



Irena's Jars of Secrets

Marcia K. Vaughan , Ron Mazellan (Illustrator)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Irena's Jars of Secrets

Marcia K. Vaughan , Ron Mazellan (Illustrator)

Irena's Jars of Secrets Marcia K. Vaughan , Ron Mazellan (Illustrator)

Irena Sendler, born to a Polish Catholic family, was raised to respect people of all backgrounds and to help those in need. She became a social worker; and after the German army occupied Poland during World War II, Irena knew she had to help the sick and starving Jews who were imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto. She began by smuggling food, clothing, and medicine into the ghetto, then turned to smuggling children out of the ghetto. Using false papers and creative means of escape, and at great personal risk, Irena helped rescue Jewish children and hide them in safe surroundings. Hoping to reunite the children with their families after the war, Irena kept secret lists of the children's identities.

Motivated by conscience and armed with compassion and a belief in human dignity, Irena Sendler confronted an enormous moral challenge and proved to the world that an ordinary person can accomplish deeds of extraordinary courage.

Irena's Jars of Secrets Details

Date : Published November 1st 2011 by Lee & Low Books

ISBN : 9781600604393

Author : Marcia K. Vaughan , Ron Mazellan (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : World War II, Holocaust, Childrens, Picture Books, Biography, History, Nonfiction, Literature, Jewish, War, Cultural

 [Download Irena's Jars of Secrets ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Irena's Jars of Secrets ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Irena's Jars of Secrets Marcia K. Vaughan , Ron Mazellan (Illustrator)

From Reader Review Irena's Jars of Secrets for online ebook

Rachel Aranda says

"As he [Irena's father] lay dying, he held his daughters hand and told her that if she ever saw someone drowning, she must jump in and try to save that person, even if she could not swim."

Thank goodness Irena Sendler's parents taught their daughter to respect and care for all people. They're good parenting and example of compassion instilled in her a desire to help others. She ended up saving around 2500 children from being sent to the Treblinka Concentration Camp near Warsaw, Poland. I have been to that place and it is awful. The feel of misery and stench of Injustice and Death is so thick no one leaves without feeling ill. This woman and her fellow Zegota workers deserve all the awards and recognition they have received.

Teri says

This is a children's picture book that caught me by complete surprise. I chose it for a biography unit I was doing with my third graders. I did not read it before putting the book out for the kids to sample. Each child that picked it up could not put it down, so I decided to find out why. The story would not leave my mind. I came across another biography written about Irena and devoured it, too. Irena was an ordinary and flawed woman who did extraordinary and courageous things to save Jews from the ghettos during World War 2.

Nicola Mansfield says

Reason for Reading: I enjoy this type of children's biography and the Catholic connection interested me.

This is a picture book biography of a Polish Catholic heroine, whose legacy has been hidden in obscurity due to the Communist state of Poland after the war. However, Irena's story did get out and has become wider known thanks to books like this. Though a picture book, this is one for the older set. I'd recommend it for the 9-12 age group or a younger child only if they are aware of the reality of the killing of the Jews in WWII. Irena's story is told wonderfully and we get a glimpse of what makes an ordinary person a hero. How bravery and courage are a part of a person's moral compass, and beliefs in human dignity can cause one to accomplish great deeds with no thought to their "greatness", simply just to their "rightness".

The accompanying illustrations are beautiful and fit the mood of the story. They are dark and by that I mean using a dark colour palette to remind us of the desolate atmosphere of the Polish ghetto. I'm not sure what medium the work is done in, perhaps guache or chalks, but it is very effective and blending and shadowing has been used to great effect. A great insight into the Jewish Polish ghettos of WWII and a little known Catholic hero. Would make a great addition to Catholic school classrooms.

