

Paula Goodwin  
Education L530  
June 29, 2008

## **YHBA Novel Resource**

Author-Jennifer Roy  
Title-Yellow Star  
Copyright date-2006  
Publisher-Marshall Cavendish Children's Books

### Author's Background

Jennifer Roy's homepage is <http://www.jenniferroy.com/>. Jennifer Roy is an acclaimed author of many awards such as the 2006 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, 2007 Sydney Taylor Book Awards Honor Book and the 2007 ALA Notable Children's Book Award. Jennifer Roy is a frequent speaker at schools, workshops and seminars. She has published over thirty books for children and young adults. She is a former Gifted and Talented teacher as well as Special Education. Jennifer Roy loves to write. Her twin sister, Julia Devillers, is also an author. She lives in Upstate New York with her husband, Gregory, and their young son.

Jennifer Roy is also author of "You Can Write" a series of books on writing techniques, Israel: Discovering Cultures, Norman Rockwell: Life of an Artist, many Educational Workbooks for McGraw-Hill.

Jennifer Roy's email address is [jenniferroy@jenniferroy.com](mailto:jenniferroy@jenniferroy.com). The picture below is the most recent picture of Jennifer Roy.

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Jennifer Roy's connection to the book, Yellow Star, started when she learned her aunt Sylvia was one of the twelve children who survived the Lodz ghetto in Poland during World War II. She began by asking her aunt about her experiences. No one in her family liked to talk about the Holocaust even though much of her family lived through it. Her father survived the Holocaust but refused to speak of it and took his secrets to his death. Jennifer Roy spoke with her Aunt Sylvia over the telephone, long distance. She tape-recorded her conversations with her aunt and while it started off slowly, her aunt started to remember her past experiences like it was yesterday. The connection to this story for Jennifer Roy is very personal because she grew up as a Jewish child being taught to never forget the Holocaust but never what actually happened until she came to understand through her aunt's memories.

### Annotation and Genre

Yellow Star is based on a true story about a young girl who was one of twelve children that survived the ghetto of Lodz, Poland during World War II. This book is written in prose so Jennifer Roy can retell her aunt Sylvia's story about growing up as a young Jewish girl. When Sylvia was four and a half years old, Sylvia's family was sent to live in a small part of the city called a ghetto in Lodz, Poland. Later that year, the Nazi guards built

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barbed-wire fence around it and posted Nazi guards to keep everyone inside. Yellow Star tells a story how a young girl survived against all odds when all the other children was rounded up and sent to concentration camps. Somehow Sylvia's family was able to hide her for three years after the deportation of all children from the Lodz ghetto. Yellow Star is considered Young Adult Historical Fiction.

### Point of View

The novel, Yellow Star, is told in first person, as if Jennifer Roy's aunt is telling the story herself.

### Theme

The main theme of Yellow Star is survival. While there are many universal themes in this book such as abuse of power, courage, prejudice and religion, survival seems to be the overall theme of this book. Sylvia's family needs to stay together at all cost and survive by any means. The first step of this family's survival is to have enough food for the family. When the family first moves to the ghetto they realize that their oldest daughter needs to work so they change her documents which shows that Dora is fourteen-years-old instead of twelve. Since they will now bring in more money this not only changes the status of her age but she is no longer considered a child. Dora's age will come into play later in the story when the Nazi's come to look for any children and will be sending any children they find on the train out of Lodz, Poland. Next, the family works as a unit so they can keep all family members safe from the Nazi's. While other children are being sent to concentration camps and other Jews are being shot and killed, Sylvia is confined to the inside of her apartment and later the cellar. The theme of survival is a constant reminder to everyone who is Jewish during this time period and for the rest of their lives.

The title of this book, Yellow Star, is associated with the six-pointed Star of David. It's a yellow star that all children and adults must wear to show people that they are Jewish. Many Jewish people were treated like criminals when they were seen out wearing this patch on their clothing. At the end of this story, though, the six-pointed yellow star on their clothing is what saved them from being killed when the Russians bombed the ghetto.

