



The Brave Princess *and Me*

*Inspired by
a true story*

written by Kathy Kacer
illustrated by Juliana Kolesova

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Guide written by Larry Swartz
Teacher's Guide

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Author: Kathy Kacer

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Summary

The story is set during the Second World War in Athens, Greece, where Princess Alice, who was born deaf, lived. With the arrival of the Nazis in Greece, Jewish people were in danger. Tilde Cohen and her mother, Rachel, were desperately seeking refuge and arrived on Princess Alice's doorstep begging her to hide them. The brave princess agreed to conceal the two Jewish people in her home, but they were forced to go into hiding and never leave the house. When the Gestapo police came to the princess's house to search for hidden Jews, Princess Alice pretended that she didn't understand them. The princess stood her ground and fooled the police who gave up and left.

Some Background Information

- After Haimaki Cohen died, his wife, Rachel, and daughter, Tilde Cohen, were on the run to escape being captured by Nazi soldiers. The mother and daughter took a brave chance to seek refuge with Princess Alice. Haimaki Cohen was a wealthy and respected member of the Greek parliament. King George promised Haimaki Cohen that if his family ever needed help, he only had to ask.
- The young girl hated being cooped up and longed to leave the small apartment that was their safe house.
- Princess Alice was born deaf and couldn't hear, but she had the ability to read lips. She kept her hearing loss a secret because deaf people experienced (and still do experience) discrimination and prejudice, and Alice wanted people to think she was smart.
- Although it was extremely dangerous for Princess Alice to conceal the family, she saved Jewish people during the Holocaust. In 1989, she was given the honour of Righteous Among Nations, granted to non-Jews who risked their lives saving Jews during the Holocaust.
- In 1944, when Athens was liberated, Princess Alice was reunited with her own children whom she hadn't seen in years.
- In 1949, Princess Alice became a nun and funded a convent and orphanage that she built in Athens.
- She died in 1969 and was buried in Jerusalem, Israel.

About the Author

Kathy Kacer is an award-winning author who has written more than 20 books that focus on stories of the Holocaust. Her work includes picture books and historical fiction and nonfiction writing. As a child of Holocaust survivors, Kathy Kacer is a passionate advocate for sharing Holocaust stories and has claimed that she feels a personal responsibility to collect stories and pass them on to the next generation. In the book *Teaching Tough Topics* by Larry Swartz, Kathy Kacer writes: “I think that the lessons we can learn—lessons about hatred and power, but also lessons about compassion, strength and selflessness are lessons for the ages. Remember this: Every time you remember the history, and every time you talk about it, you are honouring someone who lived and possibly perished during that time. You are giving meaning to their lives. And that is a remarkable thing” (2020, p. 69).

Learning Opportunities

Students will have the opportunity to do the following:

- Learn about the threat of the Nazis in Greece
- Learn about the kindness and bravery of citizens who protected Jewish people during the Second World War
- Read a true story about a mother and her daughter who were forced to go into hiding to avoid being captured by the Gestapo
- Engage with a story about a deaf person who used her disability (along with trickery) to save the lives of others during the Holocaust
- Interpret illustrations that convey suspense, conflict, and narrative
- Experience a piece of historical fiction presented in picture book format
- Ask questions and build inquiry into the history of the Holocaust
- Learn about the family background of Prince Philip, who eventually married Princess Elizabeth, who became the Queen of England
- Share their responses to the text through reading, writing, discussion, and the arts

Vocabulary

cooped up: to keep a person or animal inside a building or in a small space for a long period of time

desperate/desperation: a hopeless sense that a situation is so bad that it is almost impossible to deal with

Gestapo police: the secret police of Nazi Germany and in German-occupied Europe; the official English translation of the Gestapo is “Secret State Police”

haul: to pull or drag with a strong effort or mighty force

plodding: slow, monotonous movement

residence: a particular place of living

Righteous Among the Nations: established in the year 1989, this is the highest honour granted by the State of Israel to non-Jews who risked their lives saving Jewish people during the Holocaust

suspicious: having a distrust of someone or something; questioning whether someone is dishonest or dangerous

ultimate: something that happens at the end of a process; final

Preparing to Read *The Brave Princess and Me*

Activating Prior Knowledge: Discussing the Holocaust

This story takes place in 1943 in Athens when the Nazis had taken control of Greece. Jewish people were being arrested and sent to concentration camps. Many Jews fled and looked for safety through the kindness of the Greek people. Invite students to share their knowledge of the Holocaust and questions about this time in history.

