



## Yellow Star

*By Jennifer Roy*

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"In 1945 the war ended. The Germans surrendered, and the ghetto was liberated. Out of over a quarter of a million people, about 800 walked out of the ghetto. Of those who survived, only twelve were children. I was one of the twelve." For more than fifty years after the war, Sylvia, like many Holocaust survivors, did not talk about her experiences in the Lodz ghetto in Poland. She buried her past in order to move forward. But finally she decided it was time to share her story, and so she told it to her niece, who has re-told it here using free verse inspired by her aunt. This is the true story of Sylvia Perlmutter—a story of courage, heartbreak, and finally survival despite the terrible circumstances in which she grew up. A timeline, historical notes, and an author's note are included.

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### Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 4–8—Jennifer Roy's partially fictionalized retelling (Marshall Cavendish, 2006) of her Aunt Sylvia's life in 1939 Poland recounts the true experiences of a 4-year-old child who is forced into a well-guarded ghetto with nearly 300,000 Lodz Jews who lived in fear, poverty, and starvation. Many years after the end of WWII, Sylvia Perlmutter was able to share with her niece the terrible story of the family's ordeal during the Holocaust. In free verse form, Roy writes from the perspective of a child from 1930 to 1945, bringing to life what it was like to live in the Jewish ghetto. Of all those incarcerated in Lodz, only 12 children and 800 adults survived the war. Christina Moore does a brilliant job as narrator, perfectly voicing Sylvia, her father, and all the other people. From just listening to the audiobook, it is not apparent that the book is written in free verse. A must for all Holocaust collections.—*B. Allison Gray, John Jermain Memorial Library, Sag Harbor, NY*

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From [Booklist](#)

\*Starred Review\* Only 12 children survived the Lodz ghetto, and Roy's aunt Sylvia was one of them. But for more than 50 years, Sylvia kept her experience to herself: "It was something nobody talked about." Roy didn't know, and she admits that she didn't want to know. She always avoided Holocaust history. She was afraid of it; when she was growing up, there was no Holocaust curriculum, no discussion—just those images of atrocity, piles of bones, and skeletal survivors being liberated. Her father, too, was a survivor, but he seldom spoke of those years, and with his death, his story was lost. But a few years ago, Roy's aunt began to talk about Lodz, and based on taped phone interviews, Roy wrote her story, presenting it from the first-person viewpoint of a child, Sylvia, in simple, urgent free verse in the present tense. Each section begins with a brief historical introduction, and there is a detailed time line at the end of the book.

Sylvia is four years old in 1939, when the Germans invade Poland and start World War II. A few months later, her family is forced into the crowded Lodz ghetto, with more than a quarter of a million other Jews. At the end of the war, when Sylvia is 10, only about 800 Jews remain—only 12 of them are children. Sylvia remembers daily life: yellow stars, illness, starvation, freezing cold, and brutal abuse, with puddles of red blood everywhere, and the terrifying arbitrariness of events ("like the story of a boy / who went out for bread / and was shot by a guard / who didn't like the way the boy / looked at him"). When the soldiers first go from door to door, "ripping children from their parents' arms" and dragging them away, her father hides her in the cemetery. For years thereafter, she's not allowed to go outside. In 1944 the ghetto is emptied, except for a few Jews kept back to clean up, including Sylvia's father, who keeps his family with him through courage, cunning, and luck. As the Nazis face defeat, Sylvia discovers a few others hidden like her, "children of the cellar." When the Russians liberate the ghetto, she hears one soldier speak Yiddish, and the family hears of the genocide, the trains that went to death camps. At last they learn of the enormity of the tragedy: neighbors, friends, and cousins—all dead. There's much to think t and talk about as the words bring the history right into the present. *Hazel Rochman*

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About the Author

Jennifer Roy is the author of more than thirty books for children and young adults, including *Israel: Discovering Cultures*. A former teacher, she holds a BS in Psychology and an MA in Elementary Education. *Yellow Star* is based on the childhood of Jennifer's aunt Sylvia, who provided extensive interviews as the author was writing this book. Jennifer lives in New York.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

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