## Conflict and Conflict Resolution

The main conflict in the book, *Yellow Star*, is between the Jewish people and the Nazi's. This book is based on a true story of a young Jewish girl whose family is forced to move into the ghetto in Lodz, Poland. Each family member must be careful because the Germans are killing thousands of Jewish people on a daily basis. As the story progresses, the Perlmutter's must survive through starvation and the threat of Sylvia being ripped from their family. Two years after the Perlmutter's moved to the ghetto, the Nazi's took all the Jewish children from the ghetto's and sent them on a train to the concentration camps.

This conflict was resolved when the Russians, Americans, Australians and the British became allies and forced the Germans to surrender. On January 19, 1945 the Jewish people of Lodz, Poland was liberated when the Russians bombed the ghetto that they had been forced to live and work at for the past five and half years. The few that survived was saved because of their yellow six-pointed Star of David that they were forced to wear on their clothing. When the Russians were bombing the ghetto from the planes, they saw many yellow stars glowing in the courtyard and they knew that there were Jewish people alive. Out of over thirty-five thousand Jewish people that entered the ghetto at Lodz, Poland, only eight hundred adults and twelve children survived.

## Characters

Sylvia Perlmutter-Sylvia is the main character in this book. At the beginning of this story, Sylvia Perlmutter was four and half years old and at the end she was ten years old. This book is based off the memories of her experiences during this time period when her family was forced to live at the ghetto of Lodz, Poland by the German Nazi's during World War II. Sylvia is a young, shy Jewish girl. She is the daughter of Isaac and Haya Perlmutter.

Isaac Perlmutter-Isaac is the father of Sylvia and her sister, Dora. At the beginning of the story, Isaac has a good job as a salesman and is living in a nice apartment in Lodz, Poland. When the Nazi's force all Jewish people to move into the ghetto, Isaac must protect his family at all costs. Isaac is a very brave and intelligent man. He has earned the trust of many Jewish people in the ghetto.

Haya Perlmutter-Haya is Syvia Perlmutter's mother. Haya is a strong Jewish woman who loves her family. She is a hard worker and will do anything to protect her family. When Haya knows there is not enough food for the whole family, she gives her daughters the food and goes without so her children will not starve. A few years after the Perlmutter's are liberated from the ghetto at Lodz, Poland Haya dies from cancer.

Dora Perlmutter-Dora is Syvia's sister. When the story begins, Dora is twelve-years-old but when the family needs more money for food, Dora's father and mother change her records so the Nazi's will think she is fourteen and she can work. In the beginning, Dora and Syvia is typical younger sister versus older sister who likes to argue. When the Nazi's force the Jewish people to hand over all the children, Dora begins to realize the special bond that she holds with her younger sister and wants to protect her at all cost.

Uncle Haskel-Uncle Haskel is Syvia's father's brother. His main contribution to this story is when Syvia and her family are forced to leave the ghetto and are walking towards the train bound for the concentration camp, Haskel runs up to Isaac Perlmutter and tells him that the children can hide in a cellar and the rest of the family can work at the workhouse. Haskel is the father of "Baby" Isaac.

"Baby" Isaac-Isaac was born at the ghetto of Lodz, Poland during the war with the Germans. His main role is when the children are forced to hide in the cellar. He was three years old and was a very quiet child. Isaac and his mother and father survived.

Hava-Hava is a little girl at the beginning of the story. Syvia, Hava and Itka like to play dolls together since they were forced to live in the ghetto. Not long after, Hava goes missing when she was walking down the street. She is presumed to be dead.

Itka-Syvia's other friend, Itka, likes to play dolls also. Itka is seen leaving on the children's train bound for the concentration camp and is presumed to be dead.

Chaim Rumkowski-Rumkowski is supposedly leader of the Jews in the ghetto of Lodz, Poland. He is helping the Nazi's so he does not get killed

himself. In the end, Rumkowksi and his new wife are sent to the concentration camp and they died.

