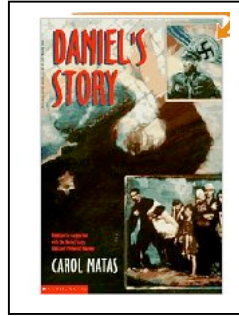


***Daniel's Story*** by Carol Matas

Grades: 6 – 9



Based on the exhibit at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, this novel features a character named Daniel, who embodies the experiences of millions of children and their families during the Holocaust.

**Objectives:**

Students will identify the qualities of perseverance and hope.  
Students will describe what prejudice is and how it can affect their lives.

**Story Synopsis:**

The book takes place in Poland and Germany during Hitler's reign of terror. The time frame of the story is from March of 1933 through Germany's surrender in May of 1945. The main character of *Daniel's Story* is Daniel. He is eighteen at the end of the book, but through flashbacks, the author takes the reader all the way back to Daniel's sixth birthday.

Daniel, his mother, his father, and his younger sister Erika are on a train with about 1000 other Jewish people from Frankfurt. Daniel is uncertain of where he is going and feels stunned and confused. He opens up his photo album, searching for some type of explanation as to what has happened...

*Daniel's Story* consists of four chronological sections: Pictures of Frankfurt; Pictures of Lodz; Pictures of Auschwitz; and Pictures of Buchenwald. In each section, Daniel is reviewing pictures that he has either taken or composed in his mind. The pictures all relate to the events and emotions he experiences, as he visits each location.

Early in the book Daniel recalls normal events in his life. There is just a slight hint that things are not right. As the story progresses, the changes Daniel, his family, and all of the Jewish population in Germany endure intensify. Daniel's views progress as he ages. He begins unable to really comprehend the changes taking place, but ends with him determined to bear witness and make changes for the Jewish people.

Daniel experiences many typical milestones in the book, although his life has become anything but typical.

Told chronologically in four parts, *Daniel's Story* begins in the family's home community of Frankfurt, Germany, in March 1933. In October 1941, Daniel and his immediate family—his mother, Ruth; father, Joseph; and younger sister, Erika—are among the many who are deported by rail to the Jewish ghetto in Lodz, Poland. They remain there until August 1944, when they are forcibly shipped in railway cars to a concentration camp, Auschwitz, where Daniel and his father are separated from Daniel's mother and sister. Their stay there only lasts until December 1944, when the father and son are force marched and again transported by train.

Daniel witnesses countless atrocities, some so horrifying he cannot even describe them to the reader. He joins the underground resistance and is able to preserve a little hope for his people's future.

By the end of the book, most of Daniel's family has been murdered, but he has survived and is thankful for what little he has left. His faith in humanity has been badly shaken, but not destroyed. The novel examines the great evil--as well as the great good--of which human beings are capable.

### **Vocabulary**

disoriented	emigrate	defiantly	vermin	propaganda
visa	pogrom	ghetto	newsreel	synagogue
deportation	rations	transports	resistance	evacuation

### **Introduction**

Shut your eyes, you are 10 years old, you have a sister, a mom, a dad, nice neighbors and friends and family all around you. There is even a special girl. You hear screams, clanging and banging sounds, you smell terrible air, your stomach aches, your scalp itches, you are cold, you are no longer with people you know and suddenly you open your eyes. It was not just a bad dream; it was nightmares of what you went through in the Holocaust. The memories stay with you always but you vow, Never Again, and you teach it your children, and your children's children.

### **Activities**

- Who is Daniel? Describe him and the life he leads when we first meet him. Continue to update as Daniel's life changes.
- Create a time line of Daniel's experiences, using both what has happened in the past and what Daniel is experiencing in the present. Update as his story continues.

- "Pictures of Frankfurt," the first section of Daniel's Story, reveals that the lives of the Jews in Germany were becoming increasingly more difficult. However, most families still did have some choices about their futures. Assume the role of one of the adult family members and try to convince the other family members to follow your suggestion about what they should do. For example, Uncle Walter says, "Palestine is the answer," while Uncle David wants the family to join him and his new wife in America. In your role-play, be prepared to argue against other family members' proposals.
- Daniel says, "By the time I was eleven, I'd almost forgotten life had ever been different." What do you think Daniel meant by that statement?
- In the midst of all the turmoil, there are examples of normalcy in Daniel's life. Explain how they affect his morale.
- Describe the school Daniel attended. How did the teacher treat the Jewish students? What incident made Daniel leave his school?
- In the beginning of the book, there are two photos of Father's store. Describe the photos and explain how they indicate the changes taking place for the Jewish people in Frankfurt.
- Daniel remembers when he first saw the word "JEW" written across his father's shop windows. Describe how he felt when he saw it.
- The wisdom of Daniel's parents enables them to survive when many others died. Describe some examples of what the family did to prolong their lives.
- The author provides a map at the beginning of each section of Daniel's Story which shows the political map of Europe from 1938–1939 plus the German concentration camps established between 1933 and 1945. A dotted line traces Daniel's journey. Enlarge the map to wall size, and add dated labels indicating the major plot events that occurred in each location.
- In 1933 there was a three-day boycott of Jewish stores in Germany. The event was one of those pivotal points in history where the future might have been changed had the populace reacted differently. Review this period in both German and world history to identify other pivotal points where a different response could have possibly yielded an entirely different future.
- Create a family tree of Daniel's extended family, and label each person. As the story progress, indicate the fate of each member.

