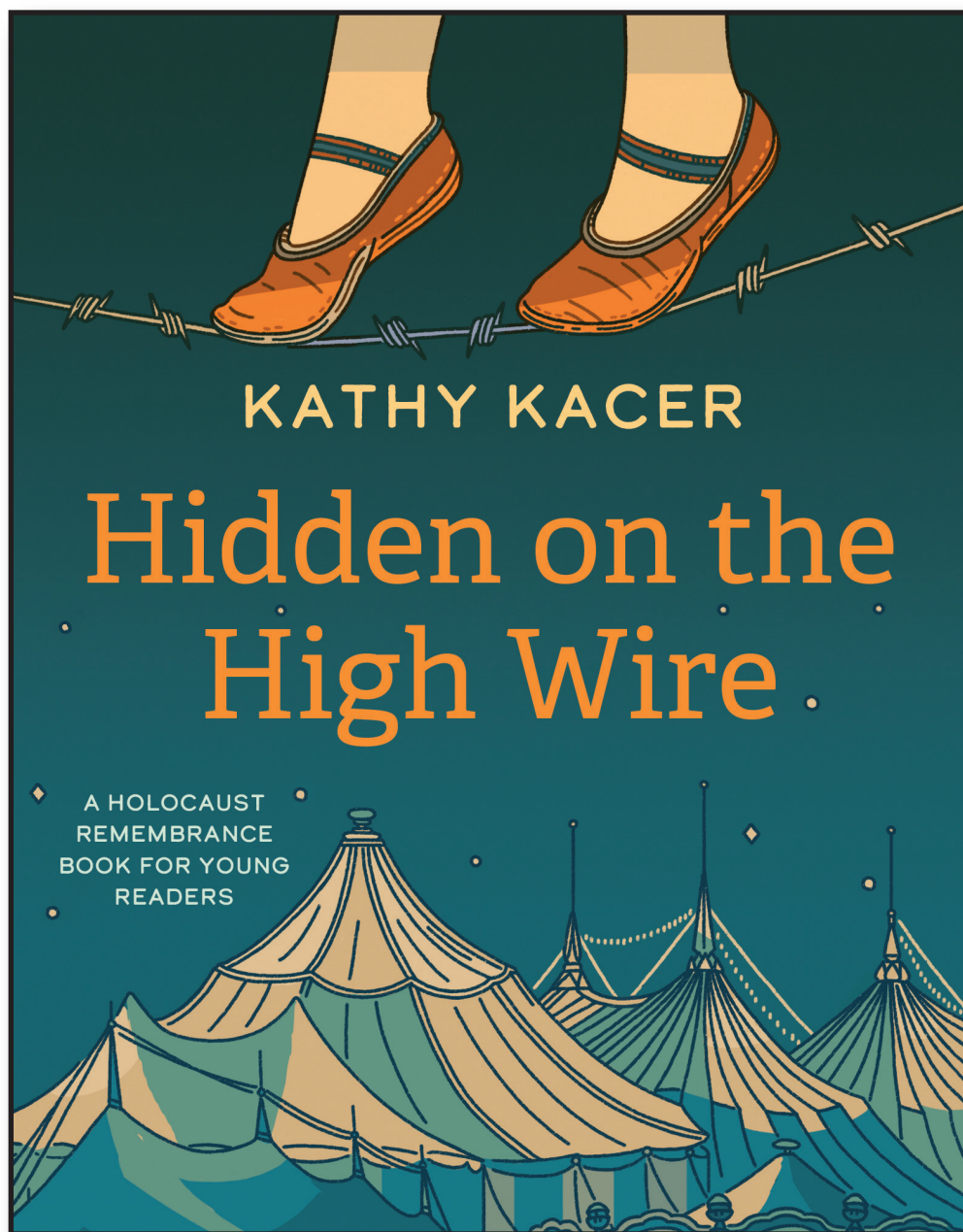


Grades 4 – 7; Ages 9 – 12



Hidden on the High Wire

Written by Kathy Kacer

Guide written by Jessica Outram

Teacher's Guide

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Hidden on the High Wire

Author: Kathy Kacer

About the Book

It's the summer of 1941. The book begins at the Lorch Family Circus, where Irene Lorch grew up with her family. In the first chapter, during Irene's performance on the tightrope, an audience member shouts out harmful antisemitic comments. Adolf Hitler and the Nazis are rising to power, making changes to Germany that put Irene and her whole family, who are Jewish, in danger.

The Lorch Family Circus is forced to shut down and Irene's father is drafted to join Hitler's army. Irene, her mother, and grandmother find a small apartment in Darmstadt. One day while Irene and her grandmother are at the market, her grandmother is taken by the Gestapo. Irene hears that her grandmother has been sent to a concentration camp, and she never sees her grandmother again.

