

A TEACHER'S GUIDE

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

We are delighted to share this incredible story with readers of all ages across the United States and more especially with the younger crowds as Edgar Feuchtwanger's childhood - in the Weimar Republic and then in the Third Reich - gives a powerful story for all your students to read and reflect upon.

ABOUT THE BOOK

An eminent historian's account of the Nazi rise to power from his unique perspective, that of a Jewish boy in Munich, living with Adolf Hitler as his neighbor.

Edgar Feuchtwanger came from a prominent German Jewish family, the only son of a respected editor and the nephew of the writer Lion Feuchtwanger. He was a carefree five-year-old, pampered by his parents and his nanny, when Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi Party, moved into the building across the street in Munich.

In 1933 his happy young life was shattered. Hitler had been named Chancellor. Edgar's parents, stripped of their rights as citizens, tried to protect him from increasingly degrading realities. In class, his teacher had him draw swastikas, and his schoolmates joined the Hitler Youth.

Watching events unfold from his window, Edgar bore witness to the Night of the Long Knives, the Anschluss, and Kristallnacht. Jews were arrested; his father was imprisoned at Dachau. In 1939 Edgar was sent on his own to England, where he would make a new life, a career, have a family, and try to forget the nightmare of his past—a past that came rushing back when he decided, at the age of eighty-eight, to tell the story of his buried childhood and his infamous neighbor.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Edgar Feuchtwanger was born in Munich in 1924 and immigrated to England in 1939. He studied at Cambridge University and taught history at the University of Southampton until he retired in 1989. His major works include *From Weimar to Hitler*, *Disraeli*, and *Imperial Germany 1850–1918*. In 2003 he received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for promoting Anglo-German relations.

Bertil Scali is a French journalist and writer. He wrote and co-directed a TV documentary about Edgar Feuchtwanger's childhood in Munich, and is the author of *Villa Windsor*.



The New York Times

BOOKS

Edgar Feuchtwanger Bore Witness, Horribly Close to Hitler

BY WILLIAM GRIDER | JUNE 2, 2018



To be a Jew in Germany in the 1930s was not comfortable. Edgar Feuchtwanger, a schoolboy in Munich at the time, knew the fear and the dread shared by all German Jews witnessing the unstoppable ascent of a madman. Yet his situation was different. Very different.

In 1929, Adolf Hitler moved into Mr. Feuchtwanger's neighborhood. With money from his publisher, Hitler took a nine-room apartment on the third floor of No. 16 Prinzregentenplatz (Prince Regent Square). It was luxurious,

with two bathrooms and two kitchens. Edgar, 5 years old, could see it from his window, a building not 100 yards away on Grillparzerstrasse. And for the next nine years, until the Feuchtwangers fled Germany in 1938, Edgar lived virtually side by side with a man bent on exterminating him, his family and every family like his, not only in Germany, but as far as the Reich could extend its dominion.



Mr. Feuchtwanger as a boy.
Credit Feuchtwanger Family

Mr. Feuchtwanger (FOISHT-vanger), whose memoir, "I Was Hitler's Neighbor," was published last year in translation in Britain, will speak about his childhood, and the man who cast his shadow over it, at the 92d Street Y on Friday at 2 p.m. The book, originally in French, has not been published in the United States.

Today, at 91, he could well be the last German Jew alive who grew up within arm's reach of Hitler and observed him day to day, if only in fleeting glimpses. Speaking in a relative's apartment in Midtown on Wednesday, Mr. Feuchtwanger, a historian who taught for 30 years at the University of Southampton, in England, and now lives in a village near Winchester, recalled his brushes with Hitler, and some of the turning points in 20th-century history. He brought with him, in a manila envelope, notebooks from his days at the Gebele School in Munich, filled with assignments on patriotic themes and decorated, here and there, with

tributes to the leader whom Germans were learning to call Führer.

