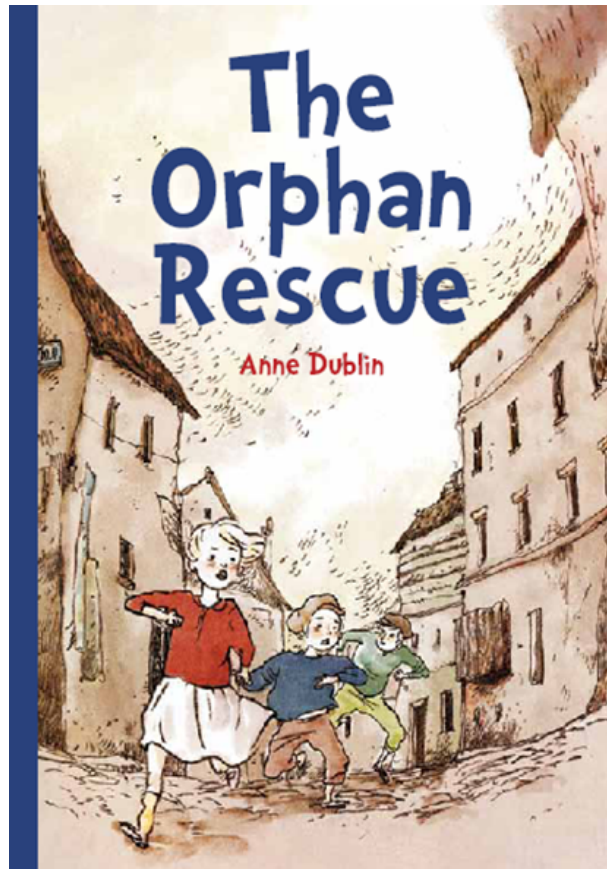


The Orphan Rescue

By Anne Dublin

TEACHER'S GUIDE



ISBN 978-1-897187-81-4

For ages 9–13
124 pp.

www.secondstorypress.ca

SUMMARY

It is springtime 1937 in Sosnowiec, Poland. Twelve-year-old Miriam and her young brother, David, live with their poor grandparents. When their situation becomes desperate, Miriam is forced to quit school to take a job in a butcher shop and, worse yet, David is sent to an orphanage.

On the surface, the Jewish orphanage is benign but underneath, its director cruelly sells some of the children to an unscrupulous factory owner who uses them as forced labour doing dangerous, even lethal, work. The plot concerns Miriam's attempts to rescue David and restore him to the family.

The Orphan Rescue deals with the same issues that many children face today—poverty, bullying, and child labour. Miriam struggles to solve her problems with determination and resourcefulness. This book of historical fiction tells how one person can make a difference, not only for herself but also for those around her.

REVIEWS

“Out of true events and a specific historic period comes a wider and more timeless meaning. Highly recommended for grades 3-6.” – Linda R. Silver, *Association of Jewish Libraries Newsletter*.

“A lovely, poignant story...” – Ann Kirschner, author of *Sala's Gift*.

“A touching story, splendidly written. I was deeply moved.” – Rabbi Dow Marmor, Rabbi Emeritus, Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Prologue

Twelve-year-old Miriam accompanies Grandfather and her seven-year-old brother, David, to the orphanage where he must stay.

1. List the places in the city of Sosnowiec as shown on the map at the front of the book. How do the symbols on the map help you understand the setting?
2. Give three details that illustrate the family's poverty.
3. What does the canary in the cage symbolize?
4. How does the author show that Mr. Reznitsky is an unlikeable character?

Chapter 1: The Family

Miriam's memories: Mama and Papa were alive; Papa died and Mama went to work; they moved in with Grandmother and Grandfather; Miriam's twelfth birthday; Mama died.

1. Give at least three details that illustrate the family's poverty.
2. Why did Miriam appreciate the gift Mama gave her?
3. How does Miriam show that she loves David?

Chapter 2: Hard Decisions

Grandfather and Grandmother try to support the children, but their poverty becomes worse. Finally, they decide that Miriam must quit school and go to work at the butcher shop, and David must go to the orphanage.