- What are the Nuremberg Laws? What do they mean to Daniel, his family and the members of the Jewish community of Frankfurt?
- Daniel must to carry an identification card. What did it look like?
- What is Kristallnacht and its significance. How does Daniel describe it?
- Daniel is sent the ghetto in Lodz, Poland. Define ghetto. Describe the ghetto as Daniel sees it.
- Things seemed to be little better for Daniel and his family until patients at the hospital begin being sent to the work camps.
  - What does the announcement made by the chairman of the ghetto mean to Daniel and his family?
- Thousands of men, women and children from the ghetto died. But, some people still talk about surviving the war. Where would they all like to go when the war is over? Why?
- Describe what it means when Daniel and his father are sent to the left in the line.
- Where does he end up? Using your senses, describe what it was like?
- Daniel is determined to live. He says he will “be witness against them” What does that mean?
- Describe the conditions in the camp that Daniel and his father were moved to.
- Daniel was very courageous and did a brave thing. Describe what he did that would help change the world?
- Daniel and his father are marched out of Auschwitz. Daniel’s tells his father to concentrate on one thing. What is it?
- How was Buchenwald different from Auschwitz and Birkenau? Use a graphic organizer to compare/contrast.
- What was “Resistance”? Provide examples of several types of resistance exhibited in *Daniel’s Story*.
- The Americans have come into the camp, and the prisoners are freed. What do Daniel and his father decide they want to do?

## Additional Activities

- How did Daniel cope when the Nazis discriminated him against? How do you cope when you experience discrimination?
- Discuss this quotation: "Whatever we call a person or a group sets up the way we treat them."
- Write a journal entry, as if you were Daniel, that describes a major event in your life.
- Write and explain a one-line message to Daniel that reflects your feelings about his story.
- Could events similar to those that led to the Holocaust occur today in the US?
  - Could the rights of a certain group of people be taken away?
  - How could public attitude towards a single group be completely altered? Explain your answers.

## Research Activities

- The Holocaust, the extermination of six million Jewish people, made the world determined that such a thing could never happen again. Have there been any other examples of such discrimination leading to deliberate slaughter based on race, religion or color since 1945? Create chart or graph showing the results of your research.
- Factories were set up in the camps and the Nazis used the inmates of the camp as slave labor.
  - What advantage was this system for the Nazis?
  - What did these factories produce?
  - How important was this work to the war effort?
- It is often said that:  
*Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.*  
In groups of three or four discuss this statement in relation to Hitler's plan to annihilate the Jewish people and events since World War II.
  - What have we learned?Justify your answer. Present your findings to the whole group.
- During the unit on the Holocaust, students have been thinking and writing about issues related to the events and experiences of those who lived and died during this period in history.
  - Have students keep a running journal in their notebooks on the following topics:

- Why is the Holocaust an important topic for US History students to learn?
  - What is the meaning of the term Holocaust? How does it apply to the time period in history of 1933 to 1945?
  - What important lessons can the Holocaust teach us in today's world?
  - Identify aspects of life in modern 21st Century America that relate to the tragedy and triumphs of the Holocaust
- Have students view "Lost Childhoods" a poster from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) containing images of children who were killed during the Holocaust. The images contained studio portraits, family snapshots, and school class pictures of children and families from the 1920s and 1930s in Eastern Europe.
- Why do adults save pictures of children?
  - How are these children different from you? How are they similar? Use a graphic organizer to compare/contrast.
  - Why did the Nazis kill children?
  - What is the value of these photos to people who survived or who knew these children?
  - Some people say the Holocaust never happened. Given that belief, what is the value of these photos?
- Daniel comments that he thought the restrictions placed on the family and the living conditions in Frankfurt were terrible, until he was moved to Lodz. He says that each place was worse than the last. Compare each place by completing the following chart.

	Frankfurt	Lodz	Auschwitz	Buchenwald
Restrictions				
Living Conditions				
Others Issues				

- View the video "Daniel's Story" with the students.

Resources and materials, including a class set of *Daniel's Story* and the video, are available through the Florida AU Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education (FAU-CHHRE). Contact Rose Gatens at [rgatens@fau.edu](mailto:rgatens@fau.edu) for information about borrowing resources and materials appropriate for teaching the Holocaust and related subjects

### **Assessment:**

Students will understand and be able to express their feelings about the horrors of the Holocaust through writing, drawing and other

Using graphic organizers, students will compare and contrast the four train rides that Daniel takes during the story.

Students will identify and describe examples of prejudice described in *Daniel's Story*.

Students will choose an example of prejudice that exists in their lives today that they will write about and provide possible solutions to. (cause/effect solution)

### **Additional Resources:**

#### **Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass)**

The origin of this observance goes back to the late 1930s. Under Adolf Hitler's leadership as chancellor of Germany, the Nuremberg Laws were passed that included limiting the right of Jewish citizens in Germany to religious observance, to attend school, to earn a living, to ride streetcars, and to visit parks.

On November 9, 1938, Nazi storm troopers, members of the Nazi secret police, and the Hitler youth went on a rampage in Jewish neighborhoods in Germany and Austria—breaking into Jewish homes and businesses, smashing windows and beating or killing those inside. They destroyed synagogues (Jewish places of worship) and holy books.

The night of November 9-10 became known as **Kristallnacht** (Night of Broken Glass). It is believed to be the catalyst event that served as the beginning of the Holocaust. **Kristallnacht** is observed throughout the world, often in synagogues and Jewish cemeteries.

For additional information:

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)