### Setting

The book opens during the fall of 1939 and the Perlmutter's are living in Lodz, Poland in an apartment. Right away, the family is forced to move to the ghetto, a small section of the city that was swarming with infectious disease. Not long after they move into a small two room apartment, they Nazi's put a barbed-wire fence around the ghetto and posted Nazi guards with guns so no Jewish people could escape. This ghetto in Lodz, Poland is where the rest of the story takes place. It is a functioning small little city to itself until thousands of Jewish people are sent there and it becomes a crowded, disease ridden city.

### Interest Level and Reading Level

The interest level for Yellow Star is 6-8 and the reading level is 6.1. The lexile is 710L.

### Booktalk

The year is 1939 and there is a chill in the air. You are four and half year old and your whole family is being sent to what the Nazi's call the ghetto in Lodz, Poland. One minute you are living in a nice warm apartment and the next minute you are in a dirty disease infected part of town. It's cold and there's not much food. Everyone is saying that since your family is Jewish you have to live here. Now they are putting up barbed wire fence and killing other Jewish people in the streets. You are told to not look at the guards by the fence or you will be killed. You are hungry and food is getting more and scarcer. Now they are taking all the children away and you are told to hide in a hole in the graveyard. Your family's survival depends on you doing this one request. What would you do?

## Discussion Questions

### Part One

#### Pre-Reading Questions

1. What year did Germany invade Poland?
2. Who was the leader of Germany?
3. What was the name of the German soldiers?
4. Describe the Star of David.
5. What does kosher mean?

#### During Reading Questions

1. How old is Sylvia at the beginning of the story? (page 3)
2. Where is the family forced to move? (page 8)
3. Why did Sylvia's family go to Warsaw? (page 6)
4. Describe the ghetto? (page 8)
5. What is Sylvia's father's new job? (page 14)
6. Why did Dora lie about her age? (page 16)

#### Post-Reading Questions

1. Why did the Nazi's put up the fence?
2. Who are Hava and Itka?
3. Who is Rumkowski and what is his job?
4. What are ration cards?
5. What is winter like for the family?

### Part Two

#### Pre-Reading Questions

1. Where is the Lodz ghetto?
2. What countries did the Nazi's invade?
3. Which side did the United States side with at the beginning of the war?
4. What year did Japan attack Pearl Harbor?
5. Why was fuel in short supply?

#### During Reading Questions

1. What happened to Hava? (page 38)

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2. Why did Sylvia have to stay inside all day? (page 41)
3. Why does Sylvia have to keep her eyes pointed to the ground when she walks past the fence? (page 46)
4. What happened to Sylvia's doll? (page 47)
5. What happens if a person goes up to the fence or through it? (page 47)
6. What does Sylvia do when her doll is gone? (page 48)
7. Why is Sylvia alone in the apartment and what does she do? (page 51)

#### Post-Reading Questions

1. Why are pets not allowed in the ghetto?
2. Why would a Polish person call the police if they saw a Jewish person?
3. Who lives over by the fence that Dora and Sylvia visit?
4. Why is Dora being nicer to Sylvia?
5. Why is Sylvia's skin pale?

#### Part Three

#### Pre-Reading Questions

1. Why would the Nazis begin deporting people from the ghetto?
2. How would they transport the Jewish people?
3. What is a concentration camp?
4. Why would the Nazis want to take the children from the ghetto?
5. What is an extermination camp?