As a class, discuss the following:

- What facts do you know about the Holocaust?
- Why did Adolf Hitler introduce laws to limit the freedom of Jewish people? Why did he want to rid the world of Europe's Jews? Who besides Jewish people were under Nazi power?
- What information do you know about concentration camps?
- What stories, real or fictional, have you read or movies have you seen about rescuing Jewish people during the Holocaust (e.g. Anne Frank, Kindertransport)?

Extension: Divide students into small groups and have them develop their own questions about the Holocaust and then do research to answer them. Groups can share what they've learned with the rest of the class. To learn more, visit <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/greece>.

Activating Prior Experience:

Injustice: Sharing Personal Narratives of Discrimination or Injustice

Invite students to share a story about a time when they, someone close to them, or someone they have read or heard about experienced discrimination or unfair or unjust treatment at school or in the community. They could share stories in small groups or could write a short journal entry. Make sure that students only share what they feel comfortable sharing and let them know it is okay if they want to pass or if they would prefer to talk about a historical, fictional, or hypothetical example, rather than a personal one.

- Was the person in the example treated unfairly because of their age, gender, race, or religion?
- Did anyone intervene to help the person who was unjustly treated? If so, was the person intervening taking a risk that they would also be treated unfairly?

Students can volunteer to share their stories in small groups and then perhaps with the whole class, if they wish.

Discussing Physical Challenges: Exploring Deafness

When Princess Alice was a young girl, her family discovered that she was completely deaf. Invite students to share anything they know, think about, or have read about hearing loss. Some students may be familiar with someone who is deaf and can perhaps tell a story about how this person lives with the disability. Ask students the following:

- How do deaf people communicate?
- What are some challenges deaf people might face at home, in the classroom, in the playground?
- What can we do to help fight prejudice and oppression against deaf people?
- What can we do to make our classroom and school more accessible to people with disabilities?

The Canadian Association of the Deaf has resources and information about deafness that teachers and students may find useful. Visit <https://cad.ca/>.

For information about terminology to use in regard to deafness, visit <https://cad.ca/our-work/terminology/>.

For information on communication strategies, visit <https://www.chha.ca/resources/speech-reading/>.

Previewing the Text:

Examining the Cover of the Book to Infer Meaning, Raise Questions, and Make Predictions

Draw students' attention to the front and back covers of *The Brave Princess and Me*. As a class, discuss the following:

- What words might you use to describe the young girl? Her feelings? Who is she looking at?
- What questions might you ask this girl if you had a chance to speak to her?
- What do you predict the relationship is between the “brave princess” and this girl? What might the story be about?
- What do the words “Inspired by a true story” mean?
- How do we know the story will be told from the girl’s point of view?
- Do you enjoy reading autobiographical texts? How are these stories different from other narrative writing?

Questions for Discussion

The following suggested questions can be presented to students during an interactive read-aloud of the picture book to encourage responses:

- We learn in the first page of the story that the princess is kind to those who need help. What has made her especially kind?
- What kind of help do Tilde and her mother need to survive?
- How does Tilde's life change when the Nazis invade Greece?
- Why would a servant be reluctant to help Tilde and her mother?
- Why does Tilde want to look out the third-floor window of the house? Why is this dangerous?
- Princess Alice is described as brave. She is also kind and clever. What evidence from the story tells us that she is brave, kind, and clever?
- Why does the princess keep secret that she was deaf? What other secrets does the princess reveal to Tilde?
- Princess Alice says that her loss of hearing often made her feel ignored and left out. Do you think this is how many people with disabilities feel?
- How does Princess Alice prevent the Gestapo from finding Tilde and her mother?
- As you read the story, were you worried about what would happen to the characters? How does the author, Kathy Kacer, make this a suspenseful story?
- Which of the illustrations by Juliana Kolesova do you think is the most dramatic or powerful? Explain.
- There are many stories of Jewish people who survived the Holocaust. How is *The Brave Princess and Me* unique? Why do you think the author chose to tell this story? Learn about other survivors and listen to other stories at <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/the-museums-collections/about/oral-history>.

Responding to *The Brave Princess and Me*

STYLE AND LANGUAGE: Responding to the Verbal Text

Display a list of statements that appear throughout *The Brave Princess and Me*.