The neighborhood, he said, was stocked with Nazis. On his way to school, he walked past the villa of Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's photographer, the man who introduced Eva Braun, then his shop assistant, to Hitler. Often, he caught a glimpse of Hitler lounging in a deck chair in the garden. Not far away was the house of Ernst Röhm, head of the Nazi Party's paramilitary wing.

"He is somewhat forgotten today," Mr. Feuchtwanger said, speaking slowly, with the hint of a German accent. "But at the time he was considered the second man in the Reich, the only one whom Hitler had to address with some respect.



Mr. Feuchtwanger with his daughter Antonia Cox and one of his grandsons, Thomas, in New York.
Credit Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

When he spoke to Hitler he did not call him 'mein Führer,' but used the informal 'du.'"

Röhm was soon out of the picture, arrested personally by Hitler on June 30, 1934, in the purge known as the Night of the Long Knives. Mr. Feuchtwanger knew of it long before most of his fellow Germans. Hearing jackboots and slamming car doors, he went to the window and saw SS officers assembling a motorcade for the short trip to Hanselbauer Hotel in Bad Wiessee, where Röhm and his followers were staying.

"Even as a small boy I could sense the tremendous, hot tension there was around," Mr. Feuchtwanger wrote in his memoir. "That public events could produce such tension, that gripped one's throat, almost took one's breath away, is now practically unknown to the present generation."

Mr. Feuchtwanger's first memorable encounter with Hitler himself occurred when he was 8. He and his nanny, out for a stroll, began walking down Prinzregentenstrasse.

"Just as we passed his front door, Hitler came out, wearing a mackintosh and a trilby hat," Mr. Feuchtwanger said. "There were some people in the street who shouted 'Heil Hitler.' Then he looked at me and my nanny, quite benevolently."

Mr. Feuchtwanger paused for a moment and said, "If he had known who I was, it would have been quite different."

Indeed. The name Feuchtwanger was well known to Hitler and the Nazi Party, and not in a good way. Edgar's father, Ludwig, was not the problem. As the director of Duncker & Humblot, a distinguished publishing house specializing in books on economics and sociology, he was objectionable only because he was a prosperous Jew. Racial laws forced him out of the business in 1936.

Ludwig's brother, Lion, was another matter. At the time, he was probably the most-read novelist in Germany, the author of "Jud Süß" ("The Jew Süß"), a historical novel about the financial adviser to Duke Carl Alexander of Württemberg in the 18th century. The novel, published in 1925, was later twisted into a viciously anti-Semitic film by the Nazis, released in 1940.

More offensive to the Nazi Party was his novel "Success." Set in Bavaria in the 1920s, it included a satirical portrait of Hitler, inserted into the novel as Rupert Kutzner, a rabble-rousing garage mechanic who creates a political movement, the Truly German Party.

When "Success" was published in 1930, Joseph Goebbels announced in his newspaper, *Der Angriff*, that the author had just earned a seat on the first train out of Germany when the Nazis came to power. The novel featured prominently in the book burnings of May 1933. Goebbels himself turned up for the bonfire in Berlin. By chance, Lion was in the United States on a lecture tour when Hitler became chancellor, but his brother, back in Germany, bore the family name.

It was not until the mid-1930s, Edgar Feuchtwanger recalled, that Hitler assumed his full dimensions. It was still possible to walk on the sidewalk in front of Hitler's building. Hitler had not yet taken to wearing a military uniform at all times in public or traveling in motorcades.

After he became chancellor in 1933, things changed. Mr. Feuchtwanger's mother now complained that she could not get milk because the deliveryman was steering extra



One of Mr. Feuchtwanger's childhood notebooks.

Credit Nicole Bengiveno/
The New York Times

bottles to Hitler. SS guards moved into the apartment below his and took up positions on the sidewalk outside. Pedestrians were made to cross to the other side of the street.

History paraded past young Edgar's window. He saw the fleet of long, six-wheeled Mercedes gather to depart for the annexation of Austria in 1938 and, several days later, watched as Hitler, standing erect, holding onto the windshield of his open car, greeted adoring crowds.