1. How do the grandparents try to support the family?
2. What does Grandfather mean when he says, "The world is not a kind place for our family"?
3. A simile is a comparison between two things using "like" or "as". Find two similes in this chapter. Discuss why they are effective.
4. Explain: "You were not born from a stone."
5. Why does David finally agree to go to the orphanage?

Chapter 3: At the Orphanage

David is left at the orphanage. He decides he doesn't like Mr. Reznitsky, the director. David draws a picture. He meets Joshua, his counsellor, and Bluma, the head cook.

1. Show three ways the author conveys Mr. Reznitsky's insincerity.
2. Joshua and Bluma are minor characters in the novel. What is their role?

Chapter 4: Ben

David meets Ben, an older boy, who says David isn't a "real" orphan. David makes friends with Sam.

1. Why does Ben say that David isn't a "real" orphan? Do you agree or disagree?
2. Compare Sam and Ben's behaviour towards David.

Chapter 5: The Visit

Miriam goes with Grandfather to visit David. They meet Ben. Miriam decides she must get David out of the orphanage.

1. How is Miriam's plan to rescue David like a game of checkers?
2. What is the importance of Mottele, the goat?

Chapter 6: Mr. Sharf

Joshua wakes David up in the middle of the night. They go to Mr. Reznitsky's office and overhear a conversation. David meets Mr. Sharf, who tells him he must work at his factory. David arrives at the factory and meets George, the foreman.

1. How does the author show that Mr. Sharf is the villain?
2. Personification is a device that treats an abstract quality or thing as if it had human qualities. Give an example of personification in this chapter. How is it effective?
3. David says he's "seven, almost eight" years old. In this novel, when would his age be an advantage? A disadvantage?

Chapter 7: The Scavenger

David is forced to do dangerous work under the weaving machine. He meets Kalina and Aaron, two other workers. He suffers from bedbugs at night.

1. Is Aaron really doing David a favour if he eats his soup? Explain.
2. David feels threatened by various things at the factory. Name three.
3. Why can't David leave the factory?

Chapter 8: Unexpected Help

Miriam goes to the orphanage. Ben tells her that David has been taken away to work at a factory. He decides to help Miriam find David and get him out.

1. Name three tasks that Miriam had to do at the butcher shop.
2. Give the real reason why Ben decides to help Miriam.

3. It was against the law for children to work in the factory. Why do you think Mr. Sharf broke the law?
4. Why did David agree to go to the factory?

Chapter 9: At the Restaurant

Miriam and Ben arrive at the factory. They look for David but can't find him. They decide to go to a restaurant. Miriam overhears a conversation between Kalina and her friend, Stella. The children spy each other. Ben tells Miriam that he was mean to David but promises that he'll make it up to him.

1. Why does Miriam at first refuse to go into the restaurant?
2. What does Ben do to show his sympathy for Miriam?
3. Why does Miriam say that David isn't an orphan?
4. What is the significance of the conversation between Kalina and Stella?

Chapter 10: The Rescue

David tries to escape but George catches him and starts to beat him. Miriam and Ben arrive. Together, the children overpower George and run away from the factory.

1. The title of this book is *The Orphan Rescue*. Name one thing that Miriam, Ben, and David each do to accomplish the rescue.

Chapter 11: Miriam's Plan

Miriam is determined that David will not go back to the factory or the orphanage. She tells David to stay in the shed overnight while she will try to persuade their grandparents to allow him to come home. David decides to trust Ben.

1. What was Miriam's plan? Do you think it will be successful? Why or why not?
2. How does Miriam persuade David to trust Ben?

Chapter 12: Almost Home

Miriam has a confrontation with Mrs. Krangle, the butcher's wife. The children reach the shed. Miriam leaves the boys.

1. Explain the purpose of the scene with Mrs. Krangle, the butcher's wife.
2. How is David persuaded to stay in the shed?

Chapter 13: Miriam in Trouble

Grandmother finds Miriam and brings her home. Miriam lies to Grandmother. The next morning, Ben and David are gone. That night, Ben wakes Miriam up and tells her about his new plan.