Jalynn Patterson says

About the Book:

Irena Sendler, born to a Polish Catholic family, was raised to respect people of all backgrounds and to help those in need. She became a social worker; and after the German army occupied Poland during World War II, Irena knew she had to help the sick and starving Jews who were imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto. She began by smuggling food, clothing, and medicine into the ghetto, then turned to smuggling children out of the ghetto. Using false papers and creative means of escape, and at great personal risk, Irena helped rescue Jewish children and hide them in safe surroundings. Hoping to reunite the children with their families after the war, Irena kept secret lists of the children's identities.

About the Author:

Marcia Vaughan is an award-winning author of numerous books for children, including Snap!, a Junior Library Guild Selection, Whistling Dixie, an ALA Notable book, and The Secret to Freedom, a Teachers' Choices Award winner published by LEE & LOW BOOKS. A full-time author, Vaughan is a popular speaker at national and regional conferences. She lives in Vashon Island, Washington, with her husband and their son.

My Review:

Irena born to a Polish Catholic family was also born to a very compassionate one. Her father on his death bed instilled an even greater sense of helpfulness in Irena as he explained to her that you help people who are drowning even if you don't know how to swim. It was a beautiful, heartfelt sentiment that Irena identified with as she grew up to be a very smart, young woman. In this book, she talks her way into a concentration camp during the Holocaust trying her best to help everyone she could.

She later joins up with another organization to help more families in need and she leads the children's division. This way she gives the parents a safe place to house their children until they can be reunited again. This book describes the ways Irena was able to still identify the children with their families. This book is a very touching one. I believe the main character shows alot of bravery that I'm sure many children could learn alot from.

****Disclosure**** This book was given to me for free from the publisher.

Naomi Kenorak says

A beautiful book about a beautiful soul, Irena Sendler, who helped to smuggle hundreds of Jewish children out of the Warsaw ghetto to safety not because she was Jewish herself but because it was the right thing to do. As her father died, he told his daughter "that if she ever saw someone drowning, she must jump in and try to save that person, even if she could not swim." That is the motto of saints and bodhisattvas, one which Irena took to heart. She saved some twenty-five hundred Jewish children and kept lists of the children's real and false identities in the hopes of reuniting them with their parents after the war. The lists were placed in jars and buried in a garden; when Irena was eventually captured by the Gestapo, she suffered months of torture rather than reveal the location of the secret jars. Long after the war was over, Irena Sendler said that what she did to save the children was "justification of my existence on this earth, and not a title to glory". Well was she named Righteous Among the Nations.

Bookworm1858 says

I was actually first interested in this book because of another blogger, Irena at This Miss Loves to Read, because she shares a name with the focus of this book. Thus even though this book is aimed at a younger audience, I requested it from Netgalley.

It tells the story of Irena Sendler who, during World War II, headed a group that saved the lives of about 2500 Jewish children. She had a special dispensation to enter the ghettos where Jews were forced to live and helped smuggle out children where they were then placed with other families under false identities. The families were promised that information would be preserved so that everyone could be reunited. Irena did this by storing the papers in various jars buried under a tree. She ended up arrested and almost executed but other members bribed her release and she spent the rest of the war in hiding...but still helping as she could!

At the end of the war, Irena dug up the jars to help reunite families. While most of the children survived, the majority of their families had been sent to camps and died. Irena received the Order of the White Eagle, Poland's highest honor and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

I was not familiar with this story but it ended up bringing tears to my eyes through the bravery and selflessness of Irena and the other members of the groups as well as the bravery of the adults who sent their children away, never knowing if they would see each other again. It was so inspiring to read about ordinary people doing their part against human evil. And although the topic is a difficult one, the book is still appropriate for younger readers due to the care taken with language.

Lisa Vegan says

I read this immediately after I read a similar picture book: Irena Sendler and the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto. Both were excellent and told the story in a slightly different way, telling about some of the same and some different children saved. I liked this book because the first pages cover Irena's earliest years.

The story of Irena Sendler inspires and humbles me.

I love the illustrations here. The picture where Irena first goes back to the apple tree after the war is luminous and reminds me of a Tiffany window.

The Afterword is wonderful. There is a photograph of Irena as a young woman and another photograph of her as an old woman. In both, she has the most beautiful smile.