It gets harder for Irene and her mother to hide from the Nazis. One day Irene sees a poster for the Althoff Circus, and she hatches a plan to go to the circus. Irene's father knew Herr Althoff, who runs the circus. Irene decides to ask Herr Althoff to allow her and her mother to join their circus, and he agrees. Irene joins a tightrope act, her mother sews costumes, and they both hide their Jewish identity.

Hiding in the Althoff Circus helps Irene and her mother feel safer and that they are part of something and have a sense of purpose. Although, it's hard to know who to trust and they must always be alert. One day the Gestapo arrive at the Althoff Circus and search each of the trailers. Irene and her mother narrowly escape being seen by the Gestapo, thanks to the kindness of friends in the Althoff Circus.

One day, Herr Althoff holds a meeting with everyone in the circus and tells them about Irene and her mother's identity. One person does not support hiding them, and that individual is asked to leave the circus. The story ends with Irene's father joining the Althoff Circus while on a leave from the army, and he hides in the circus with his family.

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 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>Explore the below list of qualities. Consider what they look like, sound like, and feel like. When do they shift and change? What influences a person’s character?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prejudice and tolerance ● Trust and love ● Determination and courage ● Respect and belonging
<p>Language Arts</p>	<p>Examine the genre of biography. What can you learn from the life stories of other people? Why is this an important genre?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Biography and true stories
<p>History and Social Studies</p>	<p>Connect the story to the broader historical context of World War II.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Government and citizenship ● Social justice ● War and conflict
<p>The Arts</p>	<p>Relate the knowledge and skills needed to be a high wire performer to another area in the arts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Process and performance
<p>Holocaust Studies</p>	<p>Identify and articulate actions that can be taken today to oppose antisemitism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Holocaust ● Antisemitism ● Hatred and racism ● Influence of individual choice

Before Reading

The following discussion prompts offer a brief introduction to the setting and context of the book and can help gauge your students' understanding and familiarity with the Holocaust and World War II.

1. Use a Trauma-Informed Approach

- a. Know your students. Be familiar with any experience or history your students may have with the Holocaust.
- b. Inform them that parts of the story include antisemitism, loss, 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 information provided in the 'About the Book' section from the publisher's website.
- 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 (while considering the age and learning stage of your students).
- b. Explore students' knowledge and experiences of the circus.
- 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. **Where am I?** Use a map of the world to identify the countries impacted by World War II.
 - i. Where did Irene live?
 - ii. Was the country where you live impacted by this war?
- b. **Who am I?** Write a list of all the ways you identify yourself. (Student, child, son, daughter, friend, etc.)
 - i. What are your interests?
 - ii. What are your strengths?
 - iii. How do you celebrate who you are?
 - iv. What makes up your identity?

c. What am I doing? Imagine you are a circus performer. Choose one of the following tasks:

- i. Prepare a fitness plan and list five exercises that would help you prepare your body to perform.
- ii. Draw a picture of your costume.
- iii. Choose a piece of music you would like to play during your act and share why you chose this song.

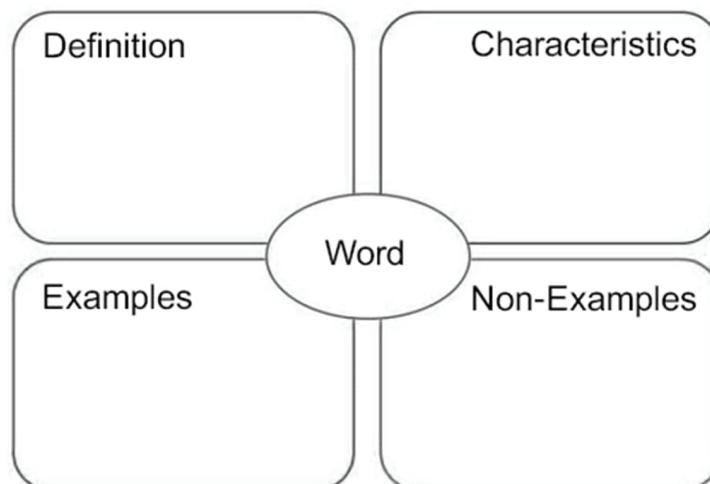
Vocabulary: The Word to the World Discussion Model

Through story, we can teach students to read the words and to read the world. As you move through the book with your class, select words that offer lessons to enhance student understanding of the story *and* the understanding of the students' lived experience.

