



Grades 4 – 7; Ages 9 – 12

The Brushmaker's Daughter

Written by Kathy Kacer

Teacher's Guide

ISBN: 978-1-77260-138-1

Second Story Press
www.secondstorypress.ca

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Author: Kathy Kacer

Summary

In 1939, twelve-year-old Lillian and her father are in danger of being arrested because they are Jewish. Nazi soldiers are tracking down Jewish people across Berlin and bringing them to the train station or putting them in prison.

The book begins with Lillian and her father running through the streets of Berlin. Lillian's father is blind and it has become too dangerous for them to find safety alone. They need help.

Lillian and her father find refuge in Otto Weidt's factory. Mr. Weidt has been secretly employing blind Jewish workers to make brushes for the Nazi army. He helps them to find safe lodging, sends supplies to those who have been captured, and has a plan for when the Gestapo raid the factory on surprise visits. Even with all of this careful planning, people are still in grave danger.

Lillian and her father settle into a new place to live because of the kindness of Hedwig (Hetti) Porshütz, a friend of Mr. Weidt. Her home is a fifteen-minute walk from the factory. Lillian and her father get to know some of the other workers at the factory as they settle into their new routines. One day, Lillian meets a friend at the factory named Anneliese. She is older than Lillian and helps her to navigate small moments of gratitude and the dangers of this time.

Lillian learns of a small secret room at the factory. When the Gestapo comes, everyone in the factory is to hide there. This room gives Lillian nightmares. The first time they hide, her father falls on the way there. They get inside and close the door just in time.

The next time the Gestapo raids the factory, they are captured and taken to the train station. Mr. Weidt arrives just in time to bribe the soldiers and secure the release of his factory workers.

Inspired by a true story.

About the Author

Kathy Kacer is an award-winning author who has written more than twenty books that focus on stories of the Holocaust. Her work includes picture books, historical fiction, and nonfiction writing. As a child of Holocaust survivors, Kathy Kacer is a passionate advocate of 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

<p>Character Education and Social Emotional Learning</p>	<p>One of the reasons we read stories is to better understand ourselves. Take some time throughout the study of this book for students to explore the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership ● Honesty & Trust ● Optimism & Hope ● Problem Solving ● Coping Strategies in Challenging Moments
<p>Language Arts</p>	<p>Examine the elements of the story including character, plot, theme, conflict, and setting. What does the author need to consider when writing a story that is rooted in history and inspired by real people?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Biography & True Stories ● Elements of a Story
<p>History & Social Studies</p>	<p>Examine the historical context of World War II. Consider big ideas like power, position, bias, and oppression within the scope of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Government & Citizenship ● Social Justice ● War & Conflict
<p>Holocaust Studies</p>	<p>Learn about antisemitism in history and in the present. Identify and articulate actions that can be taken today to oppose antisemitism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Holocaust ● Antisemitism ● Hatred & Racism ● Influence of Individual Choice

Preparing to Read

1. Use a Trauma-Informed Approach

- a. Know your students.
- b. Inform them that parts of the story include antisemitism and intimidation by soldiers.
- c. Share a process for students to take a break when they need one.
- d. Inform parents that your class will be reading a story and learning about the Holocaust so families can support students at home as needed. Share the book summary with them.
- e. Check in with students along the way.
- f. Avoid compare/contrast questions.
- g. Avoid role play or writing in the voice of a Holocaust survivor or a soldier.
- h. Avoid displaying or sharing symbols of hate or horrific imagery.
- i. Do your research. For example, the Montreal Holocaust Museum (<https://museeholocauste.ca/en/resources-training/teaching-holocaust-middle-high-school/>) provides some tips and resources for teachers.

2. Provide Context

- a. Introduce the history of World War II (consider the age and stage of your students).
- b. Pull up a map of Germany, Europe, and the world to situate this novel.
- c. Review vocabulary from the story related to the Holocaust:
 - i. Antisemitism
 - ii. Gestapo
 - iii. Concentration Camps

- iv. Nazis
- v. Adolf Hitler
- vi. Documents/papers
- vii. Holocaust

3. Pre-Reading Activities

a. Understanding Dialogue:

- i. What is dialogue? How do we learn from conversation in our daily lives? How do we talk to each other about things that are easier and things that are harder to say?
- ii. Explore what dialogue looks like on the page with a short sample.
- iii. Invite students to have a short conversation with a partner, then try to write it out as dialogue. What do they notice?
- iv. Why does an author use dialogue in a story?

b. How Things Are Made:

- i. Bring in a variety of different brushes. Invite students to investigate them and make predictions about what their purpose is, what materials were used to make them, and how they were assembled. Students can then share their findings with the whole class.

c. Social Identity:

- i. Invite students to reflect on their own identity. Prepare a lesson using the Social Identity Wheel. For a sample, visit University of Toronto website: <https://socialwork.utoronto.ca/practicum/for-students/social-identity-wheel/>.

