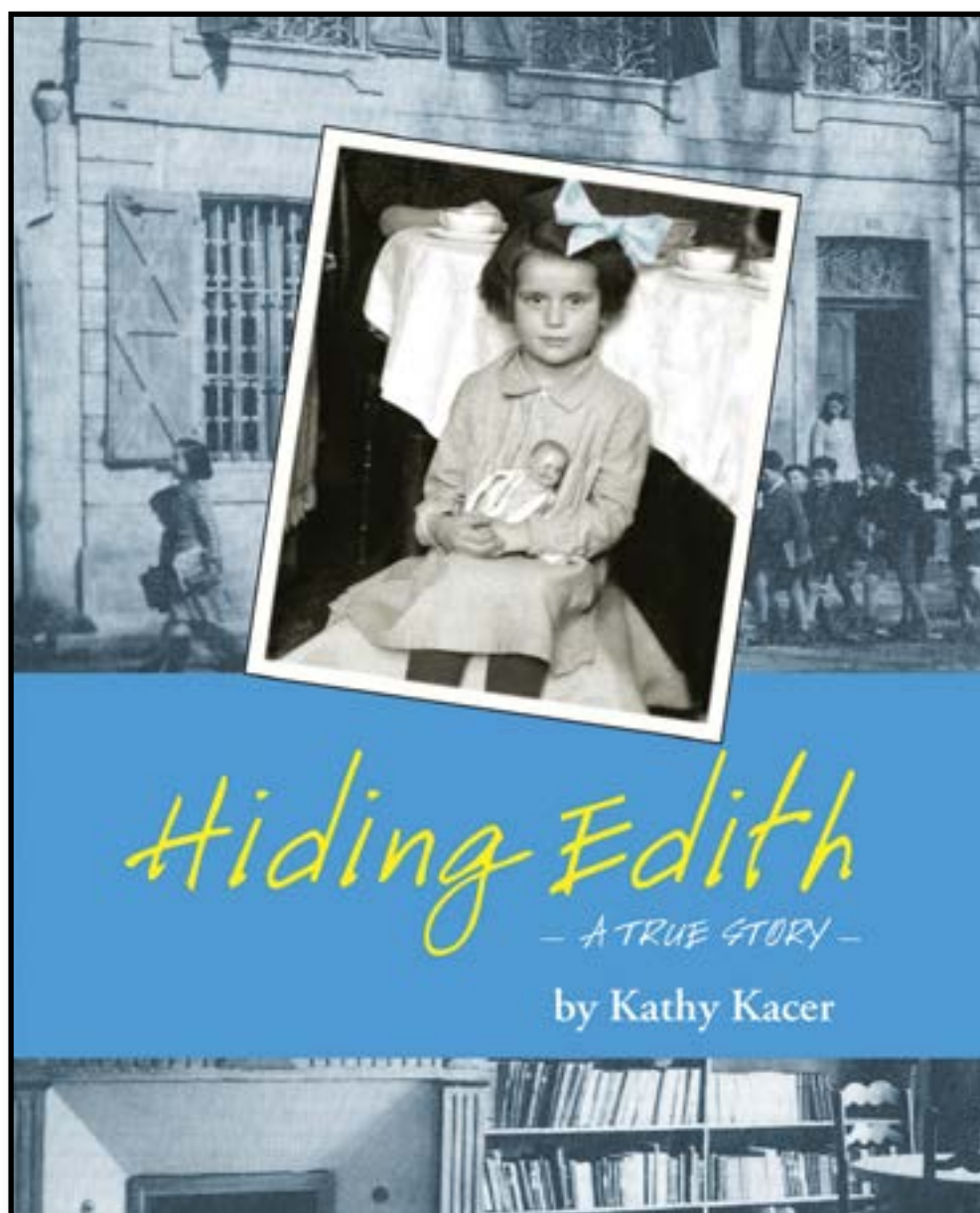


Grades 4 – 7; Ages 9 – 12



Hiding Edith

Written by Kathy Kacer

Guide written by Larry Swartz

Teacher's Guide

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Summary

The true story of Edith Schwalb, a young Jewish girl who was saved from the Nazis by the courage of the entire French village of Moissac.

