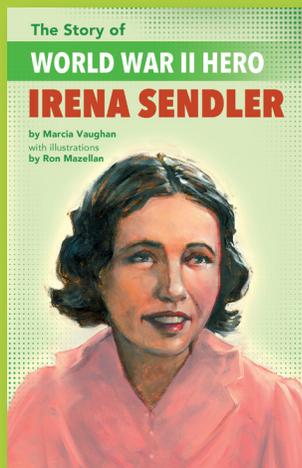


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



## The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler

written by Marcia Vaughan, illustrated by  
Ron Mazellan

### About the Book

Genre: Nonfiction Biography

\*Reading Level: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades 3–7

Guided Reading Level: Y

Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

\*Reading level based on the Spache  
Readability Formula

Themes: Biography, Overcoming  
Obstacles, Persistence, World  
War II, Holocaust, Jewish History,  
Courage and Bravery, Women's  
History

### SYNOPSIS

Irena Sendler, born in 1910 to a Polish Catholic family, was raised to respect all people regardless of their race or religion. As an adult she became a social worker, and after the Germans occupied Poland during World War II, Irena knew she had to help the Jews who were packed into the Warsaw Ghetto. She began by smuggling food, clothing, and medicine into the ghetto, then turned to smuggling children out of the ghetto.

Motivated by her humanity and armed with compassion and a belief in human dignity, Irena Sendler proved to the world that an ordinary person can accomplish extraordinary deeds. This chapter book includes illustrations as well as sidebars on related subjects, a timeline, a glossary, and recommended reading.



## BACKGROUND

### The Story Of Series

*The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler* is part of LEE & LOW's *Story Of* series. Every title in our *Story Of* chapter book line introduces independent readers to a diverse historical figure with a powerful life story. All books in this series include informative sidebars, highlighted vocabulary words, a timeline, a glossary, photographs and images with captions and labels, a bibliography with complete sources, and recommended reading.

### Nonfiction Text Features

*The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler* has different nonfiction text features that readers need to be aware of. The chart below lists the nonfiction features that readers will find. Consider printing or enlarging this chart for students to refer to in your classroom or library.

See the section titled, "Nonfiction Text Features: *The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler*" for details on how to teach these features with specific information in the book.

Types of Print	Words that are darker are called <b>bold</b> and words that are slanted are called <i>italics</i> , which point out specific information.
Sidebar	Additional information about a person, time period, or subject that is helpful to understand the story.
Table of Contents	A list of the book's sections that says what information is in the book.
Timeline	A lists of the dates and years when events happened.
Glossary	An alphabetical list of vocabulary words mentioned in the book and their definitions, located in the back of the book.
Captions	A line underneath a photograph or image that describes what's in the picture.
Text Sources	A list of the books, images, photographs, and other forms of information that the author used to write the story.
Title	The name of the chapter (that's usually larger in size and in a different font) that describes the text and information that follows.
Label	A word that tells the name of the part of the photograph or image.

### Additional LEE & LOW titles in The Story Of series:

**The Story of Tennis Champion Arthur Ashe** written by Crystal Hubbard, illustrated by Kevin Belford

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-tennis-champion-arthur-ashe>

**The Story of Car Engineer Soichiro Honda** written by Mark Weston, illustrated by Katie Yamasaki

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-car-engineer-soichiro-honda>

**The Story of Movie Star Anna May Wong** written by Paula Yoo, illustrated by Ling Wang

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-movie-star-anna-may-wong>

**The Story of Civil Rights Hero John Lewis** written by Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson, illustrated by Aaron Boyd

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-civil-rights-hero-john-lewis>

**The Story of Olympic Swimmer Duke Kahanamoku** written by Ellie Crow, illustrated by Richard Waldrep

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-olympic-swimmer-duke-kahanamoku>



## VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

### Content Specific

Warsaw, Poland, typhus, Jewish, body lice, chiggers, World War I, anti-Semitism, delousing, kerosene, Treaty of Versailles, Article 231, War Guilt Clause, reparations, Adolf Hitler, National Socialist German Workers' Party, Nazis, chancellor, Fuhrer, Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, Soviet Union, ghetto, Warsaw Ghetto, Warsaw Social Welfare Department, concentration and extermination camps, Aryan, Final Solution, the Holocaust, convents, Zegota, Gestapo, Communists, Adolf Eichmann, Einsatzgruppen, the Allies, military tribunal, Nuremberg, Yad Vashem, Israel, Order of the White Eagle, Freedom House, American Center of Polish Culture, Nobel Peace Prize

