

**Lonek's Journey**  
**Non-fiction by Dorit Bader Whiteman**  
**Star Bright Books**  
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**About the Author:**

Dorit Bader Whiteman was born in Vienna, Austria to a Jewish family. Her father was a physician and her mother was the proprietor of a well-known girls' boarding school. Her mother also had a doctorate in chemistry and was an accomplished pianist. Fortunately, they were able to escape to England from the Nazis in 1939 with nothing more than one suitcase for each person. While living in London, her mother worked as a maid. In 1941, her family moved to New York. Ms. Whiteman earned a BA from the University of Georgia and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from New York University. She and her husband live in New York. They have two daughters and two grandchildren. In her leisure time, she enjoys tennis, swimming and traveling.

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[http://www.starbrightbooks.org/category\\_author.php?author=Dorit%20Bader%20Whiteman](http://www.starbrightbooks.org/category_author.php?author=Dorit%20Bader%20Whiteman)

**Books:** *The Teheran Children, The Uprooted: A Hitler Legacy*

**Annotation:**

This is a miraculous WWII story of one Polish Jewish boy, his family, and 1000 orphans. Lonek and his family are first forced to move to western Poland to escape the invasion by the Germans. They evade capture several times by the time they make it to Lvov, a Russian occupied city. However, from there they are taken to the Russian slave camp in Siberia. Through their own resourcefulness and back breaking work, they manage to survive a year in the camp. Finally, they are freed due to an agreement between England and Russia. This should be the end of their troubles, but it is not. The family struggles to survive and eventually Lonek's mother is forced to place him in an orphanage to save his life. From the orphanage, Lonek and 1000 other "orphans" begin their long dangerous journey to Palestine.

Ms. Whiteman and her family escaped to England in 1939 with only one suitcase for each of them. Due to her first-hand knowledge of knowing what it is like to flee for your life with little possessions and her dedicated research with those who were there after her family left, she has produced an informative, insightful book. It is unique because it deals with a gap in the Holocaust literature. Young people will enjoy reading this book because it is from the perspective of eleven-year-old Lonek, a resourceful and persevering child and there is a “happy” ending. As one reader stated, it “keeps me on the edge of my seat.” I would recommend this book to all ages. It is an excellent resource for the classroom as there are so many ways to connect to many subjects. This book is a “must read.”

### **Booktalk:**

If you like learning history through personal stories, you will like reading Lonek’s *Journey: The True Story of a Boy’s Escape to Freedom*. This true story takes place during WWII. Lonek and his family are trying to avoid capture by the Nazis by going into hiding. This is the first of their many brushes with death. However, the resourcefulness and continued optimism of Lonek and his family is amazing. It is also a compelling story about 1000 orphans who travel thousands of miles to escape to freedom in Palestine. Even this freedom bring challenges. This is a little-known story that everyone should read. It puts a human face on history.

**Themes:** survival, holocaust, freedom, resilience, courage; the subtitle of *Lonek’s Journey* is “The True Story of a Boy’s Escape to Freedom” embodies all of these themes. This is a story of a boy and his family and 1000 orphans who survive a holocaust through resilience and courage and find freedom.

**Setting:** Poland, Russia, Iran, India, and Palestine; story takes place during WWII.

**Point of View:** Lonek, eleven-year-old child and main character; third person

### **Characters:**

**Lonek Jaroslawicz:** an eleven-year-old who is the main character. He and his family lived in Poland during the invasion by the Nazi soldiers.

**Heimek Jaroslawicz:** Lonek’s younger brother

**Papa/Mr. Jaroslawicz:** Lonek’s father

**Mama/Mrs. Jaroslawicz:** Lonek’s mother

**Sosa:** sixteen-year-old live-in babysitter

**Sosa's family:** helped hide the Jaroslawicz family

**Lonek's uncle:** Lonek's family lived with his uncle's family in Lvov

**The NKVD:** Russian Secret Police

**Joseph Stalin:** Russian dictator

**Commandant:** head of the Siberian slave camp

**General Wladislaw Anders:** famous Polish general who had been captured and imprisoned by the Russians when they invaded Poland in 1939 and in August, 1941 is freed to guide 100,000 Poles out of Russia

**Counselors:** assisted children in orphanage to get out of Russia

**David Laor:** Head counselor; helped create a comfortable routine in camp at Teheran

**Kraus:** Lonek's friend in Teheran

**Conflict:** The major conflict is external. It is survival during WWII. Lonek and his family try to survive during the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and subsequently the Russian slave labor camp in Siberia.

**Conflict Resolution:** Lonek is eventually separated from his family, but after a one-year journey arrives in Palestine where he is safe.

**Genre:** Non-fiction

**Interest Level:** Grades 5 - 9

**Reading Level:** 5.7

**Read-Aloud Passages:**

Chapter 7: pp. 50 – 52; this passage describes the horrid conditions on the train taking them to the Siberian slave camp.

Chapter 9: pp. 58 – 62; this passage the unspeakable living conditions in Gulag or Siberian slave camp.

**If you like this, you will like:** *My Bridges of Hope* by Livia Bitton-Jackson; *Farewell to Manzanar* by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston; *Children of the River* by Linda Crew