Edith's story is remarkable not only for her own bravery, but for the bravery of those that helped her: an entire village, including its mayor and citizenry, heroically conspired to conceal the presence of hundreds of Jewish children who lived in the safe house. The children went to the local school, roamed the streets and ate good food, all without having to worry about concealing their Jewish identity. And during Nazi raids, the children camped out until the coast was clear.

Hiding Edith details not only the amazing courage and struggles of one young girl, but the inspiring spirit of the people she met. Shatta and Bouli Simon, the couple who ran the house, taught the children everything they needed to survive, including how to change their identities in new hiding places once conditions in Moissac became too risky. Sarah Kupfer, another Jewish child in hiding, became Edith's closest friend, sharing both birthdays and bomb attacks, losses and love. And Mutti, Edith's mother, sacrificed everything she could for her children—even the comfort of having them close at hand.

About the Author

Kathy Kacer is an award-winning author who has written more than twenty books that focus on stories of the Holocaust. Her work includes picture books, historical fiction, and nonfiction writing. As a child of Holocaust survivors, Kathy Kacer is a passionate advocate of sharing Holocaust stories and has claimed that she feels a personal responsibility to collect stories and pass them on to the next generation. In the book *Teaching Tough Topics* by Larry Swartz, Kathy Kacer writes, “I think that the lessons we can learn—lessons about hatred and power, but also lessons about compassion, strength, and selflessness are lessons for the ages. Remember this: Every time you remember the history, and every time you talk about it, you are honouring someone who lived and possibly perished during that time. You are giving meaning to their lives. And that is a remarkable thing” (2020, p. 69).

Learning Goals

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Gain information about the threat of the Nazis
- Read and learn about a true story of a young girl who was separated from her family and went into hiding to avoid being captured by the Gestapo
- Consider the impact of being forced to conceal your name, your identity, and your faith
- Build understanding of the kindness of bravery of citizens who took risks and protected Jewish people during World War II
- Learn about a community of French citizens who conspired to hide the existence of hundreds of Jewish children
- Interpret photographs that support (and extend) verbal text
- Ask questions and build inquiry into the history of the Holocaust
- Reflect on the emotional connections we make when reading a text
- Share their responses to the text through reading, writing, discussion, and the arts

Vocabulary

persecution (p. 6): hostility and ill treatment, particularly on the basis of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or political beliefs.

Gestapo (p. 12): the official secret police of Nazi Germany and in German-occupied Europe. The English translation of the Gestapo is “Secret State Police.”

Sabbath (p. 59): a day of religious observance. Sabbath takes place from Friday evening to Saturday evening for Jewish people, and on Sunday for most Christians.

***Shabbat shalom* (p. 59):** a Hebrew greeting said on the Sabbath by Jewish people to wish each other a peaceful day of rest. “Shabbat” means sabbath in Hebrew, and “shalom” means peace. In other contexts, shalom can mean hello or good-bye.

baptismal certificate (p. 90): a church document stating that the Baptized person received the Sacrament of Baptism.

grubby (p. 107): dirty, grimy condition.

rationing (p. 111): allowing each person to have only a fixed or controlled amount of something, like food.

earshot (p. 112): the range of distance over which someone can hear or be heard.

grandeur (p. 114): impressive style, splendor; high rank or social importance.

jeopardize (p. 116): to put someone or something into a situation where there is potential danger of loss, harm, or failure.

ironic (p. 128): happening in the opposite way to what is expected.

Auschwitz (p. 142): a Nazi concentration camp situation situated in German-occupied Poland during World War II.

Introducing *Hiding Edith*

Activating Prior Knowledge: Sharing Information About the Holocaust

It is important to have a discussion with students before reading the book, to talk about the Holocaust and touch on the fact that some horrible things happened. It would be helpful for the teacher to know if any material contained in this book could remind students of similar traumatic events in their own lives, or events they've heard of in their family history. Inform students that parts of this story contain antisemitism and traumatic events. Remind students that if they get overwhelmed and need to take a break, they can do so. As a teacher, do your own research to be as well-informed as you can. For example, the Montreal Holocaust Museum has resources for teaching about Holocaust: <https://museeholocauste.ca/en/resources-training/teaching-holocaust-middle-high-school/>.

Part A

As a class, discuss:

- What facts do you know about the Holocaust?
- Why did Adolf Hitler introduce laws to limit the freedom of Jewish people? Why did he want to rid the world of Europe's Jews?
- What information do you know about concentration camps?
- What stories or movies have you read or seen about the Holocaust?