As you read the book, select a word and feature it in your discussions after each chapter. You can build an enhanced word wall and expand the list as you read (the word wall could look like a collage of words and images). This book would be an excellent choice to read aloud, so the whole class experiences the reflection, connections, and discussions.

How to Use Vocabulary to Make Connections

1. Begin with defining the word within the context of the story. What do we learn about this word from the story? For example, how would a spotlight be used in a circus?
2. Map out the word using a Frayer Model graphic organizer to include a definition, characteristics, examples, and non-examples.



3. Use the word to spark discussion and inquiry into how the word exists in the world. The intention is for students to connect the vocabulary and concepts to their own lived experience. Students could also use the discussion prompts in the Frayer Model graphic organizer as a starting point and draw or write their reflections in a journal.

Chapter	Word (in the book)	Word Inquiry (in the world)	Subject Connection
1	spotlight	a) Can people feel like there is a spotlight on them even when they are not on stage? b) When does it feel good to be in the spotlight? c) When would you prefer not to be in the spotlight?	Language Arts Writing
2	bullies	a) What are ways to respond to a bully? b) Why is it important that all people feel safe? c) How can we make our classroom or school a safer place?	Character Education Community
3	light	a) What are all the synonyms for light that you can list? b) Why is light often connected to hope? c) What can you learn from the presence of light?	Language Arts Critical Thinking

4	Sabbath	<p>a) What rituals or traditions do you have in your family?</p> <p>b) How can we acknowledge and respect the ways we are the same and the ways we are different?</p> <p>c) What rituals or traditions would you like to learn more about?</p>	<p>Social Studies</p> <p>Family</p> <p>World Religions</p>
5	race	<p>a) What is racism?</p> <p>b) What is anti-racism?</p> <p>c) How can we celebrate diversity?</p> <p>Teacher resource: “Talking to your kids about racism: How to start the important conversation and keep it going.” UNICEF, June 9, 2020. www.unicef.org/parenting/talking-to-your-kids-about-racism.</p>	<p>Social Studies</p> <p>Character Education</p>
6	tightrope	<p>a) Why do people sometimes say, “I’m walking on a tightrope” to describe how they are feeling about a difficult situation?</p> <p>b) What are some strategies that might help when times are tough?</p>	<p>Language Arts</p> <p>Problem Solving</p>
7	government	<p>a) What do you know about the government where you live?</p> <p>b) How does the government help people?</p> <p>c) What qualities do you think are needed in a leader?</p>	<p>Social Studies</p> <p>Government Citizenship</p>

8	sewing machine	a) How have sewing machines changed since the 1930s? Compare sewing machines in different places over time.	Social Studies Technology
9	letter	a) It isn't easy to receive bad news. Today, people still receive letters or emails but news on social media can also be worrisome. What are some strategies for coping with bad news?	Social Emotional Learning Digital Citizenship
10	nesting dolls	a) What are some items you have collected over the years? b) Why are these items important to you?	Language Arts Writing
11	photographs	a) If you could create an album (or box) of photographs of the people who are important in your life, who would you include?	Social Studies Community Family
12	hate	a) Where do beliefs come from? b) What are some strategies for learning the truth and ensuring you have accurate information? c) How can empathy and compassion help combat hatred and negativity?	Social Studies Media Social Emotional Learning

13	determination	<p>a) When was a time in your life that you or someone you know practiced determination?</p> <p>b) What are the lessons that determination teaches?</p> <p>c) Is there something you can do today to practice determination?</p>	Social Emotional Learning
14	help	<p>a) What are some ways that you can offer help and/or receive help in your life?</p> <p>b) How does it feel to offer help?</p> <p>c) How does it feel to receive help?</p>	<p>Character Education</p> <p>Social Emotional Learning</p>
15	poster	<p>a) Where do you experience advertising in your daily life?</p> <p>b) How does advertising impact you?</p>	<p>Arts</p> <p>Media</p>
16	megaphone	<p>a) When is it time to use a loud voice versus a quiet voice?</p>	<p>Language Arts</p> <p>Oral Communication</p> <p>Critical Literacy</p>
17	safe place	<p>a) Where do you feel safe?</p> <p>b) What is it about these places that offer you protection or comfort?</p>	<p>Social Studies</p> <p>Community and Family</p>

18	performer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What does it mean to be a performer? b) How do performers work as part of a team? c) What is the process for preparing for a performance? d) Do you prefer to be on stage or cheering in the audience? 	Arts
19	curiosity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) When you arrive at a new place, what do you want to learn about it? b) When you meet new people, what types of things do you want to learn about them? 	Language Arts Writing
20	feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Why is it important to share your feelings with friends and family? b) What are all the words you know to describe your feelings? c) How are you feeling right now? 	Social Emotional Learning
21	nervous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) When do you feel nervous? b) What are some strategies that help when you are nervous? 	Problem Solving Social Emotional Learning
22	flourish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What would you like to be able to do with a flourish? b) If you could do anything and be successful at it, what would you like to do? c) What are your skills and talents? d) How can we do something together today with a flourish? 	Arts Language Arts Vocabulary