1. How can you tell that Grandfather is upset?
2. What is Miriam's greatest fear?
3. Why do you think Miriam lies to Grandmother?
4. Why did the hours "pass in a blur" for Miriam?

Chapter 14: The Truth About Mr. Reznitsky

The children go to the orphanage. Miriam finds proof that Mr. Sharf is paying Mr. Reznitsky for labour done by the orphans. She tells Mr. Perlman, a member of the Orphanage Committee. He promises to rectify matters.

1. Earlier in the book, Ben promised Miriam that he would make up for his mean behaviour to David. Explain how he kept his promise.
2. What did the letter reveal?
3. Mr. Perlman says: "Sometimes a person must do something wrong in order to correct a bigger wrong." Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

Chapter 15: The End is the Beginning

Mr. Reznitsky is fired; Mr. Sharf is arrested. Grandfather takes Ben on as his apprentice. David will stay home and not have to return to the orphanage. Miriam must continue to work at the butcher shop but Grandmother says, "Let's wait and see what happens in the fall."

1. Mr. Reznitsky and Mr. Sharf were punished for their wrongdoing. Do you think their punishment was fair? Discuss.
2. How have Miriam and Ben changed by the end of the book?
3. Explain the significance of the last sentence: "And maybe this time, I'll win."
4. Is this a happy ending? Why or why not?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

READING AND WRITING

1. Read another historical fiction book about orphans. (See further reading.)
Compare and contrast:
 - Setting
 - Main characters
 - Challenges and obstacles
 - Resolution
2. Write a different ending for *The Orphan Rescue*.
3. Write a letter to one of the main characters of the book. Tell him/her what you admire about him/her, and what he/she could have done differently.
4. Ask a member of your family to tell you a family story, that is, something that happened to someone in the family. Write the story with a beginning, middle, and ending.
5. Write a poem from the point of view of one of the main characters.
6. Write a newspaper article about the orphanage. Answer the questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. Be sure to include a headline that will grab the reader's attention.
7. Make a "FOR/AGAINST" chart that might have helped Miriam decide whether to rescue her brother or not.
8. Write and design a lunch menu for the restaurant where Miriam and Ben went.
9. Write a pamphlet against child labour.

SPEAKING (ORACY)

1. See # 4 in "Reading and Writing". Divide into groups of four or five. Tell each other your family story.
2. Debate: "Child labour is a necessary evil."
3. Prepare and give a newscast: "Man arrested for breaking child labour laws."

RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. **The Depression in the 1930s**, especially as it affected the place and people where you live.
2. Over 200 million children all over the world are exploited as labourers. Research **child labour** in one of the following countries: India, Pakistan, Thailand, Nigeria, OR a country of your choice.
3. **Making a difference**. Find out about an organization that is trying to eliminate child labour. One example is Free the Children. Another is IPEC (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour).
4. **Games children play**. Research the game of checkers, chess, or dominoes. Describe the rules and demonstrate how to play.

5. Write a short **biography** about the life of a Jewish artist. Some examples are: Marc Chagall, Amedeo Modigliani, Jacques Lipchitz, Will Eisner, and Arthur Szyk.
6. **Sosnowiec**: Research the history of the city of Sosnowiec before 1939.

ART

1. Choose a scene from *The Orphan Rescue*. Illustrate it in any medium that you choose.
2. Choose a scene from *The Orphan Rescue* and write it in the form of a graphic novel or comic strip.
3. Build a diorama of one of the following settings from *The Orphan Rescue*:
 - Miriam's home
 - A room at the orphanage
 - The factory
4. Draw a different illustration for the cover of *The Orphan Rescue*.
5. Create a banner, bumper sticker, or poster with a slogan against child labour.

MUSIC

Find an example of Yiddish music that Miriam might have heard in 1937. Play it for your class on a musical instrument or on a CD player. Discuss the lyrics.

