are no longer welcome in Lawoczne and people are disappearing after Nazi round-ups. Malka does not remember her father. He lives in another country. Malka's mother, a doctor, thinks that the Nazis will not harm her family because she has treated and healed German patients. She almost leaves it too late to escape. By the time she realises how dangerous life for Jews is becoming the only choice she has left is to take her two daughters away from Poland by crossing the mountain border into Hungary. On the journey seven year old Malka is taken ill and is too weak to travel further. Separated from her mother and sister, she learns to survive alone.

### About the Author

The author, Mirjam Pressler, met the real Malka Mai in Israel in 1996. Malka recounted some of her fragmented memories and Mirjam used them to write this fictional account of a lost child and a mother's frantic search for a loved one left behind.

### Discussion Questions

1. when Mrs Schneider told Malka that she had to go home Malka was hurt and angry. Why does Malka think that she is no longer allowed to play with Veronika?
2. did Malka steal Liesel? Why does the doll become so important to her?
3. Malka is only seven when the story begins. At what point does she have to stop thinking like a child in order to survive?
4. what evidence is there that it wasn't only the actions of the Nazis but also anti-Jewish feelings of other members of the community which made daily life difficult for Jewish families?
5. choose two characters with whom Malka stayed and discuss her relationship with them. Which people did she miss the most when she was alone?

6. why did people offer shelter to Malka and then send her away?
7. although the story is mainly about Malka's experience what do we learn about how people managed to stay alive in the ghetto?
8. people living in difficult circumstances often lose track of time. What names does Malka give to different days and how does this show how her thoughts and actions are all linked to staying alive and well?
9. what do we learn about Polish churches and Christian church goers in the story?
10. sometimes Malka thinks about her mother and about Teresa. What does she remember about each of them?
11. how does Malka avoid being rounded up by the Nazis?
12. what do the sections on the experiences of Minna and Hannah tell us about Malka's father and grandfather?
13. why was it difficult for the nurse and doctor to persuade Malka to leave the ghetto?
14. did the story end in the way you expected? What do you think the old woman, the woman by the stove and Malka said next?