This book makes clear that her deeds were known by 1965 because she was recognized then by Yad Vashem, honored as Righteous Among the Nations. In 1991 she was made an honorary citizen of Israel. She was given all sorts of other honors and even nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. I love how it was revealed who cared for her at the end of her life. She deserved all the above, as will be made crystal clear when the reader reads of her good deeds extraordinaire.

Now that I've read two picture books about this remarkable woman and the other people she worked with, I'd like to read a good full length non-fiction for adults book about this subject.

4 ½ stars

Margo Tanenbaum says

Irena's Jars of Secrets is the second picture book to come out this year on Polish heroine Irena Sendler, a young social worker who rescued over 2,500 Jewish children from under the noses of the Nazi guards in the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II (earlier this year I reviewed Irena Sendler and the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto, by Susan Goldman Rubin). Both are well-written, worthwhile books, although they cover much of the same territory.

Irena's father, a Polish doctor, taught his daughter that if she ever saw someone drowning, she must jump in, even if she didn't know how to swim. Irena took his teachings to heart, and when the Polish Jews were forced into the Warsaw ghetto, dying of starvation and disease, she knew she must do something to help. Dressed as a nurse, she smuggled in food, medicine, and clothes, but that wasn't enough. Soon she joined the Zegota, a Polish organization established to help the Jews, and started smuggling children out of the ghetto however she could--finding families that would take them in. She kept careful records of the names of the children and where they went, so that they could be reunited with their parents after the war. These important notes were hidden in small jars and buried under the apple tree in a friend's garden.

Irena's work was terribly dangerous, and she was eventually arrested by the Gestapo and sentenced to death. Zegota members managed to rescue her through a bribe, and she continued to work for the resistance until the war ended. Although Irena was able to retrieve her precious records, very few of the children were able to be reunited with their parents, most of whom had perished in death camps or the ghetto. Still, relatives were able to be found for some of the children.

Irena's remarkable story was ignored in Poland until very recently, although she was honored in 1965 by Israel's Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous Among Nations, those Gentiles who helped Jews escape the Nazis. She passed away in 2008 at the age of 98, but as author Marcia Vaughan concludes in her afterword, "her story of caring and courage lives on."

Ron Mazellan's rich oil painting illustrations capture the somber mood of this time period, with dark colors, broad, energetic, brush strokes, and dramatic lighting.

Taffy says

Irena Sendler saved thousands of Jewish children from extermination during WWII. I wish we all knew her amazing story.

Irena proves that one person can make a difference!

This is a beautiful picture book with a beautiful message to read out loud to your family.

First line:

"On a cold February day in 1910, a baby girl was born to a Catholic family in a small town near Warsaw, Poland."

Rating: PG

S: No

L: No

V: references to Gestapo soldiers and killing of Jews

4 1/2 STARS (only because there weren't enough pages to do Irena justice and now I want more about her)

THANKS for NetGalley for the copy I read. It's one that's worth buying for my personal library.

Elle Drue says

Irena knows she could no longer sit by and watch the Jewish people suffer in the Warsaw Ghetto. As a social worker, her heart longs to help those in trouble, even if it means risking her own life. At first, Irena smuggles food, first aid, and clothing into the ghetto, but she soon realizes her efforts to help are in vain. Groups of imprisoned families are consistently being transported to Germany's concentration camps to die. She along with the Polish Council to Aid Jews, also known as the Zegota, begin rescuing children out of the ghetto, hoping to reunite them with their families after the war. This picturebook is based on the true story of heroine Irena Sendler, a Polish Catholic who saved the lives of more than two thousand children imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II. Mazellan's beautiful painted illustrations are darker in color and appropriately fit the mood of secrecy. Vaughan brings to light the remarkable story of one woman's bravery to rebel against evil and place the well-being of strangers before her own. This unforgettable story is recommended for older children, and it can be used as a stepping stone for conversation about persecution of other cultures, the Holocaust, and World War II history.