23	relationship	<p>a) Why are relationships important to being human?</p> <p>b) How does the word <i>relationship</i> change when you think about a relationship with a person versus a relationship with an object or an activity?</p>	<p>Language Arts</p> <p>Vocabulary</p>
24	mistakes	<p>a) What can we learn from mistakes?</p> <p>b) Why is it important to make mistakes sometimes?</p>	Problem Solving
25	trust	<p>a) Who do you trust?</p> <p>b) How do you earn someone else's trust?</p>	Social Emotional Learning
26	breathing	<p>a) What do you know about breath and breathing?</p> <p>b) What questions do you have about why healthy breathing is important?</p>	<p>Healthy Active Living</p> <p>Social Emotional Learning</p>
27	juggling	<p>a) Sometimes people refer to “juggling” as being in a sticky situation, trying to do multiple things at once. As a student, what are the different things that you are juggling?</p> <p>b) How is it helpful to be able to focus on one thing at a time?</p>	<p>Problem Solving</p> <p>Social Emotional Learning</p>
28	voice	<p>a) How can using your voice or not using your voice make a difference?</p> <p>b) When are the best times to share information? When can this cause harm?</p>	<p>Language Arts</p> <p>Character Education</p> <p>Critical Thinking</p>

29	eye	<p>a) What happens when you look someone in the eye? What can you learn about them?</p> <p>b) How does eye contact help you better understand others?</p>	Social Emotional Learning
30	horse	<p>a) What do you know about horses?</p> <p>b) What would you like to learn about horses?</p> <p>c) Is there a time an animal offered you comfort?</p>	Social Emotional Learning
31	decision	<p>a) What is your process for making decisions?</p>	Problem Solving
32	news	<p>a) How does news spread from one person to another?</p>	<p>Language Arts</p> <p>Character Education</p>
33	understand	<p>a) What steps can you take to better understand something or someone?</p>	Social Emotional Learning
34	responsible	<p>a) Why is it good to be responsible? How can being responsible help yourself and others?</p> <p>b) What are your responsibilities as a student?</p>	Character Education
35	family	<p>a) Who are the people in your family?</p> <p>b) What does it mean for family to be the people you are related to and/or the people you choose?</p>	<p>Social Studies</p> <p>Family and Community</p>
36	humanity	<p>a) What does it mean to be human?</p> <p>b) What are some characteristics all humans share?</p>	<p>Social Studies</p> <p>Character Education</p>

Engaging with *Hidden on the High Wire*: Extension Activities

The following lists offer some suggestions for engaging students with tasks after reading the book. These ideas can be adapted to meet your curriculum expectations, learning goals, and success criteria.

1. Character Slide Deck Task

- a. Design a slide deck/collection of slides for a presentation with an overarching theme. You could use PowerPoint, Canva, Keynote, Google Slides, etc.
- b. Create one slide for each quality that Irene and her family demonstrated in the book. Some examples of qualities include:
 - i. Determination
 - ii. Hope
 - iii. Courage
 - iv. Trust
 - v. Love
- c. On each slide, include a quotation from the story and some images of what this quality looks like to you.
- d. Be prepared to share your slide deck with a friend and explain your choices.

2. Persuasive Writing Task

- a. Adolf Hitler and the Nazis are responsible for significant harm because of the choices they made in positions of power. Choose one of the following options:
 - i. Write 1–3 paragraphs about the dangers Jewish families faced during the Holocaust.
 - ii. Write 1–3 paragraphs about the ways people helped Jewish families who were in danger.

3. Research Task

- a. Research the real Lorch family and the Lorch Family Circus.
 - i. Start here: Dominique Jando. “The Lorch Family.” *Circopedia: The Free Encyclopedia of the International Circus*. http://www.circopedia.org/The_Lorch_Family#:~:text=The%20Lorch%20family%20was%20a,the%20nineteenth%20century%20until%201930
- b. Research the real Irene Lorch. What was she like in real life? What happened to her and her family after the events that took place in this novel?

4. Creative Writing Task

- a. Write a story, poem, or script about the following topic:
 - i. Imagine a world without hatred. What does this world look like?

5. Arts Task

- a. Design an act for the high wire using a skipping rope flat on the ground. Share your act with the class.

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

544 page Five-Part Comprehensive Guide