Later that year, he watched Mussolini's car taking him from the four-power conference that led to the signing of the Munich Agreement. "I would join in the crowds to see what was going on," Mr. Feuchtwanger said, recalling the periodic commotion on the square outside Hitler's building.

Ludwig Feuchtwanger, like many Jews, misread Hitler at the outset. He believed that German Jews could reach some sort of livable, stable accommodation with the regime. "My parents did talk about the political situation, and I knew more about it than 8-year-olds do today," Mr. Feuchtwanger said. "I knew that he was no good for us. But I wouldn't say I was terrified."

At school, Mr. Feuchtwanger was not tormented, by teachers or fellow students, although Nazification reached full steam by the time he entered the prestigious Maximilian Gymnasium in 1935. He was spared having to enroll in the Hitler Youth, obligatory for his non-Jewish classmates. But he did have to stand for hours at a time, arm outstretched in the Nazi salute, at school rallies organized by the party. "The way you go through it was to rest your arm on the shoulder of the chap in front of you," he said.

He brought out two of his school notebooks. In the opening page of the first, to commemorate Labor Day 1933, he had inscribed a large swastika superimposed over the Communist hammer.

"I had a teacher who was over the moon about the Nazi takeover," he explained.

Political reality sank in on Kristallnacht, in November 1938, when Edgar's father was arrested and interned at Dachau. Amazingly, the camp administration failed to make the connection between his name and that of the author of "Success." Six weeks later he was released and began making plans to take his family out of Germany. "He knew it was curtains," Mr. Feuchtwanger said. Nearly all the Feuchtwangers escaped. One of Ludwig's eight siblings, a half sister, died in Theresienstadt.

At 14, Edgar Feuchtwanger adopted a second life as an honorary Englishman. He studied at Winchester School, where classmates called him "fish finger" and "Volkswagen." He earned a doctorate in history at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and went on to write studies of the Victorian era, including biographies of Gladstone and Disraeli, and histories of modern Germany, up to the Nazi seizure of power.

He reached again for a notebook. In this one, from 1934, he honored Hitler on his 45th birthday by pasting in a glowering portrait of the Führer, adorned with a Nazi eagle and swastika. Mr. Feuchtwanger smiled. "Just think, it was a Jewish child who did this," he said.

Correction: June 4, 2016

An article on Friday about Edgar Feuchtwanger, author of the memoir "I Was Hitler's Neighbor," misstated Hitler's address in Munich when he moved into Mr. Feuchtwanger's neighborhood in 1929. It was 16 Prinzregentenplatz (Prince Regent Square), not 16 Prinzregentenstrasse (Prince Regent Street).

A version of this article appears in print on June 3, 2016, on Page C17 of the New York edition with the headline: He Bore Witness, Horribly Close to Hitler.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

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REAL LIFE

FIRST-HAND

I was Hitler's Jewish neighbour

A small boy watched the Führer as he rose to power. **Edgar Feuchtwanger** remembers

All a child of nine I used to see Hitler when I went out to walk with my father past our home in Munich. We had just opened his apartment three quarters of a century ago.

It was during his early days as a politician. At that time he travelled with just one or two cars, and I remember first getting into one, wearing a mackintosh and a felt hat, which he lifted to the five frontiers watching.

But by the middle 1930s, he was always accompanied by a motorcade of four or five long black Mercedes. He sat back in the car, and the motorcade would start moving. Hitler would emerge, now always dressed in military uniform, take his place by the driver of the leading car, and the motorcade would start away. I felt even then that this was a man who could shake the world to its foundations.

It was trivial that my Jewish family and I could go on living so close to the centre of the new dictatorship for so long as we did, because my father - Feuchtwanger - was hardly one. My uncle Lion was one of the well-known literary figures of the Weimar period. His novel *Succes*, published in 1918, accused Nazi fury with a critical storm of Hitler as Rupert Kautzen, leader of the Thule-Gesellschaft. In 1920 Lion would be one of the first to be rounded out when the Nazis came to power.