Discussion Model: Unpacking the Dialogue with Conversation Circles

One of the paths to social change is to engage in conversation to awaken empathy, shift understanding, and commit to action. As you are reading the book, set up conversation circles with five to seven students in each circle or a whole class circle (depending on the readiness of your class).

Establish conversation norms that help students develop active listening skills.

1. One person reads the quote aloud to the group.
2. Only one voice speaks at a time.
3. Move around the circle in one direction.
4. Post the same three questions each time. Students can choose to answer one or all three questions.
 - a. What do these words mean to you?
 - b. What questions do you have about this passage?
 - c. What do you learn from this passage that sparks you to try something or do something?
5. Wait until the conversation returns to you to ask a question or build on someone's thinking.
6. Students can look up the lines in the book to remind them of the context.
7. In the last few minutes of discussion, the group is invited to reach a consensus on one big idea to bring back to the whole class.

Chapter	<p>Dialogue from the Book for the Conversation Circles</p> <p>What do these words mean to you?</p> <p>What questions do you have about this passage?</p> <p>What do you learn from this passage that sparks you to try something or do something?</p>	<p>Extension Activities for Each Chapter</p>
1	<p>“Some people think being blind is an obstacle,” he would say. “I believe it’s an opportunity to learn new things” (p 2-3).</p>	<p>Metacognition</p> <p>How do you learn new things? What opportunities do you have? What makes you unique?</p>
2	<p>“You need a place to stay,” Herr Weidt continued. “I take care of that for all my workers, finding them homes with good people. I have just such a place for you. There’s a lovely woman who lives close to my factory, a good friend of mine. She’ll give you a place to sleep and food to eat. You’ll be safe there” (p 15).</p>	<p>Language Arts</p> <p>Begin a study of Herr Weidt. What character traits does he demonstrate in the story? Add to the list as you continue.</p> <p>For more information about the real Otto Weidt, see: https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/weidt.html</p>
3	<p>“You never know who might be watching. Not everyone is a friend, I’m afraid” (p 17).</p>	<p>Safety</p> <p>Why is it important for all people to feel safe at home, at school, and in communities?</p> <p>What can you do to help?</p>

4	<p>“No one would bring their dresses to a Jew,” she explained, “even though I could shorten a hem or redesign a blouse better than most other dressmakers” (p 33).</p>	<p>Antisemitism</p> <p>How did you feel when you read this chapter?</p> <p>What questions do you have about this?</p> <p>Define and discuss: antisemitism, bias, oppression, and hate.</p> <p>These are not just historical issues; we are seeing a rise in antisemitism now. Here are some resources to learn more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://rac.org/issues/modern-day-issues-antisemitism • https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/antisemitism-today <p>What actions can you take to make a difference today?</p>
5	<p>“I remember a sun so yellow it looked like the yolk of an egg,” added Marianne. “And I can remember what eggs looked like” (p 36).</p>	<p>Poetry</p> <p>What do you remember about the colour yellow? Write a poem about yellow. Begin each line with ‘I remember...’</p>

6	<p>“They wanted to remind us of the power they have. So, they come through factories like mine to make sure we’re following their rules” (p 43).</p>	<p>Human Rights</p> <p>What are human rights? Why are they important? How do you know when a rule is helpful or harmful?</p> <p>For more information about human rights, look at these resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://humanrights.ca/ • https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child
7	<p>“Sometimes it’s better when you talk and get your worries out in the open,” Papa urged (p 46).</p>	<p>Social Skills</p> <p>Who do you go to when you have worries? How can we help each other?</p>
8	<p>“And thank you for this cake. It makes me happy, and it’s more than I ever imagined” (p 52).</p>	<p>Letter Writing Task</p> <p>What are you thankful for? Write a thank you letter to someone who has been kind to you.</p>
9	<p>“I’ve been trying to figure out how I can help those poor people, some of whom I know, who have been sent away to the camps,” Herr Weidt continued. “And then it came to me. I’m going to send supplies to them” (p 57).</p>	<p>Social Skills</p> <p>List all the ways you can help people you know who are in need.</p>

10	<p>“Children are in those concentration camps, too,” I whispered. “Even babies” (p 61).</p>	<p>Holocaust Education</p> <p>Use a trusted resource like the Montreal Holocaust Museum (https://museeholocauste.ca/en/ontario/) to examine the Holocaust.</p>
11	<p>“Do you miss the work that you used to do?” I asked.</p> <p>“Very much, Anneliese replied. “It was not only something I did for money, it was something I loved doing. It was my profession <i>and</i> my pastime” (p 69).</p>	<p>Careers</p> <p>What do you love doing? If you could spend your time doing anything, what would you choose? How do you want to make a difference in the world?</p>
12	<p>It was Anneliese who spoke first, calling out urgently, “Everyone, to the back. I’ll lead the way” (p 74).</p>	<p>Leadership</p> <p>Why are leaders important? How do we know when to trust leaders? Examine leadership in your school and community. Who are the leaders?</p>
13	<p>“Shhh,” he whispered. “I’m here, always here” (p 80).</p>	<p>Family and Friends</p> <p>How do others help us on our hardest days? Who do you consider your family and friends? Create a circle with you in the center. Add all the people in your life to the page, with the ones who support you closest to you in the circle.</p>