Part B

In the introduction to *Hiding Edith*, Kathy Kacer provides an overview of the rise of Hitler.

1. What do we learn about the history of the Holocaust from this introduction?
2. Describe the Jewish Communities in Europe before the war. How did life change for these communities with the rise of Hitler and the war in Europe?
3. What do we learn about the essential need for parents to hide their children? Why was this such a heartbreaking decision?

Research: On the Map

- Display a map of Europe and point out the locations of Austria, Belgium, and France
- Point out the countries where the Nazi Party took power (Germany, Poland, Austria)
- Where is Moissac, France?
- Where do you live in relation to these countries?

Reflecting on Your Identity: What's Your Name?

In order to hide themselves from the Nazis, the Jewish children are forced to be given new identities: new birthplaces, histories, and new names that are not Jewish. Edith changes her name from Edith Schwalb to Edith Servant.

Part A: Names as Artifacts of Our Identities

Have students tell a story about their names by considering the following:

- How did your parents choose your name? Were you named after someone?
- Do you know the meaning of your name?
- Do you have a nickname?
- Do people ever have trouble spelling or pronouncing your first or last name? If so, how does this affect you? If not, how does this affect you?
- Do you like your name?
- If you had to change your name, what name might you consider?

Step One: Students can turn to a partner to tell a story about their names.

Step Two: As a class or in small groups, students can share a story about their name.

Step Three: Students can write a story or poem to tell others about their name.

Part B: Who Are You? Exploring our Identities

In order to survive, Edith and her friends are forced to relinquish their identities. Edith remembers that her sister told her, “Remember who you are” (p. 37).

Ask students: Who are you? What words would you use to describe your identity? Have students consider physical characteristics, personality traits, family, citizenship, languages spoken, talents, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, class.

Writing: Students can make a list of at least ten items that describe their identities.

Discussion Questions

Chapters 1–3: Decision to move into Hiding: Vienna and Belgium

1. In desperation, how did Jewish parents try to keep their children safe?
2. How was life already scary for Edith and her family in 1938?
3. What choices do Edith’s family have about surviving? Why does Edith’s family decide to leave? Where do they go?
4. When Edith goes into hiding to escape persecution, she is allowed to take one item from her room to comfort her when she is alone and frightened (p. 17). What would you take with you from your room for comfort if you were forced to leave home?

Chapters 4–18: Hiding in Moissac, France

What is Edith’s view of running from place to place?

1. Describe Mutti. What are two qualities that Mutti possesses? How does she demonstrate these qualities along the journey?
2. What information do we learn about Moissac, France? How are Jewish children kept safe and protected at Moissac?
3. On page 36, Shatta explains that she receives money from the Jewish scouts of France. She explains that they “follow the philosophy of the scouting movement: be prepared and help your neighbor.” What are some of the strengths of abiding by this philosophy? What are some of the dangers of abiding by this philosophy?
4. Bouli calls the children to explain the purpose of scouting. What is the purpose of scouting? Some examples of possible answers are to learn new skills, to always do your best, to be strong, and to be of service to others. How do these rules apply to your own life? How might you be of service to others?
5. On page 63, how do the people of Moissac help the school and protect the children?

6. Describe Edith and Sarah's relationship. How do they help each other?
7. On page 90, Shatta announces that the children can no longer live openly as Jews. They have to be given new identities, including new birthplaces and new names that are not Jewish. Why is it essential that the children commit to believing in their new identities? How does Edith respond to the necessity of changing her name from Edith Schwalb to Edith Servant?
8. When thinking about her new identity, Edith is reminded of Mutti's plea, "Remember who you are" (p. 37). How are these words important to Edith's survival?
9. When Moissac is no longer safe, the children are placed in convents and homes. What is the most challenging part of these placements? How do they prepare for this move?

Chapters 19–26: Hiding in Ste-Foy-la-Grande

1. What were some of the challenges of living in Ste-Foy-la-Grande?
2. Describe Edith's last move.
3. Why is the death of Edith's father so tragic?
4. An epilogue is a separate, yet essential, part of a book and almost always features a time jump—sometimes a few days later, sometimes decades later. Epilogues show the reader where the characters end up and may resolve unanswered questions. What important information do we learn in this epilogue? What questions are answered in the epilogue? What further questions would you want answered?