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

Marcia Vaughan's book, *Irena's Jars of Secrets*, is an informative look at the life of a brave, young resistance worker in the face of great danger.

Irena Sendler was a pretty young girl living in Warsaw, Poland when the Nazis invaded her country. Late in 1940, they forced Warsaw's more than 400,000 Jews into some crowded, run down buildings, separated from the rest of that city by a 7 foot brick wall the Nazis had built, where they began their fight for survival in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Irena Sendler, a young social worker, and the daughter of a physician who had been willing to treat poor Jews during a Typhus outbreak years earlier, decided to follow in her father's footsteps and try to help ease the suffering of the Jews behind the wall.

Against this background, Vaughan tells the story of this remarkable young woman who risked her own life over and over to try to save others. By now, most of us know about Irena smuggling activities – bringing clothing, food and medical supplies into the ghetto, and sneaking children out and to safety. To keep track of the children, whose names had to be changed so they could pass as Christians, she wrote down their real name and their false identity and buried them in jars in the hope that they could some day be reunited with their families.

Irena's smuggling activities came to an end when she was betrayed to the Gestapo in 1943. She was sentenced to death but, despite being tortured, never betrayed any her secrets, including the location of the jars that had the potential to destroy so many lives in the hands of the Nazis.

Irena Sendler as a young girl

Vaughan's biography about Irena Sendler is presented in very accessible language, detailing how she began her work on her own, and later joining Zegota, a secret organization for helping Jews. She also includes some personalized narratives of Jews deciding to send their child into the unknown with Irena, rather than face deportation. Vaughan gives a real sense of the despair, desperation and even the ambivalence these parents must have felt about turning their children over to Irena without a real guarantee of their safety.

The narrative is enhanced by the excellent oil paintings of illustrator Ron Mazellan throughout the book. Mazellan paintings reflect the dark uncertain times that people experienced under the Nazis. Yet, for all their emotional content, the paintings are done in a kind of soft focus, powerful without being frightening and detracting from the narrative.

Irena's Jars of Secrets is an excellent addition to the ever growing body of Holocaust literature for younger readers. I think it is important that children know there were some people acting unselfishly and courageously amid so much cruelty. This important story is a must read for anyone teaching or just interested in the Holocaust.

This book is recommended for readers age 6-11

This book was a received as an E-ARC from Netgalley.com

Yad Vashem named Irena as one of The Righteous Among The Nations in 1965

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

I had never heard of Irena Sendler until I read this book. Irena was a Polish woman who helped hide Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto and other places. The book describes the numerous ingenious ways that children were smuggled out and hidden--what courage it must have taken! She was captured by the Nazis once, but escaped and continued her work until the end of the war. Her jars, which she buried in a friends apple orchard, contained the real names and aliases of all the children she rescued, in hopes that they could be reunited with their families after the war. An afterword at the end of the book talks about the rest of her life and provides photos of Irena as a young woman and an old lady.

I highly recommend this inspiring story of how one person can, with courage, make a difference.

An Abundance of Books says

Featured at An Abundance of Books

It's strange that the story of Irena Sendler and the Zegota (the Polish Council to Aid Jews) is not widely known. Under 29 year old Irena's direction, the Zegota's children's section saved the lives of 2,500 Jewish children. Irena and others would enter the ghetto under the health department's auspices saying that they were keeping track of a typhoid breakout. They would pick up infants and children and hide them in ambulances and trucks. Sometimes they had to disguise the children as packages, hide them under fake floorboards or in tool chests. A network of convents, churches, everyday citizens, and various underground resistance movements would then hide the children. Of course it would be hard for any parent to give up their children to strangers. Irena couldn't promise that their children would survive, but she was honest with

the parents that they would surely die in the ghetto or in the Treblinka camp. Zegota and other organizations promised that the children would be reunited with their families after the war. Irena kept track of the children's original names and new identities on lists that were hidden in jars buried under a tree. She was eventually arrested by the Nazis, tortured for information on the children, and when she kept her silence for three months she was finally scheduled for execution. Members of Zegota were able to bribe guards to release her during her transfer. They cut it so close that Irena's name was still listed on posters as one of the rebels executed. She spent the rest of the war in hiding, helping Zegota when she could.