Yet, such was the confusion and anxiety of the early years of the Third Reich that my father, who ran a prestigious academic publishing house, thought he could survive there.

I had a second life. On my walk to school I used to admire the gleaming silver Mercedes coupe driving and



These memories are not as clear as they once were. The Hitler we saw in our small Munich streets, on Lake Starnberg, close to Munich, in our village I remember first, was the children, about eight or nine years old, when I myself was still a boy, replaced by the matured and the figure of the Long Knives. It is hard to look at them in the changing of time. I cannot for certain remember whether war, but I think they were the children of General von Fritsch, assistant to Hitler's predecessor as Reichsmarschall and General von Brauns, who was also murdered, along with his wife.

One day we were once seen in a small village close to the main road, with a woman who was a Jewish girl, governess. When they had left the shop, the woman looked at me, and said "Poor child!" - looking at me.

Having this and other things would end, we stayed at Munich for other four years. In 1919, 1920, when I was 13, I saw Hitler first, by the way a large crowd in the streets, surrounded grey Mercedes surrounding vehicles, to follow the parade to Austria for the Austrians.

A few days later he returned to Munich in triumph. It was the only time I saw him riding through cheering crowds, standing in his car, his hand on the wheel, right arm giving the Nazi salute.

In September, at the time of the Munich Conference, I went out to the street as another motorcade, surrounded a uniformed man I recognized from newspaper photographs as Hermann Goering with his Luftwaffe.

The day after I read that the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain had come to the file on this day.



Hitler on the balcony of his Prinzregentenplatz 16 apartment, circa 1935.



Edgar aged 11, in Munich in 1935.

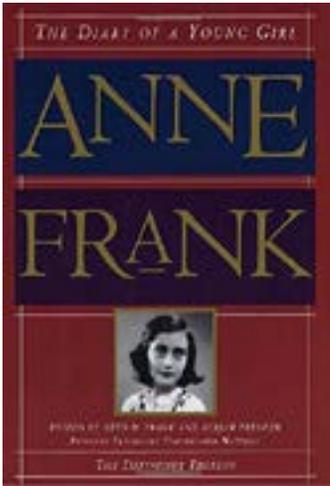


Michael Siegel, the father of Edgar's friend Beate, in a well-known photo taken in 1933. His placard reads: "I am a Jew and I shall never again complain to the police."

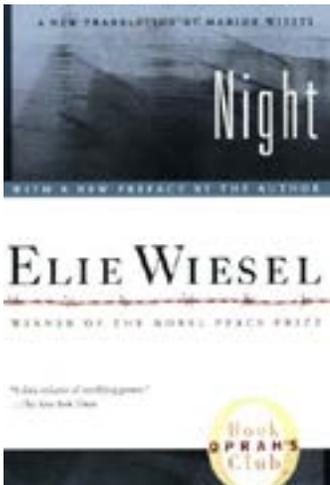


Elderly Edgar outside Hitler's former home, 2012

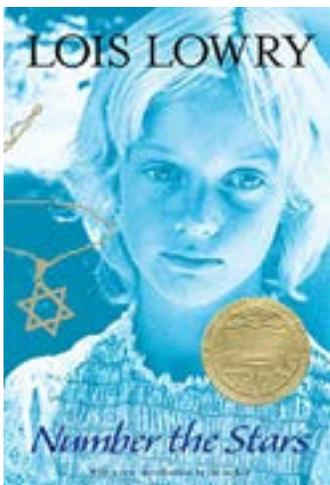
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ANNE FRANK: THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL, by Anne Frank