Reflecting on *Hiding Edith*

1. What are some emotions you felt as you read Edith's story?
2. Edith wonders if there could really be enough safe spaces for all the Jewish children who were separated from their parents. What are some times that Edith and her friends felt safe? When were their lives unsafe?
3. We learn about many different experiences that Edith encountered when hiding in France. Which of her stories do you think paints a strong picture of Edith's circumstances?

4. What real stories about hiding, from history or in the present, are you familiar with?
5. How did the inclusion of black and white archival photos help to tell this story?
6. Why is learning about the history of hidden Jewish children so important?

Responding to *Hiding Edith*

Visual Arts: Inspecting Photographs

Throughout this book, there are many photographs that show the people and places in Edith's life.

Part A

Take a picture walk through *Hiding Edith* and have students comment on images that they think provide information about this young girl's life.

Discuss:

- What do we learn from this photograph?
- How does this photograph support the verbal text?
- How do the captions help us understand what is captured in the photograph?
- What title might you give the photograph?

Part B

Have students work with one or two classmates to choose four or five images that would effectively tell Edith's story. Students can discuss which order they would arrange the photos and do not need to follow the order in which they appear in the book. Have students create a title for each photograph.

As a follow-up, each group can be paired with another group to compare their choices and why the photographs were important for telling Edith's story.

Extension

If Edith kept a sketchbook, what images would she create to record the events of her life in hiding? Students can choose a sentence or passage from the book and create an illustration that they think might have been included in Edith's sketchbook. Using pencil or charcoal might help to capture the essence of a black and white photo.

Perspective Writing: Thank You Letters

Imagine Edith is now an adult and thinking back on her perilous journey during the war. Select one of the many people who helped her survive at that difficult time (e.g. Shatta Simon, Bouli Simon, Henri Milstein, Oncle Albert, Tante Marie, Sarah Kupfer). Writing from the perspective of Edith, have students write a letter or email to express her gratitude, knowing that this person took risks in helping her. Students can consider Edith's feelings, her concerns, and her hopes and dreams. What memories does she have of her time in hiding? How has life changed for her?

Once completed, students can exchange letters to read different ways Edith has expressed herself. Students can then write a letter back to the Edith from the perspective of the person their classmate wrote to.

Media: Creating Artifacts for a Museum of Remembrance

In the author's note, we learn that a plaque was placed in Moissac to honour the children and counsellors and the people of Moissac. Often, memorials include artifacts and testimonials. Have the students imagine that the survivors created a museum to honour Shatta and Bouli and the survivors and townspeople. Students can create an artifact that would be found in the museum. Examples might include letters, posters, camping maps and notes, illustrations the children might have made, dolls, toys left behind, etc.

A museum exhibit can be set up in the classroom. Each student, in turn, can present their memorial artifact by explaining its significance. Students can write a few sentences for a museum wall label for their artifact.

Style and Language: Responding to the Verbal Text

Part A

Display a list of statements that appear throughout *Hiding Edith*. Have the students independently read the excerpted statements on the following pages from *Hiding Edith*.

Part B

Have students select one of the statements that interests them and write and respond to the questions found on the following pages.

As a follow-up have students work in groups of four or five to share their written responses. Some group members may have chosen the same statement. Students can compare responses.

Part A

- “‘But how can we leave everything behind?’ Mutti cried. ‘Our home, your business—it’s impossible!’ ‘It’s necessary,’ Papa urged” (p. 16).
- “I don’t know, but money talks. I’ll buy Papa’s freedom” (p. 22).
- “*People have been telling me to hurry up my whole life*, thought Edith, pretending not to listen. She was sick of running, first from Vienna, then from Belgium” (p. 27).
- “You must be joking, Edith. The war will never be over” (p. 29).
- “...we follow the philosophy of the scouting movement: be prepared, and help your neighbor” (p. 36).
- “Finally, Mutti gently pulled away and looked deeply into Edith’s eyes. ‘Remember who you are,’ she said. And then she was gone” (p. 37).
- “*Are they really our friends?* Edith wondered. *When the Nazis come, will they keep our secret?*” (p. 79).
- “Besides, what good does it do to worry? There’s nothing more we can do. So relax and enjoy the adventure” (p. 82).
- “There was that word ‘safe’ again, thought Edith. *Could there really be enough safe places for us all?*” (p. 90).
- “‘If this plan is going to work, it’s going to take more than pretending,’ said Eric [...] ‘You’re going to have to believe in your new identity and believe that you are someone else’” (p. 91).
- “‘Practice saying your new names,’ Shatta was saying to the group. ‘From now on you must stop using your old names and refer to one another only by your new ones. [...] Your safety depends on this’” (p. 94).
- “It wasn’t that the Jewish girls were treated badly. No one was deliberately cruel. They were simply ignored. It was almost as if they didn’t exist” (p. 107).
- “Wordlessly, Edith began to cut. Sarah winced each time the scissors sliced through her hair. But she didn’t cry and she didn’t complain. The hair kept falling, almost like tears themselves, cascading in a puddle around her feet” (p. 110).