Some examples are:

- Rozhinkes mit mandlen
- Oif'n pripetchik
- Die mezhinke oysgegebn

DRAMA

1. Role-play the scene when the police might have interrogated Mr. Sharf.
2. Act out your favourite scene from *The Orphan Rescue*.

COOKING

Find a recipe for borscht soup. Make a pot of soup and bring it to your class to taste.

MEDIA LITERACY

1. Here is a postcard of the Jewish quarter of Sosnowiec, 1916. What does it tell you about the way people lived at that time?



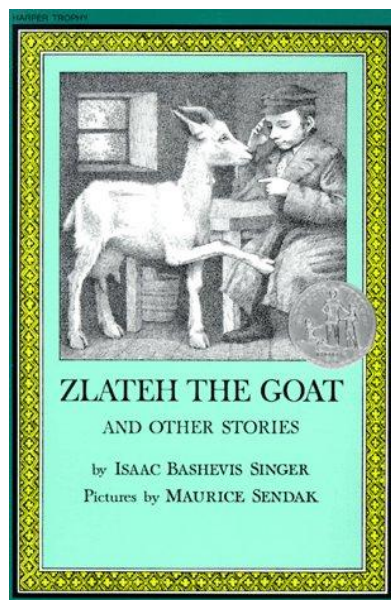
2. Here is an illustration from *The Orphan Rescue*. What does it tell you about David and the orphanage?



3. Here is a map of the area near Sosnowiec before 1914. Why was the area called the “Three-Crown Corner”?



4. View the film *Jewish Life in Crakow*. What do you learn about Jewish life before 1939? Compare the information in the film and in *The Orphan Rescue*.
5. View the film or read the book, *Zlateh the Goat*. Compare the goat in this film to the one in *The Orphan Rescue*.



FOR FURTHER READING

FOR TEACHERS

Ducjan Dobroszycki & Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. *Image Before My Eyes: A Photographic History of Jewish Life in Poland, 1864-1939*. New York: Schocken, 1977.

Patal, Raphael. *The Vanished Worlds of Jewry*. New York: Macmillan, 1980.

Vishniac, Roman. *Children of a Vanished World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Wiesel, Marion (ed.) *To Give Them Light: The Legacy of Roman Vishniac*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.

FOR STUDENTS (historical fiction / orphans)

Avi. *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*. New York: Hyperion, 2002.

Levine, Gail Carson. *Dave at Night*. New York: HarperCollins, 1999.

Montgomery, L. M. *Anne of Green Gables*. Toronto: Tundra, 2000 (© 1908).

Skrypuch, Marsha. *Call Me Aram*. Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2009.

Wulf, Linda Press. *The Night of the Burning*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

WEBSITES

Free the Children: <http://www.freethechildren.com/>

IPEC: <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/lang--en/index.htm>

Sosnowiec, Poland: <http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/sosnowiec/5,history/?action=view>

Jewish Music: <http://www.zemerl.com//index.shtml>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Anne Dublin was born to Holocaust survivors in a displaced persons camp in Salzburg, Austria. Her family came to Canada when she was very young. She grew up in Toronto, and attended York University and the University of Wisconsin.

She was an elementary school teacher and librarian for over 25 years. She taught in Nairobi, Kingston, Winnipeg, and Toronto.

Anne has traveled to many strange and wonderful places to research her books, for example, the salt flats in California, the town hall in Prague, and the streets of Sosnowiec, Poland where her parents lived before the outbreak of World War II.

The Orphan Rescue is Anne's fourth book for Second Story Press. Her other books include *Bobbie Rosenfeld: The Olympian Who Could Do Everything*, *June Callwood: A Life of Action*, and *Dynamic Women Dancers*.

Anne also writes short stories for adults and book reviews for the Association of Jewish Libraries *Newsletter*.

Anne enjoys walking, swimming, yoga, and singing in a choir. She loves to attend the ballet, opera, and theatre. She is a literacy volunteer at the Toronto Public Library.

For more information, go to Anne's website: www.annedublin.ca.

Teacher's Guide by Anne Dublin
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Second Story Press
20 Maud Street, Suite 401
Toronto, ON M5V 2M5
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