### Academic

mepidemic, density, segregating, prejudice, negotiated, infrastructure, recession, scorned, forbade, eliminate, allies, minorities, inferior, investigate, outbreak, smuggle, segregation, humiliate, unsanitary, inhumane, deportation, razed, dwelled, sanitary, social workers, proclaim, superiority, dissidents, annihilation, deliberate, systematic, whimpered, deception, bribing, foster families, coordinated, transmitted, blackmail, betrayed, collaborator, torture, execution, rebellious, infectious, genocide

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. What do you know about World War II? What were some of the most important events in World War II? What was happening in Germany and Europe? What are some of the legacies of the war?
2. What do you know about the Holocaust? Who was targeted in the Holocaust? Who led the persecution and murder of the Jewish people and other groups? What are some of the legacies of the Holocaust?
3. What do you think courage means? How would you demonstrate and show courage? How have you seen others being courageous? What are some examples of courage, both in your own life and in the world?
4. What does compassion mean to you? What does it mean to be compassionate? How do you show and demonstrate compassion to others?
5. What female historical figures do you admire? How did they change history? Why is it important to learn about them? What are their accomplishments?
6. What does it mean to be persistent? How do you demonstrate persistence even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be persistent? Do you think persistence can be learned? How so?
7. What does it mean to stand up for what's right? What are some instances in history where people have had to stand for what they believe in even though they encountered adversity and opposition?



## Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
2. **Read Author Marcia Vaughan's Biography:** Read about Marcia Vaughan on the back page of the book. Marcia Vaughan was inspired to tell Irena Sendler's story after reading her obituary in 2008 and discovering her work through Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project, an organization dedicated to bringing Irena Sendler's story to the world.
3. **Read Illustrator Ron Mazellan's Biography:** Read about Ron Mazellan on the back. Have students look at Ron Mazellan's picture-book version of this story, *Irena's Jars of Secrets* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/irena-s-jars-of-secrets>). How would you describe Ron Mazellan's artistic style? Students can also look at other pieces in Ron Mazellan's collection at his Indiana University Wesleyan Faculty Artwork page: <https://www.indwes.edu/undergraduate/division-of-art-and-design/faculty-artwork/ron-mazellan>.
4. Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
5. Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

## Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- what inspired Irena Sendler to help Jewish children during World War II
- how Irena Sendler saved thousands of Jewish children during World War II
- how Irena Sendler used her creativity and problem-solving skills to avoid German guards
- how Irena Sendler demonstrates persistence and bravery
- what impact Irena Sendler had on the children and their families
- why Irena Sendler is a World War II hero and how her legacy has changed the world

Encourage students to consider why the author, Marcia Vaughan, would want to share with young people this story about Irena Sendler and how she saved Jewish children during World War II.

NOTE: Students can read this book at their own leisure, but please note that it's most impactful when students have prior knowledge of World War II and the atrocities of the Holocaust.

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

#### Chapter One: A Daughter's Promise

1. Where was Irena Sendler born?



2. What happened when Irena was seven years old?
3. What happened to Irena's father? What did he tell her?

### **Typhus**

4. What is typhus?
5. Why was typhus difficult to fight?
6. What did many Jewish people in Warsaw experience?
7. What did anti-Semites do to Jewish people after the typhus outbreak?
8. How did authorities end the 1918 typhus epidemic?

### **Germany After World War I**

9. What happened after Germany surrendered in World War I?
10. What did the Treaty of Versailles require Germany to do?
11. What happened in Germany after the Treaty of Versailles?
12. What was National Socialist Germany Workers' Party and who was their leader? What did they do?

### **Chapter Two: Occupation**

13. What happened in 1939 in Poland? What did it begin?
14. What were Hitler's intentions during World War II?
15. What did German soldiers force Jewish people to do in 1940?
16. How did Irena Sendler's father inspire her when the war began? What did she do?
17. What were the conditions like in the ghetto? What did Irena do for Jewish families in the ghetto?