- a. Invite the students to independently read the following excerpted statements from *The Brave Princess and Me*:
 - I'm doing what any decent person would do.
 - The less people know about you, the better. No one can be trusted these days.
 - We know you are putting yourself in danger, hiding us like this.
 - She pulled the curtains shut, and my sweet feeling of safety was gone.
 - The pounding in my eyes matched the thumping of my heart. I held my breath.
 - People often think if you're deaf you're not very smart.
 - I understand how it feels to be treated differently—to be left out.
 - If she can't understand us, how could she possibly know what's going on in the world.
 - I suspect that it never occurred to her that her action was in any way special.

- b. Have students select one of the statements that interests them and write and respond to the following questions:
 - i. Why did you choose this statement?
 - ii. How does this statement make you feel?

- iii. Does this statement remind you of something that happened to you or someone you know or a character in another story you have read? Explain.
 - iv. Does this statement remind you of anyone or any situation in the world today? What does this sentence tell you about the characters or the story?
- c. As a follow-up, have students work in groups of four or five to share their responses. Some group members may have chosen the same statement. Students can compare responses.

VISUAL ARTS: Tilde's Sketchbook

Tilde spends long days in hiding unable to go outside. She does go to the window to catch glimpses of the outside world. Have the students imagine that Tilde had a sketchbook to share what was happening to her and express her feelings. Students can create a visual image that shows one of the following:

- Tilde's life in Athens before the invasion of Nazis; what is something she remembers? What is something she misses?
- the view Tilde sees when she looks outside the window
- a moment she spends with Princess Alice
- her hiding with her mother in Princess Alice's home
- a dramatic incident from the story from a different visual point of view

WRITING: A Diary or Letter from Tilde's Point of View

Students choose to write a diary entry or letter from the perspective of Tilde. This piece can be written before, during, or after the story.

Before

Write a diary entry describing a time in Tilde's life before the invasion of Greece (e.g., Tilde could write about her life at school before she had to leave school or an anecdote about happy times with her family).

During

Write a diary entry describing her life while in hiding at the princess's castle or a letter describing her life with the princess to a friend who did not have to go into hiding.

After

Write a diary entry describing her life sometime after the war. What might Tilde be doing? How does she remember her time in hiding?

Extension: Once completed, students can share their writing in pairs or small groups. Students can write a letter back to Tilde in response to something she has written.

WRITING: Writing a Narrative from Princess Alice's Point of View

This story is told from the point of view of Tilde Cohen. Have students imagine that Princess Alice was recounting the rescuing of Rachel and Tilde. How would the story change if it was told from Alice's perspective? Invite students to tell the story of how she tricked the Gestapo to save the lives of the mother and daughter. This narrative will be written in the first person.

WRITING: Sharing Opinions about the Book

Provide students with the following reproducible exercise, which invites students to reflect on the story and share their opinions of the picture book.

Your name: _____

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, I would rate this book a _____ because: _____

2. Three things I learned by reading the story:

i.

ii.

iii.

3. Two things I wondered about:

i.

ii.

4. When I read the story, I felt:

5. Tell someone who hasn't read this book why *The Brave Princess and Me* is an important story for learning about surviving the Holocaust. What might you say to persuade others to read this book?

EXPLORING NONFICTION: Determining Important Ideas and Further Research

See the Afterword, "Who Was Princess Alice of Battenburg?"

- a. What new facts do we learn about Princess Alice of Battenburg?
 - What do we learn about her marriage and her family?
 - What do we learn about her life after liberation in 1944?
 - What are some further acts of Princess Alice's kindness?
 - What facts do we learn about Tilde's family before the Nazi invasion of Greece? After the Nazi invasion?
 - What do we learn about the Cohen family after the war?

- b. What is the honour "Righteous Among the Nations"? Ask students if they know any rescuers in today's world.

For further stories of the Righteous Among Nations, visit

<https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories.html>.