When the war ended in 1945, Irena returned to Warsaw to dig up the jars. The lists had remained safe and undiscovered the entire time. She handed all of her information over to the Jewish National Committee so that they could begin reuniting families. While almost all of the 2,500 rescued children had survived the war, most of their families had died at Treblinka. The Committee reunited families or relatives when they could, but many children decided to stay with their host families or leave the country. What was probably the saddest part of the story was never stated outright: everyone expected the bulk of the families to survive, nobody could imagine how bad things were going to be. Those who smuggled the children out and hid them never expected that the large majority of the children would have no one to return to.

Irena's Jars of Secrets was a well told and engaging story with warm illustrations that communicated the seriousness of the subject quite well while keeping the target age group in mind. Vaughan has included a more detailed history in the back of the book along with photographs of Irena as well as additional resources.

Verdict:

A bittersweet story, but an important one. Irena's Jars of Secrets shows people of every age that extraordinary circumstances can bring out the hero in the most ordinary of people. I think this book would be a valuable addition to any public or school library. While it's definitely worth the time to read, this is a better one to pick up from the library.

Read full review [HERE](#)

babyhippoface says

I'm beginning to realize that there is no end of amazing stories of courage that came out of the Holocaust. I have read so many in the last few years, all of them horrifying in their own way, and still I am never prepared for what I read.

Irena Sendler was a Polish Catholic living during the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich. At the outbreak of the war, Irena obtained permission to treat tuberculosis in the ghetto. She used this pass to give aid to those suffering in the ghettos but soon realized that supplying food and medicine was not enough; she must get the children out of Poland and to safety.

Before she could save the children, though, she had to convince their parents to give them away. I cannot imagine the anguish of trying to decide whether to keep your child with you and try to protect her yourself or send her away, quite possibly forever. They would ask, *Can you guarantee they will live?* and Irena could only guarantee they would die if they stayed. Smuggling the children in ambulances, potato sacks, coffins, body bags--any way she could possibly find, and with the help of a dog trained to bark to cover the children's cries--Irena saved as many as she could, placing them in new homes and giving them new names. She took extra care to write down the new names of all the children alongside their real names, hoping they could be reunited with their families after the war. She placed the lists in jars and buried them under a friend's apple tree.

Over the course of the war, Irena and her team saved the lives of over 2500 children, at great risk. Irena herself was arrested, tortured, and sentenced to death. Only a last-minute bribe from friends saved her life. Irena escaped to safety and continued her work. After the war ended, she dug up the jars and did her best to reunite families. Sadly, the vast majority of the parents had been killed in concentration camps.

If you are interested in the Holocaust, read this book. If you are studying the Holocaust in your classroom, read this book. If you are a thinking, caring human being, *read this book*. It is beautiful and horrible and full of pain and hope. In the midst of atrocities beyond my comprehension, man's absolute inhumanity and cruelty toward man, for no other reason than pure, dark, hatred, there was a light. There was a hope. There was Irena.

For her, it was not enough to save children from possible torture and certain death. That she took the time to document the names of all the children is what just floors me. This woman risked her life again and again and again, for someone else. For love. *Greater love has no man than this.*

And yet, Irena never saw herself as a hero: *I could have done more*, she said. *This regret will follow me to my death.*

Irena Sendler was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. Over 200 letters from all over the world were written in support of Irena. At the time, she was being cared for by a woman who was smuggled out of Poland at the age of 6 months. Irena had carried her out in a tool box. Wow.

Irena was not awarded the Nobel. Al Gore received the prize. (And on an extremely personal note, I have to say: what an absolute *travesty*.)

Irena passed away in 2008 at the age of 98. What a blessing she was to the people of Poland and to this world.

Edward Sullivan says

Great introduction to the Polish-Catholic social worker who risked her life to save nearly 2,500 Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto.