### **The Warsaw Ghetto**

18. What did German troops do in Poland in 1939?
19. What was the Warsaw Ghetto like?
20. Where were German soldiers sending people in the Warsaw Ghetto?
21. What happened on January 18, 1943?
22. What was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising?
23. How many Jewish people lived in ghettos during World War II?

### **Chapter Three: Irena the Smuggler**

24. What organization did Irena join? Why did she join this organization?
25. How did Irena and her fellow nurses gain entry into the ghetto? What did they do once inside the ghetto?
26. What did Irena do to help families find their children after the war?

### **Concentration and Extermination Camps**

27. What did the Nazis believe?
28. What happened in concentration camps?
29. What were extermination camps?
30. 27. What is genocide? How many prisoners died in Nazi concentration and extermination camps?
31. 28. What is the systematic killing by the Nazis and their allies called?

### **Chapter Four: Escape from the Ghetto**

32. How did Irena save the child in the ambulance when the guard stopped and questioned them?
33. How did Irena teach the children to use deception with the guards?
34. What were some of the ways that Irena hid children to sneak them out of the ghetto?
35. What happened to the children after they were out of the ghetto?



36. Where did Irena keep her records and list of the children's names?

### **Zegota**

37. What was Zegota? What did this organization do?

38. Where did Zegota establish their headquarters? What could members do there?

### **Chapter Five: Betrayed**

39. What happened to Irena in October 1943? Where was she taken?

40. What did the German officers want to know from Irena? What did Irena do?

41. What happened on the day Irena was supposed to be killed?

### **The Gestapo**

42. What was the Gestapo?

43. What did Gestapo officers do?

44. What was the Gestapo's role in the Holocaust?

45. Who was Adolf Eichmann?

46. What happened in Nuremberg, Germany after World War II ended?

### **Chapter Six: Irena's Jars**

47. How many names were on Irena's lists after she uncovered her jars in 1945?

48. What did the Jewish National Committee find after Irena gave them her lists?

49. Who recognized Irena's deeds in 1965?

50. What awards did Irena receive for her work?

51. When did Irena die?

### **Elzbieta Ficowska**

52. Who is Elzbieta Ficowska? What did she discover about her own life?

### **Extension/Higher Level Thinking**

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3; and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler* mean to you after reading? How did your perceptions of Irena Sendler change after reading the story?
2. How did Irena Sendler use her persistence and perseverance to help Jewish children? What were some of the ways that she helped children escape, and how did she use her problem solving and critical thinking skills in critical times?
3. How did Irena's father inspire her mission in life? How did she use his words throughout her work during World War II?
4. Why do you think Irena was so honest with parents and families who she was helping? Why do you think she was upfront with them when she told them that she had to take their children away?
5. How did Irena demonstrate composure in tense periods? Why do you think she acted the way she did whenever she was approached by guards? How did she make other children act when she was taking them out of the ghetto?
6. What kind of legacy did Irena leave? Why do you think she received a variety of awards for her work? How would you describe her legacy?
7. What did you learn about the atrocities that were committed against Jewish people in this book? How did reading this book make you think about World War II differently than what you have learned about before?
8. How would you describe Irena Sendler to a person who had never heard of her before? What are some of the qualities that you would use to speak about Irena? What are the most important things to say when explaining Irena Sendler's life and legacy?



## Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about Irena's dedication to saving Jewish children from concentration and extermination camps. How did she show her dedication to her mission throughout World War II, and the rest of her life?
2. What do you think the message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind Marcia Vaughan's intentions to write the book. What do you think she wanted to tell her readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Irena's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world, such as on television or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. What does courage and bravery mean to students after reading? After reading *The Story of World War II Irena Sendler*, how does your view of being brave change? What does it mean to be courageous even though you're afraid, especially when it means helping someone in need?
7. Why did Irena risk her life to save thousands of Jewish children? Despite obstacles and the possibility of death, how did Irena continue her mission to save children from the Nazis and concentration and extermination camps?

1. How has a family member impacted your life? Irena Sendler was inspired by some early lessons from her father, who was the only doctor in her area who would treat poor Jewish patients with typhus. How has a family member or teacher's words inspired you to pursue an important cause in your life?

## ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review each chapter and have students summarize what is happening in the chapter, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about how Irena's story inspired them and how she demonstrated bravery and persistence throughout World War II.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an



action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. Guide students to the glossary at the back of the book for further definitions.

6. Use the text features to help ELL students make sense of what they're reading. The table of contents, chapter titles, callout boxes, bolded words, and diagrams are all visual aids in helping students prepare to engage with the text.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

*(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)*

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English Language Arts

*(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)*

*(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9; Range of Writing, Strand 10)*

*(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)*

1. Have students make a list of the times that Irena had to save children in the face of fear and the guards. Students can look in the text for the different events that Irena had to save children from the German guards. Then students should make a graphic organizer: Problem/Confrontation; How Irena Solved the Problem. Students can refer back to this list when thinking about how Irena faced so many different obstacles and life-threatening situations and how she saved children when confronting the Nazis in Poland. What qualities does she demonstrate in each of these instances? What earlier in her life or

background may have prepared her to react the way that she did in these moments?

2. Have students write an essay or reaction to Irena's quote, "Every child saved with my help and the help of all the wonderful secret messengers, who today are no longer living, is the justification of my existence on this earth, and not a title to glory." What do students think of when they read this statement? Have students talk about Irena's humility and her loyalty to her mission to help others. What does it mean to be humble? How do Irena's words inspire them in their own lives? Ask students to think about what Irena might think about having a book written about her, particularly a book that is written for an audience of young people.
3. Provide students with excerpts from the text about how Irena's father inspired her: "he held his daughter's hand and told her that if she ever saw someone drowning, she must jump in and try to save that person, even if she could not swim" and "The Jewish people are drowning, she thought, and she knew that she had to help them." How is this the word "drowning" in both excerpts an example of a metaphor, and what did both Irena and her father mean by "drowning?" How does this word demonstrate what was happening to Jewish people during World War II and in the ghettos? Why did they use this word to demonstrate the impact of what was occurring? Have students write a reaction essay to both excerpts from the text and how the metaphor centered Irena's work. Then ask students to write a persuasive essay arguing whether they agree with Irena's father's statement or not. Is it applicable to current events today? Can young people contribute similarly? Why or why not?
4. Have students read the LEE & LOW interview with Marcia Vaughan and Ron Mazellan about their picture book, *Irena's Jars of Secrets* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/irena-s-jars-of-secrets/interviews>). Have students write



a journal entry in response to the interview. What did the interview make them think about? What new information did they learn about Irena Sendler, the author, and the illustrator? What resonated with students the most after reading the interview? In a letter to the author or illustrator, students can ask other questions they would like to ask both Marcia Vaughan and Ron Mazellan after reading the chapter book version, *The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler*?

- Have students think about expository nonfiction versus narrative nonfiction. How was reading *The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler* different from reading a newspaper article about Irena? Have students read the article, “Irena Sendler: Rescuer of the Children of Warsaw” from [TheJewishWoman.org](https://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/939081/jewish/Irena-Sendler.htm) ([https://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article\\_cdo/aid/939081/jewish/Irena-Sendler.htm](https://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/939081/jewish/Irena-Sendler.htm)). Have students create a Venn Diagram with the headings, “Narrative Nonfiction: The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler” and “Expository Nonfiction: ‘Irena Sendler: Rescuer of the Children of Warsaw.’” Students can compare and contrast the different formats of the texts and the information they learn in both.
- Encourage students to select a resource from the Text & Sidebar Sources from the back of the book. Students can examine the piece, whether it’s a book, video, photograph, or website, and write a reaction to how they think the author and illustrated were informed by this information and how it helped to develop the book.
- After reading *The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sender*, encourage students to look at more resources about Irena Sendler. Some additional sources of information include Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project (<http://www.irenasendler.org/>), PBS’s Irena Sendler: In the Name of Mothers (<http://www.pbs.org/program/irena-sendler>), and Yad Vashem’s Women of Valor (<http://www.yadvashem.org/>

[yv/en/exhibitions/righteous-women/sendler.asp](http://www.irenasendler.org/en/exhibitions/righteous-women/sendler.asp)). Students can pick a photo, fact, or anecdote about Irena and write a reaction to it. What did they learn about Irena from this source that they hadn’t learned in the book? Encourage students to critically think about and analyze the difference between reading an informational text and looking at facts and photographs. How did they learn differently? What did it make them think about?

