

I Have Lived a Thousand Years

by Livia Bitton-Jackson

(Published in 1997)

Approved for use in 8th Grade

Summary of the Work:

So wonders thirteen-year-old Elli Friedmann, just one of the many innocent Holocaust victims, as she fights for her life in a concentration camp. It wasn't long ago that Elli led a normal life; a life rich and full that included family, friends, school, and thoughts about boys. A life in which Elli could lie and daydream for hours that she was a beautiful and elegant celebrated poet. But these adolescent daydreams quickly darken in March 1944, when the Nazis invade Hungary. First Elli can no longer attend school, have possessions, or talk to her neighbors. Then she and her family are forced to leave their house behind to move into a crowded ghetto, where privacy becomes a luxury of the past and food becomes a scarcity. Her strong will and faith allow Elli to manage and adjust somehow, but what Elli doesn't know is that this I only the beginning of the worst is yet to come. . . . A remarkable memoir; it is a story of cruelty and suffering, but at the same time a story of hope, faith, perseverance, and love. back cover blurb

Rationale:

Study of the Holocaust is paramount. It is a watershed event in our history that speaks volumes to the ends of human cruelty, racism, and hate. It is also a time of compassion, love, and triumph. Studying these issues through a memoir – personal nonfiction account – allows students to view the Holocaust through a survivor's eyes. The account begs personal reflection of values and how we should treat other people. In a historical context, this book opens itself interdisciplinary work with social studies to answer questions of how and why such an event occurred. This also leaves us to the final question: how can we never let this happen again?

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

In a graphic present-tense narrative, this Holocaust memoir describes what happens to a Jewish girl who is 13 when the Nazis invade Hungary in 1944. She tells of a year of roundups, transports, selections, camps, torture, forced labor, and shootings, then of liberation and the return of a few. For those who have read Leitner's stark *The Big Lie* (1992), this is a much more detailed account, with the same authority of a personal witness. Horrifying as her experience is, she doesn't dwell on the atrocities. There is hope here. Unlike many adult survivor stories, this does not show the victims losing their humanity. The teenager and her mother help each other survive; they save each other from the gas chambers. Even in the slaughter of the cattle trucks strafed by machine-gun fire, "words of comfort emerge from every corner." The occasional overwriting about "drowning in a morass of pain and helplessness" is unfortunate. The facts need no rhetoric. On every page they express her intimate experience. After the war, the teenager finds her brother, hears how her father died. She wonders whether she dare enjoy the luxury of being a girl, of "having hair." A final brief chronology of the Holocaust adds to the value of this title for curriculum use with older readers. Hazel Rochman from Booklist

Auerbach, Barbara. "Bitton-Jackson, Livia. Hello, America." *School Library Journal* 51.3 (March 2005): 224(1). *General OneFile*. Gale. Helena School District #1/IMC. 26 June 2008 <<http://find.galegroup.com/ips/start.do?prodId=IPS>>.

- * Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.
- * Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

- ALA Best Book for Young Adults

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 720L
- Readability Level:

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: (link)

Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption: 2000

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

Graphic, real-life violence, torture, and death.

Connection to the Curriculum:

See rationale.

Additional Connections:
(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)