- “‘But we will not speak again about you being Jewish,’ Monsieur Merleau said, in his deep soothing voice, ‘as it increases the risk to all of us. We are happy to have you here with us. We will keep your secret safe.’ ‘We are only doing what all decent people should do,’ his wife added” (p. 131).
- “The end of the war had brought freedom for everyone. But there were still some, like Sarah, who remained imprisoned in sadness and despair” (p. 139).
- “Edith looked hard at the taller woman. She recognized that walk, knew that face! She flew off the steps and into Mutti’s arms” (p. 140).

Part B

1. Why did you choose this statement?

2. How does this statement make you feel?

3. Does this statement remind you of something that happened to you or someone you know? Explain.

4. How does this statement remind you of anyone or any situation in the world today?

5. What does this sentence tell you about the character or the story?

Drama: Role on the Wall

Role on the Wall uses a large outline of a figure, which is most often displayed on a wall. Space should be allowed to include written thoughts inside and outside the outline. This activity encourages students to reflect on the thoughts, feelings, and qualities significant to the character. Information about the role is added as the story continues. This role can be adopted by students in an improvisation.

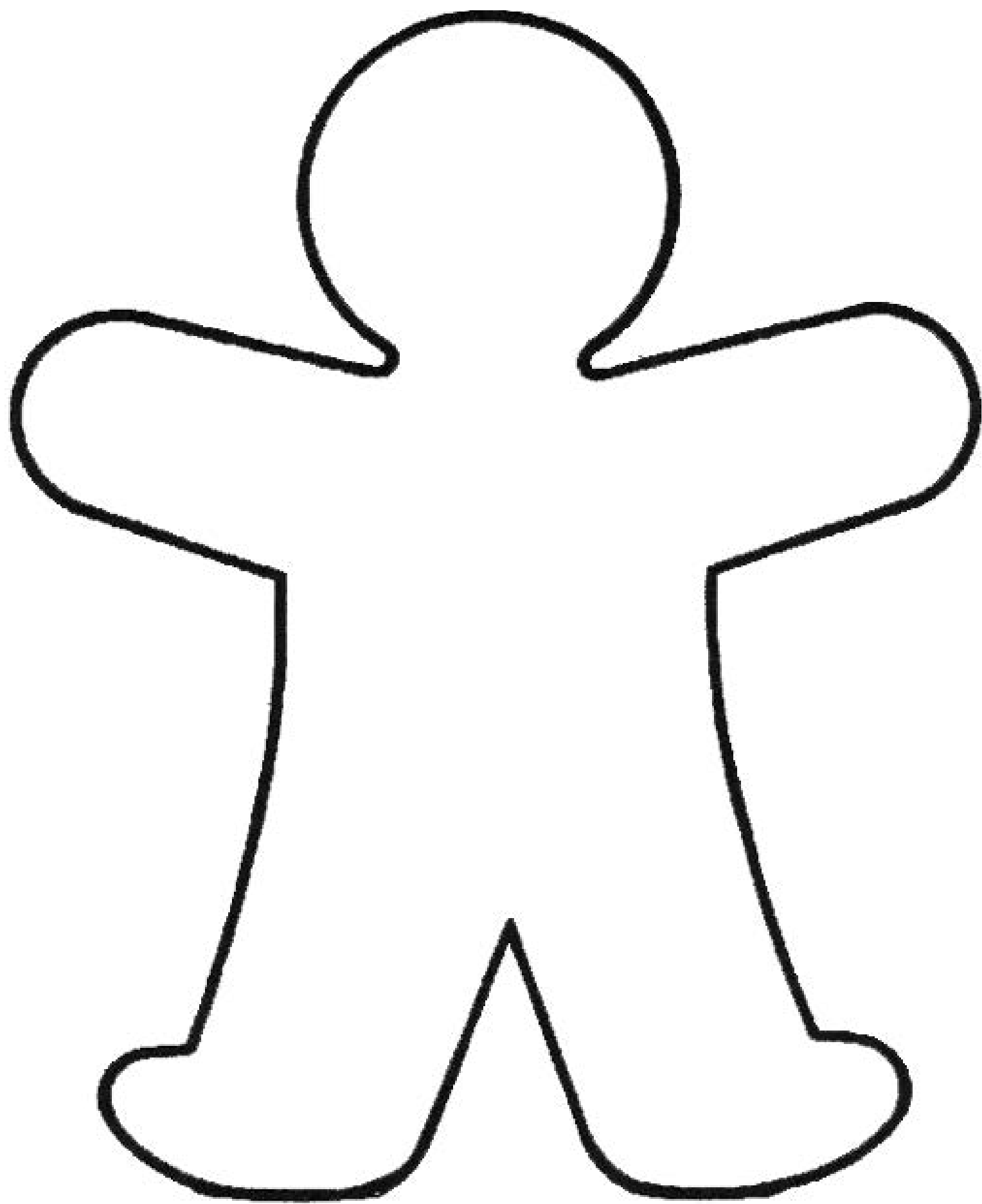
Role on the Wall can be facilitated with the whole class. Alternatively, students can work in groups of four or five, each creating a figure with words and phrases.