- Have students think about the main idea and details for a chapter of their choosing. Looking at the table of contents, have students pick a chapter that interested them. Then, have students write three key details, the most important information, in that chapter. Students can then generate the main idea, or what the chapter was mainly about. Finally, have students form small groups with each student representing a different chapter to share their results.

<p>Details:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p>
<p>Main Idea: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

### Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)  
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

- Help students investigate and conduct a research project on World War II in the Pacific. With older students, encourage them to think about what questions they have or topics that interest them and want to learn more



about. For example, Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, relations before the war, the Japanese internment camps, the role of race in the war, and so on. There are many expert recommended resources and lesson plans, including:

- Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center has a list of lesson plans broken down by grade and topic for elementary through high school ([http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson\\_plans/index.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/lesson_plans/index.asp))
  - Echoes & Reflections is dedicated to educating students about the Holocaust and changing the ways that teachers understand, process, and learn about events of the Holocaust (<https://echoesandreflections.org/teach/>). There are lesson plans, timelines, and resources to help you prepare to teach about the Holocaust.
  - The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has a Resources for Educators page that has Lesson Plans, additional curricular resources, and Teacher Training Programs (<https://www.ushmm.org/educators/lesson-plans>). If possible, plan a visit to this museum, located in Washington, D.C.
  - The Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center has Book Lists for young readers, a Holocaust Curriculum Guide, Educator Tours, and other resources about teaching and learning about the Holocaust. (<https://hhrecny.org/curriculum/>)
2. Have students select an event in the Timeline in the back of the book and conduct a detailed research project about it. Students can refer to the different events indicated on the Timeline and conduct a more detailed study about an event of their choosing. Have students investigate this event with the following questions: Who was important in that event? What was the event? When did it occur? Where did it take place? Why did it happen? Students can create posters with photographs or present videos to demonstrate their findings.
  3. Yad Vashem has a section dedicated to “Women of Valor: Stories of Women Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust.” (<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/righteous-women/index.asp>) Students can pick a woman besides Irena Sendler from the selection and work in pairs or small groups to research more about this individual. What did she do to help save Jewish people from the Holocaust? Consider having students compare and contrast her efforts to Irena Sendler’s. How were they similar? How were they different?
  4. As a follow-up activity, encourage students to research other female historical figures and how they affected history. What did they accomplish? How do these women transcend stereotypes associated with gender during the time period? Furthermore, have students compare and contrast how female historical figures are taught about in contrast to men during that time period in history. What kind of language is used? How are women portrayed in different historical texts and sources from that time period?
  5. Author Marcia Vaughan discovered Sendler’s story first as an obituary. Have students track down multiple obituaries of Sendler’s story from different media outlets. Compare these to each other and to Vaughan’s descriptions of Sendler’s life. Have students analyze what aspects of Sendler’s life are highlighted in each source and what her legacy is. Going further, encourage students to find someone in a featured obituary (written by a staff writer, not submitted by family) in a local, regional, or national newspaper. Based on the obituary and any additional research, students should write a story for young people about this person: What can we learn from this person’s life? As a class, reflect on what it is like to write about another person and their life and with the intention of sharing it with young people.



6. Support students in researching additional people who contributed to the resistance of the Nazis and saving people from the persecution and extermination of the Holocaust. Students can read about Chiune Sugihara in *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/passage-to-freedom>). Students can learn about people who risked their lives to rescue Jewish people from the Holocaust at The Righteous Among The Nation database (<https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous.html>). Trees have been planted to commemorate the rescuers. See if any books for children and young people have been written about these heroic efforts and encourage students to try to create their own.

### Science/STEM

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Encourage students to learn more about typhus and its effects on history. Students can find out how the disease originated and what other populations it has affected. What are the symptoms, and what were the courses of treatment over time? What does typhus look like today and how is it treated?

### Arts/Performing Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Have students create a drawing, painting, or other visual representation after reading *The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler*. Encourage students to think about how the

story impacted them and why it motivated them to create this particular art piece.

### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Provide students with a copy of LEE & LOW’s *Irena’s Jars of Secrets* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/irena-s-jars-of-secrets>). Encourage family members to read this picture-book version of *The Story of World War II Hero Irena Sendler* at home. Have students and their families talk about how this story about such an important historical figure and how she impacted their view of World War II and the Holocaust.
2. Encourage students, family members, and guardians to research Holocaust memorials, museums, and resources. If possible, have families and children look at resources at home. Yad Vashem has a general Holocaust Resource Center for more in-depth information about the Holocaust ([http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/resource\\_center/index.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/resource_center/index.asp)). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has resources for Survivors and their Families if relevant or applicable to students and families in the classroom (<https://www.ushmm.org/remember/office-of-survivor-affairs/resources-for-survivors-and-their-families>).



### Nonfiction Text Features

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)  
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

Types of Print	Point students to the words that are darker in the book, such as <b>typhus epidemic</b> . Why do they think those words are darker, or in bold? What can they use to figure out what the word means if they do not know the meaning? Encourage students to look at the rest of the sentence, and if they still don't know the word's meaning, then point them to the glossary.
Sidebar	When students see: "Typhus," why do they think that the text and format look different from the text on the first few pages in Chapter One? Why do they think that there are these specific parts in the book? What is the point of sidebars? What kind of information can they learn from sidebars?
Table of Contents	Point students to the Table of Contents prior to reading. Why do they think a Table of Contents exists? Why is a Table of Contents important?
Timeline	Show students the timeline in the back of the book. Encourage students to think about why timelines are important. After reading, make photocopies of the timeline and then cut up the different events. Have students rearrange and place the different events in order.
Glossary	Prior to reading, show students the glossary in the back of the book. Why do students think that there is a glossary? What can you find in a glossary? When students read and encounter a bold word, have them go to the glossary and read the definition.

Captions	Ask students why they think there is a line of text next to a photograph, illustration, or diagram. What is the purpose of that line of text, or a caption? How would it be different if there was no caption? Have students look at the photograph of the mothers and children with their hands raised with the caption covered. Have students describe what they see. Then, uncover the caption. Have students describe what they see with the additional knowledge of the caption. How do their feelings about the photograph change when they know the real names of the people in it? Use the caption and the rest of the page to describe the photograph in more detail.
Text Sources	Have students look at the text sources in the back of the book. Why do you think the author chose to include these? Why is it important to show the sources that you used in your writing? Have students select one of the web links (or books if available) and have them look for information that the author could have used in writing the book.
Title	Show students the text that comes after the chapter number. Then, have students read the title of that chapter and make a prediction from the words about what the chapter is going to be about. How does the title of the chapter help them to think about what they're about to read?
Label/Key	Show students the map of Europe in September 1939. Point to the key with the labels for each of the countries in different colors and patterns. What did they learn from this image that they wouldn't have if there wasn't a key with labels? How did the labels help students understand the map better and help them prepare to engage with the rest of the book?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Marcia Vaughan** has written numerous books for young readers, including picture books, beginning readers, and both fiction and nonfiction series. She was inspired to tell Irena Sendler's story after reading her obituary in 2008 and discovering more about her through the work of Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project, an organization dedicated to bringing Irena Sendler's story to the world. Vaughan lives in Tacoma, Washington.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Ron Mazellan** is the illustrator of several award-winning picture books. He is also a professor of art at Indiana Wesleyan University. Mazellan was drawn to this story by Irena Sendler's character and her multiple selfless acts of kindness and courage toward those who had little hope of survival. Mazellan lives in Marion, Indiana.

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com).

## ORDERING INFORMATION

### On the Web:

[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-world-war-ii-hero-irena-sendler> (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25 | **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

## Book Information for

*The Story of World War II Hero*

Irena Sendler



\$8.95, PAPERBACK

978-1-62014-790-0

40 pages, 8-1/2 X 10-3/4

\*Reading Level: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades 3-7

Guided Reading Level: W

Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

**THEMES:** Biography, Overcoming Obstacles, Persistence, World War II, Courage and Bravery, Women's History

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-of-world-war-ii-hero-irena-sendler>

*All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.*