#### During Reading Questions

1. What is the significant of the Wedding Invitations? (page 57)
2. What happened to Itka? (page 59)
3. What is the new announcement that the Nazis have made? (page 62)
4. What did the Nazis tell the Jewish people about where the children are going? (page 63)
5. Why are the Nazis banging on doors and breaking into houses? (page 64)
6. What happens if a mother or father will not hand over the child? (page 66)
7. Where do Sylvia and her father escape to? (page 69)

#### Post-Reading Questions

1. What does Sylvia's father tell her to do?

2. Is Sylvia along throughout the night?
3. What does Sylvia's father mean when he says "A Bed Fit for a King"?
4. Why can Sylvia and her father not go home in the morning?
5. Who are the others in the cemetery?
6. Why are Sylvia and her father spending the nights out?
7. What are some of the places they have to stay?
8. What happened to all the children?
9. What are "dust dolls"?
10. What is Dora making at the factory?

## Part Four

### Pre-Reading Questions

1. Did the Nazis ever lie?
2. What was the capital city of Poland and was there a ghetto there?
3. Will the Jewish people ever rise up against the Germans?
4. What grade would Dora and Sylvia be in this year?
5. What does Sylvia do in the apartment all day?

### During Reading Questions

1. What is a resistant fighter? (page 96)
2. Why is the family so weak? (page 97)
3. What do the Jewish people steal? (page 95)

### Post-Reading Questions

1. What did Rumkowski tell the Jews?
2. How many factories are there in the Lodz ghetto?
3. What did the Nazis do to the Warsaw ghetto?
4. What did the Nazis do about the newborn babies?

## Part Five

### Pre-Reading Questions

1. When does the war end?
2. Who wins the war, the Germans or the allies?
3. What will become of the Ghetto?

### During Reading Questions

1. What happens to Rumkowski and his new wife? (page 100)

2. Who are the allies? (page 103)
3. What does Isaac do for Mina? (page 105)
4. Where was Mina at? (page 107)
5. What does the Nazi's tell the Jewish people to do? (page 111)
6. What is the list? (page 117)
7. Why doesn't Sylvia's family make the list? (page 119)
8. What does Papa's gut tell him? (page 120)
9. Where are the children taken to? (page 124)
10. Who is "Baby" Isaac? (page 125)

### Post-Reading Questions

1. What does Sylvia wish she could do?
2. What happens to Sylvia in the cellar?
3. What kind of jobs is Sylvia's family doing?
4. What happens when the Germans find the children?
5. How children survive the ghetto of Lodz?
6. Where do Sylvia and her family hide?
7. Where do the Germans go to and why do they leave?
8. Why didn't the courtyard get bombed?

### Language (Spelling/Vocabulary)

1. kosher-Kosher is the diet that Jews conform to (page 4)
2. muffler-a scarf worn around a woman's neck for warmth (page 7)
3. shiva-a period of mourning for a family member that has died (page 31)
4. Judenalteste-elder of the Jews (page 33)
5. deportations-the act of expelling a person from the country or area (page 55)
6. summons-an authoritative demand (page 59)
7. retaliated-fight back (page 94)
8. legitimate-true (page 99)
9. chaotic-completely confusing or disordered (page 147)
10. lingering-will not go away (page 162)
11. hoax-trick (page 190)

## Indiana Academic Standards

### Grade Six

6.1.4 Understand unknown words in informational texts by using word, sentence, and paragraph clues to determine meaning.

6.2.4 Clarify an understanding of texts by creating outlines, notes, diagrams, summaries, or reports.

6.2.7 Make reasonable statements and conclusions about a text, supporting them with evidence from the text.

6.2.8 Identify how an author's choice of words, examples, and reasons are used to persuade the reader of something.

6.3.2 Analyze the effect of the qualities of the character on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.

6.3.3 Analyze the influence of the setting on the problem and its resolution.

6.3.5 Identify the speaker and recognize the difference between first-person (the narrator tells the story from the "I" perspective) and third-person (the narrator tells the story from an outside perspective) narration.

6.3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.

6.3.9 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.

### Grade Seven

7.1.3 Clarify word meanings through the use of definition, example, restatement, or through the use of contrast stated in the text.

7.3.2 Identify events that advance the plot and determine how each event explains past or present action or foreshadows (provides clues to) future action.

7.3.3 Analyze characterization as shown through a character's thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions; the narrator's description; and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.