To further explore characterization, the outside of the figure can be used to raise questions about the character, record statements that other characters have said about the character, or record the thoughts of this character.

Create a visual representation of Edith with a large outline displayed on the board or on chart paper.

For this activity, have students volunteer to use words and phrases to describe the character of Edith using information from the story. The Role on the Wall figure can be introduced after reading the first pages of the book, where we meet Edith. As the book continues, encourage students to add words that describe her character and feelings as her survival story unfolds.

Outside the outline of the figure, students can suggest questions that they have about Edith and her circumstances. New questions can be added as they continue to read about her hiding.



Writing: Book Report 5-4-3-2-1

Present the following outline to the students. By completing each of the components, students will have an opportunity to summarize the book, determine important ideas, and offer their opinions about *Hiding Edith* in fifteen sentences.

5 interesting things you learned about Edith Schwalb:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

4 interesting things you learned about the Holocaust:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

3 questions you would ask Edith if you had the chance to interview her:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2 words to describe Edith:

- 1.
- 2.

1 sentence that gives your opinion of this book:

- 1.

Completing Sentence Stems: Making Emotional Connections

Present the following sentence stems to the students that have them share their feelings as they read different parts of the book. You can have students complete each of the statements. Alternatively, they can choose five items to respond to. Once completed, students can work in small groups to compare answers.

Extension

As a class, have each student read one statement of their choice aloud.

Discuss: What was the strongest emotion you felt while reading Edith's story? What was the most common feeling you experienced?

1. I felt **sad** when...
2. I was **worried** when...
3. I was **surprised** when...
4. I was **confused** when...
5. I was **frightened** when...
6. I was **upset** when...
7. I felt **happy** when...
8. I made a **connection** when...
9. I **hope** that...
10. Add your own.

Further Research: Hiding from the Nazis

There are many stories about Jewish children who were hidden during the Holocaust, the most iconic being Anne Frank. Other examples include Tilde Cohen in *The Brave Princess and Me*, Irene Lorch in *Hidden on the High Wire*, and Gabi Kohn in *The Secret of Gabi's Dresser*.

Have students investigate the lives of other Jewish young people who went into Hiding during World War II. Students can write a one-page report about young people hiding from the Nazis by considering the following:

- Who was forced into hiding? Who gave them shelter?
- What do we know about this hidden person's background?
- What circumstances forced them into hiding?
- Where did the main narrative of their story take place?
- What were the most dangerous things they experienced?
- How successful was the mission to provide refuge for this person?