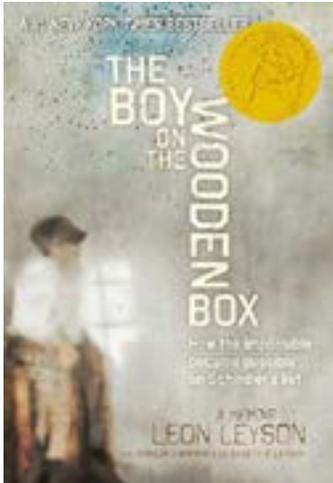


NIGHT, by Elie Wiesel

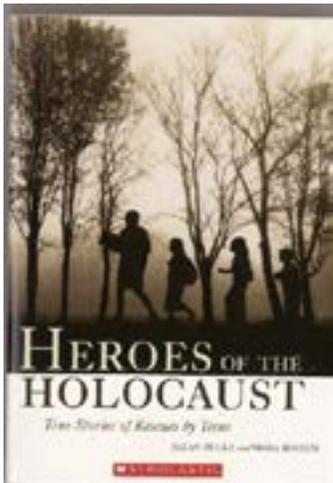


NUMBER THE STARS, by Lois Lowry

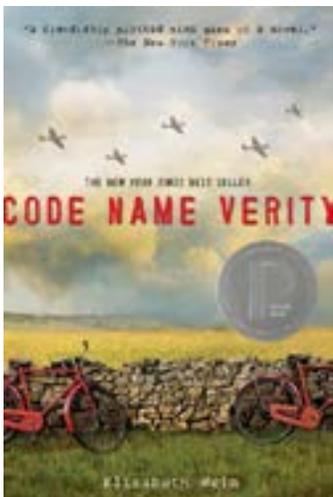
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THE BOY ON THE WOODEN BOX, by Leon Leyson

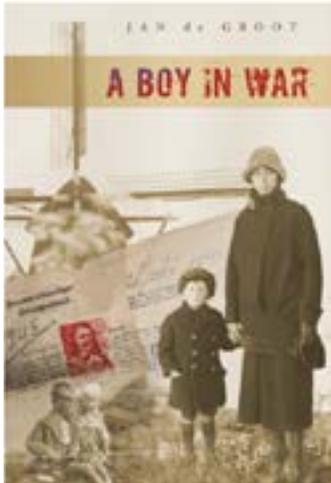


HEROES OF THE HOLOCAUST: TRUE STORIES OF RESCUES BY TEENS, by Mara Bovsun and Allan Zullo

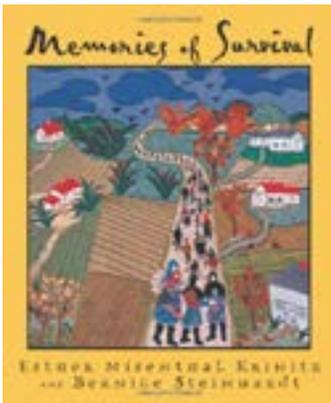


CODE NAME VERITY, by Elizabeth Wein

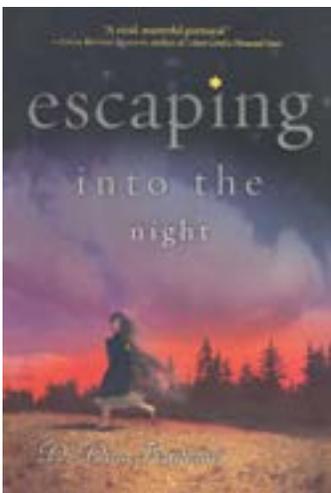
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A BOY IN WAR, by Jan de Groot



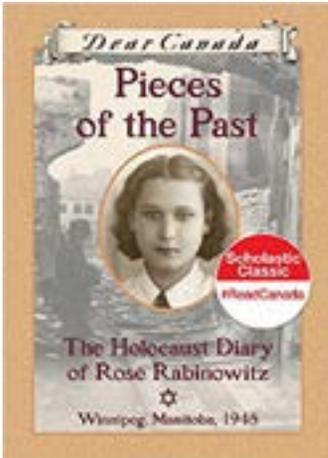
MEMORIES OF SURVIVAL, by Esther Nisenthal Krinitz and Bernice Steinhardt