7.3.4 Identify and analyze themes — such as bravery, loyalty, friendship, and loneliness — which appear in many different works.

7.3.8 Analyze the influence of the setting on the problem and its resolution.

7.3.9 Analyze the relevance of setting (places, times, customs) to mood, tone, and meaning of text.

## Grade Eight

8.3.2 Evaluate the structural elements of the plot, such as subplots, parallel episodes, and climax; the plot’s development; and the way in which conflicts are (or are not) addressed and resolved.

8.3.3 Compare and contrast the motivations and reactions of literary characters from different historical eras confronting either similar situations and conflicts or similar hypothetical situations.

8.3.4 Analyze the importance of the setting to the mood, tone, or meaning of the text.

8.3.5 Identify and analyze recurring themes (such as good versus evil) that appear frequently across traditional and contemporary works.

8.3.9 Analyze the relevance of setting (places, times, customs) to mood, tone, and meaning of text.

8.3.7 Analyze a work of literature, showing how it reflects the heritage, traditions, attitudes, and beliefs of its author.

### Anticipation Statements

Agree	Disagree	Topic: Yellow Star
		Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in 1951.
		Hitler was the leader of Germany during World War II.
		Jewish people were sent to ghettos and concentration camps.
		Jewish people were free to leave the ghettos anytime that they wanted to.

		World War II ends when the Japanese surrenders.
		Hitler surrenders and dies at a concentration camp.

## Read Aloud Passages

### Prologue

“In 1939, the Germans invaded the town of Lodz, Poland. They forced all of the Jewish people to live in a small part of the city called a ghetto. They built a barbed-wire fence around it and posted Nazi guards to keep everyone inside it. Two hundred and seventy thousand people lived in the Lodz ghetto. In 1945, the war ended. The Germans surrendered, and the ghetto was liberated. Out of more than a quarter of a million people, only about 800 walked out of the ghetto. Of those who survived, only twelve were children. I was one of the twelve.” *–Excerpt from interview with Sylvia Perlmutter*

I chose this paragraph because I think that it sums up Sylvia’s whole story. I think that it’s important for young children reading this book that while there are bad things that happened to Jewish people that the main character, Sylvia, did not die. While there are horrific things that went on, Sylvia describes her experiences from a child’s perspective. Many Jewish people hardly spoke of one of the worst times in history but now they are starting to talk about their past and what happened to them and their family members. Sometimes just a number doesn’t speak to the reader but with the names and personal experiences that Sylvia had, it seems all the more real.

### Part Five

“Amazing! What luck that he saw us. Thank God he is Jewish.”

People are talking all around me.  
I look down at my yellow star  
which has been patched on my front  
for so many years.

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I had forgotten it was there.  
Many of us also had stars  
on our back, too,  
to show we are Jews.” (Page 220)

I chose this paragraph due to the significance of the six-pointed yellow Star of David that Jews were forced to wear by the Nazis. The Germans thought this would be a good way for them to tell apart the Germans from the Jews but at least in this story, this small yellow star was the force that saved them from being killed. This paragraph takes place on the last night that Sylvia’s family is being held at the ghetto in Lodz, Poland. Her family and other Jews are trying to shield themselves and their loved ones while the Russians are bombing the ghetto and killing the German Nazis. The Jews formed a large circle formation in the courtyard and when the Russians flew over the ghetto they saw the glowing yellow stars when they thought no other Jews were still alive.

### Read-Alikes

#### Ann Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl by *Ann Frank*

Born in 1929, Anne Frank received a blank diary on her 13th birthday, just weeks before she and her family went into hiding in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam. Her marvelously detailed, engagingly personal entries chronicle 25 trying months of claustrophobic, quarrelsome intimacy with her parents, sister, a second family, and a middle-aged dentist who has little tolerance for Anne's vivacity.