Further Reading

Picture Books (Ages 7+)

Bat Zvi, Pnina and Margie Wolfe illus. Isabelle Cardinal, *The Promise*

Nonfiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-058-2

Kacer, Kathy; illus. Gillian Newland, *The Magician of Auschwitz*

Nonfiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-927583-46-3

Kacer, Kathy; illus. Juliana Kolesova, *The Brave Princess and Me*

Juvenile Fiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-102-2

Renaud, Anne; illus. Richard Rudnicki, *Fania's Heart*

Nonfiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-057-5

Upjohn, Rebecca; illus. Renné Benoit, *The Secret of the Village Fool*

Nonfiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-926920-75-7

Middle Grade (Ages 9–12)

Anne Frank House; illus. Huck Scarry, *All About Anne*

Nonfiction, \$24.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-060-5

Arato, Rona, *The Ship to Nowhere: On Board the Exodus*

Nonfiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-772600-18-6

Clark, Kathy, *The Choice*

Fiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-927583-65-4

Clark, Kathy, *Guardian Angel House*

Fiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-897187-58-6

Dublin, Anne, *She's A Mensch! Ten Amazing Jewish Women*

Nonfiction, \$22.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-320-0

Jimenez, Sameea and Corinne Promislow with Larry Swartz, *What Does Hate Look Like?*

Nonfiction, \$21.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-290-6

Kacer, Kathy, *Clara's War*

Fiction, \$8.95, ISBN: 978-1-896764-42-9

Kacer, Kathy, *The Diary of Laura's Twin*

Fiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-897187-39-5

Kacer, Kathy, *Hidden on the High Wire*

Fiction, \$13.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-251-7

Kacer, Kathy, *The Night Spies*

Fiction, \$8.95, ISBN: 978-1-89676-470-2

Kacer, Kathy, *The Secret of Gabi's Dresser*

Fiction, \$10.95, ISBN: 978-1-896764-15-3

Kacer, Kathy, *Shanghai Escape*

Nonfiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-92758-310-4

Kacer, Kathy, *To Hope and Back: The Journey of the St. Louis*

Nonfiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-897187-96-8

Kacer, Kathy, *The Underground Reporters*

Nonfiction, \$17.95, ISBN: 978-1-896764-85-6

Kacer, Kathy, *We Are Their Voice: Young People Respond to the Holocaust*

Nonfiction, \$16.95, ISBN: 978-1-926920-77-1

Levine, Karen, *Hana's Suitcase*

Nonfiction, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-896764-55-9

Levine, Karen, *Hana's Suitcase Anniversary Album* (10th anniversary special edition)

Nonfiction, \$24.95, ISBN: 978-1-92692-036-8

Levine, Karen and Emil Sher, *Hana's Suitcase on Stage*

Nonfiction / Drama, \$18.95, ISBN: 978-1-89718-705-0

Spring, Debbie, *The Righteous Smuggler*

Fiction \$9.95, ISBN: 978-1-896764-97-9

Wees, Janet, *When We Were Shadows*

Nonfiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-061-2

YA/Adult

Burakowski, Ella, *Hidden Gold: A True Story of the Holocaust*

YA Nonfiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-927583-74-6

Gold, Jennifer, *Names in a Jar*

YA Fiction, \$14.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-207-4

Kacer, Kathy, *Restitution: A family's fight for their heritage lost in the Holocaust*

Adult Nonfiction, \$19.95, ISBN: 978-1-89718-775-3

Kacer, Kathy with Jordana Lebowitz, *To Look a Nazi in the Eye: A teen's account of a war criminal trial*

YA Nonfiction, \$13.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-040-7

Kacer, Kathy, *Under the Iron Bridge*

YA Fiction, \$15.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-205-0

Rubenstein, Eli (compiled by) with March of the Living, *Witness: Passing the Torch of Holocaust Memory to New Generations*

Adult Nonfiction, \$32.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-149-7

Schulman, Faye, *A Partisan's Memoir: Woman of the Holocaust*

Adult Nonfiction, \$19.95, ISBN: 978-0-92900-576-8

Setterington, Ken, *Branded by the Pink Triangle*

YA Nonfiction, \$15.95, ISBN: 978-1-926920-96-2

Silberstein Swartz, Sarah, *Heroines, Rescuers, Rabbis, Spies: Unsung Women of the Holocaust*

YA Nonfiction, \$19.95, ISBN: 978-1-77260-262-3

For Teachers

Nesbitt, Shawntelle, *Holocaust Remembrance Series Teacher Resource: Elementary Social Justice Teacher Resource*

Educational Resource, \$149.00, ISBN: 978-1-89718-794-4

544 page Five-Part Comprehensive Guide