



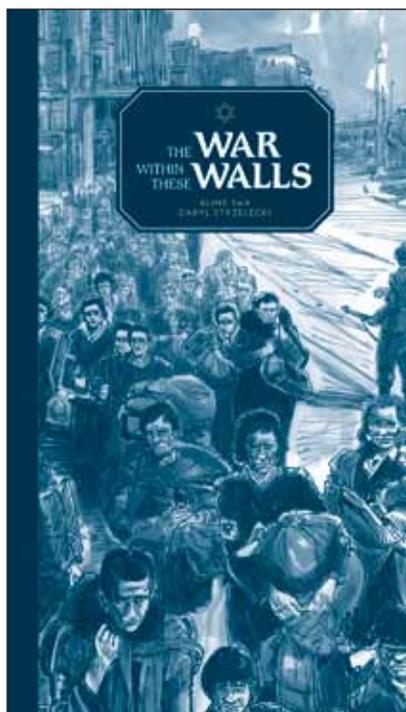
EERDMANS BOOKS  
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Grand Rapids/Cambridge  
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## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

INCLUDES COMMON CORE  
STATE STANDARDS CORRELATIONS

# THE WAR WITHIN THESE WALLS

Written by **ALINE SAX** • Illustrated by **CARYL STRZELECKI**



*It was September 1939 when the Germans invaded our country. A month later, they marched into Warsaw and took up residence as if they were there to stay.*

*The war seemed to be over. But after the dust of the bombings had settled, a very different war began . . . a war against some of us.*

Misha and his family, like the rest of Warsaw's Jews, are harassed and humiliated by the Nazis, and eventually crowded together into a single tiny ghetto. Every day more people die from disease, starvation, and violence. Misha has no way to protect his parents and sister, and no reason to hope — until one day he meets a group of brave young people who have decided that they will not give in to despair. Together they make one final, daring stand.

Drawing on the actual events of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, Aline Sax's spare prose and Caryl Strzelecki's striking images tell a powerful story of incredible courage amid brutal oppression.

Hardcover ISBN: 978-0-8028-5428-5 ♦ \$17.00

4¾" x 8½" ♦ 176 pages ♦ Ages 14 & up

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### TO ORDER

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If you have any suggestions for using *The War within These Walls* with young readers, we would be happy to hear from you.

Eerdmans Books for Young Readers

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### ABOUT the Author

**A**LINE SAX is a Belgian (Flemish) author and translator. She has written a number of historical novels. Visit her website at [www.alinesax.be](http://www.alinesax.be).

### ABOUT the Illustrator

**C**ARYL STRZELECKI is a Belgian (Flemish) illustrator. He has provided art for several children's books as well as numerous newspapers and magazines.

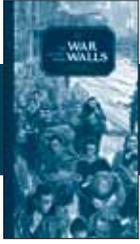
### PRAISE FOR *The War within These Walls*

★ "The combination of the illustrations and the author's spare prose make this a good choice for reluctant readers and an outstanding example of Holocaust fiction."  
— *School Library Journal* (starred review)

★ "I had never felt so Jewish before,' the narrator says. Sax's achievement is to have made every reader feel this with him."  
— *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

★ "Sax gives modern readers an unrelenting, heart-rending insight into the hell that the Nazis created. Gripping, powerful, shattering."  
— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

[www.eerdmans.com/youngreaders](http://www.eerdmans.com/youngreaders)



## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

### THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

- ❖ Anti-Semitism
- ❖ Courage
- ❖ Freedom, liberty
- ❖ The Holocaust
- ❖ World War II

### VOCABULARY USE AND ACQUISITION

Look for the following words in *The War within These Walls*: ghetto, star of Zion, *Judenrat*, malnutrition, typhoid, Aryan. Can you guess the meaning of these words from their context in the book? If not, use an online or print dictionary to find their meaning. **(L.4)**

### KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

When the walls around Warsaw are initially built, Misha thinks about tearing off his armband and escaping the city. But his father believes that would be wrong. Why? **(RL.1)**