#### Child of the Warsaw Ghetto by *David A. Adler*

This is a story of the Warsaw Ghetto told through the eyes of Froim Baum, who was born in Warsaw on April 15, 1926. After his father died, he was placed in Janusz Korczak's orphanage, where he spent some of the happiest years of his childhood. When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Froim and other Jews were forced by Nazi soldiers to live in a walled-off part of the city. Froim sneaked outside the walls to the market, where he

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bought food and smuggled it in to his family and friends. A few years later, he was sent to the death camps. He managed to survive until he was liberated at Dachau by American soldiers at the end of the war. Mr. Adler hopes that by reading Froim's story, people will be reminded of those millions who perished.

A Lone Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by *Ishmael Beah*

This is how wars are fought now: by children, hopped-up on drugs and wielding AK-47s. Children have become soldiers of choice. In the more than fifty conflicts going on worldwide, it is estimated that there are some 300,000 child soldiers. Ishmael Beah used to be one of them.

A Teenager in Hitler's Death Camps by *Benny Grunfeld*

When Benny Grünfeld was 16 years old, he and his family were forced from their home and sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. His life soon became as simple as being directed left or right—to the gas chamber or to the camp to work as a slave laborer. His father and younger brother Alexander went left; Benny and his older brother Herman went right. It's the tale of his struggle to survive, through debilitating hunger and inhumane abuse. *A Teenager in Hitler's Death Camps* is not just one man's story; it is a testament to the human will and a reminder of the evils of which humanity is capable.

Across the Curriculum Connections

History

The first activity that students will complete is to research the history and meaning of the six-pointed Star of David. Answer questions such as: Who invented this star? Why were Jewish people made to wear this star? What does the six points stand for?

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6.12 Describe and compare the beliefs, the spread and the influence of religions throughout Europe and Mesoamerica.

6.1.4 Describe and explain the development and organization of political, cultural, social and economic systems in Europe and the Americas. (Individuals, Society and Culture)

6.1.18 Create and compare timelines that identify major people, events and developments in the history of individual civilizations and/or countries that comprise Europe and the Americas.

6.1.22 Differentiate between fact and interpretation in historical accounts and explain the meaning of historical passages by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, and relating them to outcomes that followed and gaps in the historical record.

6.1.23 Form research questions and use a variety of information resources\* to obtain, evaluate and present data on people, cultures and developments in Europe and the Americas.

Describe the historical origins, central beliefs and spread of major religions.

Identify and describe recent conflicts and political issues between nations or cultural groups.

7.1.21 Analyze cause-and-effect relationships, bearing in mind multiple causation in the role of individuals, beliefs and chance in history.

Analyze different interests and points of view of individuals and groups involved in the abolitionist, feminist and social reform movements, and in sectional conflicts.

## Language Arts

The second activity that students will complete for this novel will be to write a character analysis of all four Perlmutter family members. Describe their physical features. How do they contribute to the family? How do they advance the plot?

6.2.4 Clarify an understanding of texts by creating outlines, notes, diagrams, summaries, or reports.

6.2.7 Make reasonable statements and conclusions about a text, supporting them with evidence from the text.

7.3.2 Identify events that advance the plot and determine how each event explains past or present action or foreshadows (provides clues to) future action.

7.3.3 Analyze characterization as shown through a character's thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions; the narrator's description; and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.

8.3.3 Compare and contrast the motivations and reactions of literary characters from different historical eras confronting either similar situations and conflicts or similar hypothetical situations.

8.3.4 Analyze the importance of the setting to the mood, tone, or meaning of the text.

### Resources

<http://www.jenniferroy.com/books.htm>

Audio Version of Yellow Star

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Narrated By: Christina Moore

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## Bibliography

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<http://web.ushmm.org/site/apps/ka/ec/product.asp?c=ftILl5PMKoG&b=2264499&en=cILNK3OLLbIWkdNOJaITJaNZLmJZikOZJnJXJgP6IzG&ProductID=568365> *A Teenager in Hitler's Death Camps* by *Benny Grunfeld*

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