

The Little Boy Star: An Allegory of the Holocaust

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About the Book

The Little Boy Star is a picture book which relates the story of a little Jewish boy who lived in Nazi Germany. He is labelled with a star and marked out as different from other citizens. Soon nobody sees the little boy himself, they only notice the star. Then the star hunters come and the little boy has to hide away. This story can be read at a simple level, indeed the publishers suggest that it is suitable for the 4-8 age range, but we think it works best with older primary and lower secondary students (9-12) when all the details which contribute to the allegory can be discussed. The illustrations are simple but contain powerful messages about exclusion, fear, helplessness and inner strength.

The book could also be used with older secondary students who have previously studied the Holocaust and those who are studying the use of imagery created through the written word, whilst teachers of visual art may wish to explore the use of the star images and the concepts of light and darkness used throughout the book.

Discussion Questions

Please note that some of these questions will act as spoilers for the book.

1. today, if we say that someone is a star, what do we mean? Does being a star mean the same thing in the story?
2. why did the little boy start to feel ashamed?
3. why did people only see the star and not the little boy?
4. who were the star hunters and what were they trying to do? What happened to the stars they found?
5. how did the little boy escape from the star hunters?
6. why was it dark outside and inside his hiding place?
7. when the night was over why was the little boy still sad?

8. who helped the little boy and what did they do?

Ideas to discuss with older students

1. an allegory is a story where every detail is important and has special meaning. How many allegorical details can you find within both the words and pictures and what do they really mean?
2. how do the writer and artist develop the concept of the star in both positive and negative ways?
3. how does the artist use colour, light and shade to explain the mood of the story?
4. how many shadows appear in the pictures and what do they represent?

You can use HMD resources to find out more about the Holocaust

<http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/the-holocaust/> and the treatment of children by the Nazis <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/theme-papers/children-and-the-holocaust.>