Extension: Students can work alone or with a partner to further investigate one of the following topics:

1. Princess Alice's life after liberation
2. Tilde Cohen's life as an adult
3. Prince Philip's childhood
4. Others who were given the honour of Righteous Among the Nations
5. Another deaf hero
6. The Gestapo
7. Other

Further Reading

Picture Books (Ages 7+)

The Brave Princess and Me by Kathy Kacer illus. Juliana Kolesova

Juvenile Fiction \$18.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-102-2

The Promise by Pnina Bat Zvi and Margie Wolfe illus. Isabelle Cardinal

Nonfiction \$18.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-058-2

Fania's Heart by Anne Renaud illus. by Richard Rudnicki

Nonfiction \$18.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-057-5

The Secret of the Village Fool by Rebecca Upjohn illus. Renné Benoit

Fiction \$18.95 ISBN: 978-1-926920-75-7

The Magician of Auschwitz by Kathy Kacer illus. Gillian Newland

Nonfiction \$18.95 ISBN: 978-1-927583-46-3

Middle Grade (Ages 9-12)

Hana's Suitcase by Karen Levine

Nonfiction \$18.95 ISBN: 978-1-896764-55-9

What Does Hate Look Like? by Sameea Jimenez and Corinne Promislow with Larry Swartz

Nonfiction \$21.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-290-6

All About Anne by Anne Frank House

Nonfiction \$24.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-060-5

She's A Mensch! Ten Amazing Jewish Women by Anne Dublin

Nonfiction \$22.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-320-0

Hidden on the High Wire by Kathy Kacer

Fiction \$13.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-251-7

Under the Iron Bridge by Kathy Kacer

Fiction \$15.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-205-0

The Brushmaker's Daughter by Kathy Kacer

Fiction \$10.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-138-1

Shanghai Escape by Kathy Kacer

Fiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-92758-310-4

The Choice by Kathy Clark

Fiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-927583-65-4

Clara's War by Kathy Kacer

Fiction \$8.95 ISBN: 978-1-896764-42-9

The Secret of Gabi's Dresser by Kathy Kacer

Fiction \$7.95 ISBN: 978-1-896764-15-3

The Underground Reporters by Kathy Kacer

Nonfiction \$17.95 ISBN: 978-1-896764-85-6

The Diary of Laura's Twin by Kathy Kacer

Fiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-897187-39-5

Hiding Edith: A True Story by Kathy Kacer

Nonfiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-897187-06-7

The Ship to Nowhere by Rona Arato

Fiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-772600-18-6

To Hope and Back: The Journey of the St. Louis by Kathy Kacer

Fiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-897187-96-8

Guardian Angel House by Kathy Clark

Fiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-897187-58-6

We Are Their Voice: Young People Respond to the Holocaust by Kathy Kacer

Nonfiction \$16.95 ISBN: 978-1-926920-77-1

The Righteous Smuggler by Debbie Spring

Fiction \$9.95 ISBN: 978-1-896764-97-9

When We Were Shadows by Janet Wees

Nonfiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-061-2

The Night Spies by Kathy Kacer

Fiction \$8.95 ISBN: 978-1-89676-470-2

Hana's Suitcase on Stage by Karen Levine and Emil Sher

Book + Play \$18.95 ISBN: 978-1-89718-705-0

Hana's Suitcase Anniversary Album by Karen Levine

Nonfiction \$24.95 ISBN: 978-1-92692-036-8

(10th anniversary special edition)

Ages 13+

Heroines, Rescuers, Rabbis, Spies: Unsung Women of the Holocaust by Sarah Silberstein Swartz

YA Nonfiction \$19.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-262-3

Branded by the Pink Triangle by Ken Setterington

YA Nonfiction \$15.95 ISBN: 978-1-926920-96-2

To Look a Nazi in the Eye by Kathy Kacer with Jordana Lebowitz

YA Nonfiction \$13.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-040-7

Names in a Jar by Jennifer Gold

YA Fiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-207-4

Witness: Passing the Torch of Holocaust Memory to New Generations compiled by Eli Rubenstein, with March of the Living

Nonfiction \$32.95 ISBN: 978-1-77260-149-7

Hidden Gold: A True Story of the Holocaust by Ella Burakowski

Fiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-927583-74-6

A Partisan's Memoir by Faye Schulman

Nonfiction \$19.95 ISBN: 978-0-92900-576-8

Restitution: A family's fight for their heritage lost in the Holocaust by Kathy Kacer

Nonfiction \$19.95 ISBN: 978-1-89718-775-3

For Teachers

The Holocaust Remembrance Series for Young Readers Teacher Resource

\$149.00 ISBN: 978-1-89718-794-4

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