14	<p>“I’ve learned that these corrupt Gestapo officials will sometimes look the other way when you grease their palms,” he said bitterly. “So, I slipped the head guard some money. I’ll do anything to make sure they don’t get close to you” (p 82).</p>	<p>Problem Solving and Moral Development</p> <p>On the one hand, receiving a bribe when you are in a position of power is not okay. On the other hand, if the Gestapo had not received bribes, more people would have died.</p> <p>What was a third option to saving lives?</p> <p>Look up Kohlberg’s stages of moral development and make connections.</p> <p>Start here: https://www.verywellmind.com/kohlbergs-theory-of-moral-development-2795071</p>
15	<p>“If only everything could be fixed as easily as this dress,” she said (p 87).</p>	<p>Problem Solving and Life Skills</p> <p>What are your processes for solving big and small problems?</p> <p>Who do you go to for help?</p> <p>How do you cope when there are not any answers yet?</p>

16	“We’re going to stay here for a while until they figure things out,” I lied, keeping my voice as steady as I could (p 98).	<p>Character Education</p> <p>What is honesty? What do you learn about honesty from this chapter? Write about a story in your life where you had to make a choice about whether to tell the truth. How did it feel? What happened?</p>
17	“And what about the others?” Papa said. “We can’t leave them here” (p 101).	<p>Social Justice</p> <p>What does it mean to be human? What qualities do all humans share? How can we create a more caring world for all?</p>
18	And then he tapped his temple, just like he had done when he first spoke to me in the factory many months earlier, and he said to the soldier, “Just so you know, I am quite blind, too. And I think my life has great value, just like the lives of the people over there” (p 110).	<p>Socio-Emotional Learning</p> <p>What do you know about self-esteem and self-confidence? Why is it important for us to believe in ourselves?</p>

Responding to *The Brushmaker's Daughter*

These are some options for engaging students with a rich task after reading. Please adapt the ideas to meet your curriculum expectations, learning goals, and success criteria.

1. Elements of Story Slide Deck Task

- a. Develop a slide deck with at least five slides demonstrating the elements of story (plot, setting, theme, character, conflict, etc.) and how they are used in this book.
 - i. Each slide needs to include the term, a definition, and an example from the book.

2. Persuasive Paragraph Task

- a. Write about someone you trust, including three reasons why they are worthy of your trust.
- b. Write about Lillian and three people she trusted in the book. Why were they worthy of her trust?

3. Art Task (and Socio-Emotional Learning)

- a. How did you feel after finishing this book? Paint or draw a picture. Make a collage. Show how this book makes you feel using art. Then, write a paragraph to explain your work.

Further Reading

Picture Books (Ages 7+)

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

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

The Magician of Auschwitz by Kathy Kacer illus. Gillian Newland

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

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

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

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

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

Middle Grade (Ages 9-12)

All About Anne by Anne Frank House illus. Huck Scarry

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

The Ship to Nowhere by Rona Arato

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

Guardian Angel House by Kathy Clark

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

The Choice by Kathy Clark

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

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

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

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

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

Clara's War by Kathy Kacer

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

Hidden on the High Wire by Kathy Kacer

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

Hiding Edith: A True Story by Kathy Kacer

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

Shanghai Escape by Kathy Kacer

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

The Diary of Laura's Twin by Kathy Kacer

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

The Night Spies by Kathy Kacer

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

The Secret of Gabi's Dresser by Kathy Kacer

Fiction \$10.95 ISBN: 978-1-896764-15-3

The Underground Reporters by Kathy Kacer

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

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

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

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

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

Hana's Suitcase by Karen Levine

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

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

Nonfiction, 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)

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

Ages 13+

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

YA Nonfiction \$14.95 ISBN: 978-1-927583-74-6

Names in a Jar by Jennifer Gold

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

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

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

To Look a Nazi in the Eye: A teen's account of a war criminal trial by Kathy Kacer
with Jordana Lebowitz

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

Under the Iron Bridge by Kathy Kacer

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

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

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

Branded by the Pink Triangle by Ken Setterington

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

A Partisan's Memoir: Woman of the Holocaust by Faye Schulman

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

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

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

For Teachers

Holocaust Remembrance Series Teacher Resource: Elementary Social Justice Teacher Resource

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

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