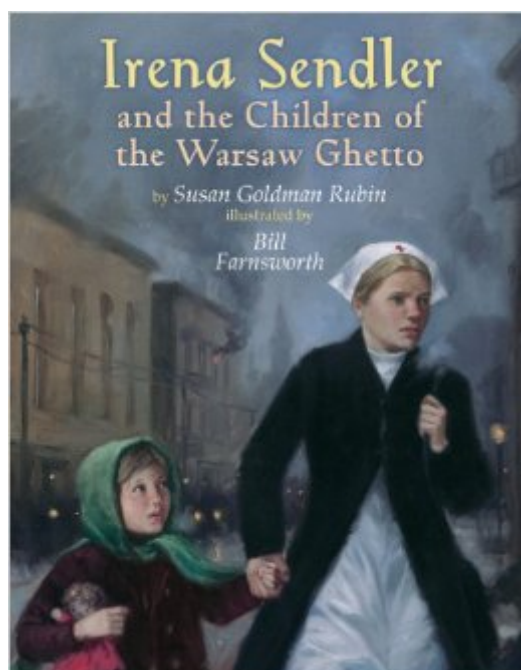


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# Irena Sendler And The Children Of The Warsaw Ghetto



## Synopsis

Irena Sendler, a Polish social worker, helped nearly four hundred Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto and into hiding during World War II.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

She was a little woman, less than five feet tall, but if height were measured by courage, heart and spirit, she would be a giant. Sendler, a young Catholic social worker, did her best to tend to the wounded and bring bread to the hungry; but as soon as Poland surrendered to Germany, she joined Żegota, a resistance movement that helped rescue Jews. Infiltrating the ghetto disguised as a nurse, she saw starvation and sickness, and as the Nazis began to empty the ghetto, she began to smuggle out the children. Her story is told in an oversized illustrated book, a column of generous-sized black text against a white background placed adjacent to the dark, doom-laden paintings. The few hopeful images have a lighter background - for instance as Sendler gently teaches a little Jewish girl her new name and the Catholic prayers she must learn to save her life; and also when Sendler buries the jars containing the assumed Polish and Jewish names of the children under a tree in a friend's yard, looking forward to the future--when the names will be turned over to a Jewish Zionist organization. Only an artist as fine as Farnsworth could manage to represent the damage and doom of the ghetto, the horror of the Nazis seizing Sendler, and the Warsaw Uprising; and only an author as talented and knowledgeable as Rubin could tell a story like this in a way that will be understood by children from grades 4-6, without diminishing its impact. Irena's story remained untold for many years, because the Soviets who took over Poland regarded

her as a traitor since Zagota was supported by the anti-communist Polish government in exile. Sendler says that she was taught by her father that when someone is drowning, you don't ask if they can swim, you just jump in and help. The author has a distinguished history of writing children's picture story books about the Holocaust, among them: *Fireflies in the Dark: The Story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and the Children of Terezin*; *The Cat with the Yellow Star: Coming of Age in Terezin* (with Ela Weissberger); *The Anne Frank Case: Simon Wiesenthal's Search for the Truth*; and *The Flag with Fifty-six Stars: A Gift from the Survivors of Mauthausen*. Ostensibly for ages 6-10, books of this type are best used with children from 9-11 and may also serve as an entry point for older students. Bill Farnsworth has worked with Goldman on *The Flag with Fifty-six Stars*, and with David A. Adler on *A Hero and the Holocaust: The Story of Janusz Korczak and His Children*. Marcia W. Posner

Irena Sendler was a young Catholic social worker in Warsaw, Poland when the Nazis invaded her country in Sep, 1939. Irena had been taught by her father that "when someone is drowning, you don't ask if they can swim, you just jump in and help." This philosophy led to Irena risking her very life in order to save persecuted Jews in Warsaw, especially Jewish children who were completely helpless in the face of a great evil in the form of Nazi Germany and their plan of exterminating the Jewish race, what came to be known as the Final Solution. Irena's position as a social worker enabled her to get in and out of the Warsaw Ghetto, the infamous area where thousands of Jews were confined. It was basically a prison where many Jews were cramped into close living quarters, and many suffered from starvation and disease. Under the guise of providing medical assistance, Irena made plans to smuggle out as many Jewish children as she could out of the ghetto and to the Aryan side of Warsaw. Irena was aided by the Council for Aid to Jews, which was an underground organization. Together with like-minded people, Irena was able to save at least 2,500 Jewish children who would otherwise have most certainly met an untimely death at the hands of the Nazis. This was because of frequent selections by the Nazis where unlucky Jews were picked to be deported to camps, and many of these deportees met a grisly end at extermination camps like Auschwitz. The story includes first-hand accounts by Jew who had been saved by Irena when they were children. The accounts of rescue make for riveting reading and one can only imagine how afraid these children must have been at the time. Babies were smuggled out in potato sacks, suitcases, and tool boxes! This is an inspiring read of a courageous woman who stood up to the Nazis and saved many lives during the Holocaust. Recommended for upper elementary students and up.

This picture book and another one: "Irena's Jar of Secrets" Irena's Jars of Secrets by Marcia Vaughan are both great. Can't go wrong with either book. Both are great for biographies for middle grades, featuring peril, heroic action, interrogation, and torture. This book features great illustrations and vocabulary words like: endangered, resistance, defy, solidarity, ghetto, perished, sanitation, typhus... The illustrations in this book are particularly good -- luminous and evocative.

This is the story of Irena Sendler, a heroine during WWII who risked her safety time and time again to save Jewish children in Poland. Her stories only surfaced after 1989, so Irena is fairly unknown. Thanks to Susan Rubin, her story can have a wider audience. While this book shares many of the risks she took, it also gives a picture of the children's side. One child mentions he'd already had 32 mothers from being moved so much, and another child mentions that after being reunited with his own mother, he recognized her only after he made it on a train and she didn't, because of how tightly she clung to him and cried when they were together again. Little glimpses like that are heart wrenching, but are a great help in stepping into their shoes a bit. I loved the book. We need to hear about great men and women like Irena Sendler more often. Looks like Susan Rubin has written about several others; I'm looking forward to reading them too.

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