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# My Family For The War



## **Synopsis**

Winner of the Mildred L. Batchelder medal for most outstanding children's book in translation. Escaping Nazi Germany on the kindertransport changes one girl's life forever. At the start of World War II, ten-year-old Franziska Mangold is torn from her family when she boards the kindertransport in Berlin, the train that secretly took nearly 10,000 children out of Nazi territory to safety in England. Taken in by strangers who soon become more like family than her real parents, Frances (as she is now known) courageously pieces together a new life for herself because she doesn't know when or if she'll see her true family again. Against the backdrop of war-torn London, Frances struggles with questions of identity, family, and love, and these experiences shape her into a dauntless, charming young woman. Originally published in Germany, Anne Voorhoeve's award-winning novel is filled with humor, danger, and romance.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 900L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 416 pages

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Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (13 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #420,667 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 inÂ  Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Jewish #26 inÂ  Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Emigration & Immigration #91 inÂ  Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Holocaust

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

Preteen Ziska Mangold and her best friend Bekka practice their survival plans - the routes they will take to escape bullies, emboldened by the increasingly anti-Jewish sentiment in Germany. Ziska's family is more Christian than Jewish, but that doesn't matter when the persecution begins. As Jews seek safe havens, the Mangolds must decide whether to split up or stay together. "Ziskele" secures

a place on a Kindertransport, and the greater part of this well-written book details Ziska (now re-christened Frances) as she adjusts to her life in a London, and her subsequent evacuation to the countryside. I had expected a straightforward story, perhaps with a feel good "happily united" ending, but Voorhoeve didn't take that route. Ziska/Frances does a few things she isn't overly proud of, and the adults aren't perfect either. Her adoptive family is loving, and Frances matures under their care, torn between the new family and friends she comes to love, and her parents and dear Bekka, left behind to an unknown fate. The book is not in any way a "downer" but neither does it take the easy narrative for Ziska/Frances. Suggest to intelligent readers, grades 8 and up. Note: MY FAMILY FOR THE WAR won the ALA's Batchelder Award, awarded to the most outstanding children's book originally published in a language other than English in a country other than the United States, and subsequently translated into English for publication in the United States. About me: I'm a middle school/high school librarian. How I got this book: purchased for the library.

This book, a great historical/coming-of-age novel for readers of all ages, starts out innocently enough. Ten-year-old Ziska and her friend Bekka, best friends living with their Jewish families in Berlin, are practicing their 'survival plan,' part of which involves jumping from Ziska's third-floor bedroom window into the branches of a tree. The tone darkens quickly, with the hateful words of a downstairs neighbor woman, who has no love for Jews. Ziska also endures a savage attack by bullies, but not without giving a little back, then later she watches in horror as the Nazis kick in her family's door, beat her father bloody, and try to apprehend her. She escapes by jumping from her window into the tree. And that's only the beginning. I will not give away more of the plot, except to echo other reviewers who mentioned that the story does not settle for easy answers or pat, happy endings. That said, the book's undercurrent of hope, and Ziska's own unbreakable spirit, will have readers cheering for her.

4.5 stars Take a young Jewish girl in Berlin, add World War II and the Holocaust. I thought it was going to be an intensely tragic book, and instead it was fascinating, humorous in places, and uplifting, despite a generous sprinkling of fear and tragedy. Franziska, aged about 11, doesn't even know she's Jewish - her parents and grandparents, even, were all Christian. This doesn't matter to the Nazis - her father is beaten, the family is terrorized, and her mother "abandons" her by getting Ziska put on one of the last Kindertransport trains to leave the country. In London, she walks into her foster home, an Orthodox Jewish family, wearing a cross necklace. This is the beginning of much culture shock, as Frances slowly comes to adjust to, even love, her new family. While still worried

about her family of origin, she and her new family are not safe either, as London becomes a major bombing target. Eventually Frances is uprooted yet again, sent to the countryside with other London children, to a foster home with a very different atmosphere. Ziska/Frances is a compelling, far from perfect character, but she loves, and she survives, not without some grief and laughter along the way. I highly recommend this book, for readers of all ages.

Really brought to life what Jews went thru during the war and how emotional a time it was. Great read

This novel is a stunning portrayal of an underrepresented part of World War II. Epic, heartwarming, tension-filled, romantic, and hopeful. A must-read!

I loved this book. My favorite books to read are from this time period and this book filled the bill. It was a book club pick and we all loved it.

I have read many books regarding the kindertransports and I have also read many holocaust survivor biographies. This author did a wonderful job weaving facts with fiction that I forgot which genre it belonged to. She cleverly allowed us to share the emotional conflicts facing a 10 year old child who was removed from war torn Germany and placed in a safer environment in England. She wrestles with questions of safety, loyalty to her old family, love for her foster family, and what her culture and religion means to her. The book moves from one chapter to another smoothly and I found myself loving the characters. Would strongly recommend this book!

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