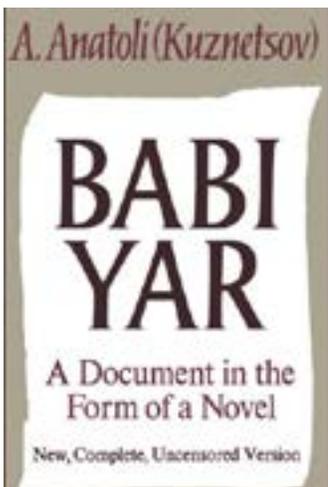
ESCAPING INTO THE NIGHT, by D. Dina Friedman

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DEAR CANADA: PIECES OF THE PAST, by Carol Matas



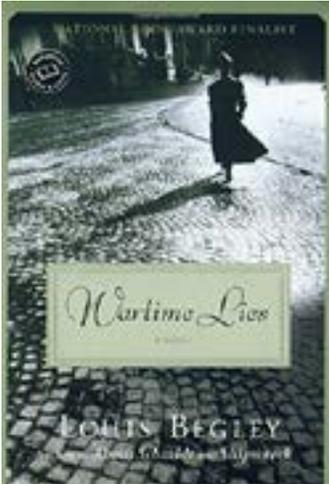
BABI YAR, by A. Anatoli



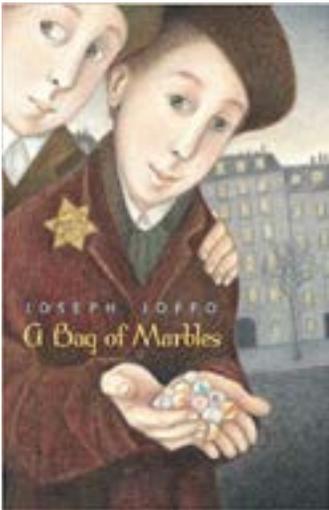
SURVIVAL IN AUSCHWITZ, by Primo Levi



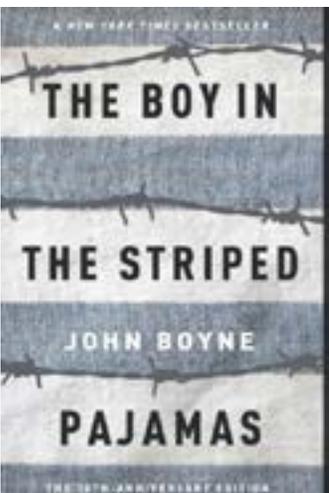
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WARTIME LIES, by Louis Begley

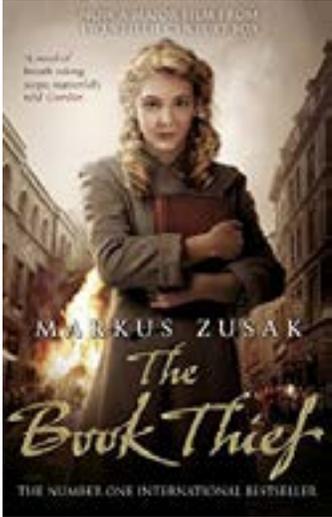


A BAG OF MARBLES, by Joseph Joffo

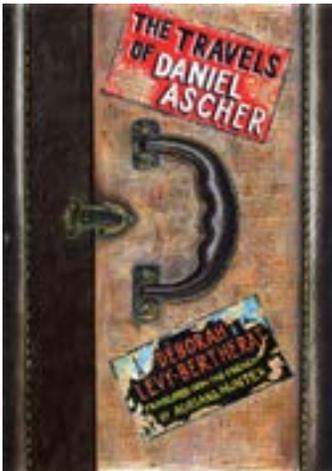


THE BOY IN THE STRIPPED PAJAMAS, by John Boyne

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THE BOOK THIEF, by Markus Zusak



THE TRAVELS OF DANIEL ASCHER, by Déborah Lévy-Bertherat