When Jews from all over Warsaw were forced into the ghetto, many strangers crowded into Misha's apartment building. He states that they never spoke to one another or became neighbors. Why do you think this was so? **(RL.1)**

Soon after the Germans invaded Warsaw and imposed new rules for Jews, the narrator says "the individuals became a group." How did the Germans strip the Jews of their individuality? Has this happened to other individuals belonging to other groups facing persecution, either historically or in the present? **(RL.2)**

Mordechai Anielewicz explains to Misha that the underground resistance group he leads had resisted in a "passive" way for two years, and now it was time for "active" resistance. Explain the difference between passive and active resistance. **(RL.1)**

Fromka tells Misha that although the rebellion was crushed and its leaders and many participants killed, these people did not die in vain. Do you agree? Why or why not? **(RL.2)**

### SPEAKING AND LISTENING / WRITING

When he received the Nobel Peace Prize, Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel declared, "There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest." Discuss this statement with your classmates. Do you think this is true? How does it relate to the themes and events depicted in *The War within These Walls*? How can you protest against injustice? **(W.1)**

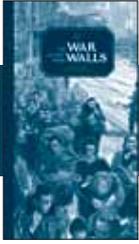
Choose an excerpt from this book and read only the text without looking at the images. Then view only the images from the same excerpt. Write a paragraph comparing the differences in the way text and images tell the story, and then write another paragraph explaining how the telling of the story changes when text and images are paired together. **(RL.7 / W.1)**

Research why the Germans relocated Jews to ghettos and how many ghettos were created in Europe during the WWII. How many Jews were held captive in the Warsaw ghetto? How many were deported from the ghetto to concentration camps, and how many died within the ghetto walls? Write an essay or make a presentation to your class explaining the daily living conditions for Jews in the ghettos, including how they obtained food and whether they were able to maintain jobs, schooling, or worship. **(W.7 / SL.4)**

Suppose you are a journalist living on the outside of the Warsaw ghetto walls. Create a video recording or perform live a series of newscasts reporting on the rebellion by the Jewish resistance movement within the ghetto. **(SL.5)**

Mordechai Anielewicz, the 23-year-old leader of the Jewish resistance in the Warsaw ghetto, wrote a letter to a friend shortly before the rebellion was crushed. View this letter online. Imagine you are the recipient and write a return letter. **(SL.2 / W.9)**

Imagine that you are a member of the Jewish resistance and need weapons and ammunition, which you can only get from Polish citizens outside the ghetto. Write a letter in which you try to convince them to help you. **(W.1 / W.3)**



## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

### CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

What is the predominant tone of this book? How is this tone established by both the text and the illustrations? **(RL.4)**

Misha sees many people give up as the appalling conditions in the ghetto make them lose hope. What emotion sustains Misha when he sees people around him give up? Does this emotion change through the story? **(RL.2 / RL.6)**

What does the parakeet on the wall symbolize? How can you tell this from the text? Explain how the symbol of the parakeet relates to some of the story's major themes. **(RL.2 / RL.4)**

The narrative of this book is spare. There is very little dialogue between characters, and even less commentary on the inner thoughts and feelings of characters. How does the story achieve emotional impact without these conventional techniques? **(RL.6)**

In his diary and official documents, German commander Jurgen Stroop wrote about the Jewish "insurgents." The Jewish survivors called themselves "freedom fighters." These two phrases referred to the same group of people, but carry a very different meaning. What is the difference? **(RL.4)**

### INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

What is the effect of the dark background on certain pages? How might this change if the background were white? **(RL.7)**

Graphic novels have a different kind of rhythm and pacing than a conventional novel. For example, page 31 contains a single word: "Food." What is the effect of pages such as this that contain only a single word or line of text? What is the effect of pages that contain only an image with no text? How do they change the way you read the book? **(RL.7)**

The image on page 42 shows a pair of hands gripped into fists to express Misha's anger and frustration. If you drew an image to express anger without using any words, what would you draw? **(RL.7)**

Mordechai Anielewicz appears as a character in *The War within These Walls*, but he was a real historical person. Do some research to find out more about his involvement in the uprising. How does the author's portrayal of this figure compare to what you've learned about the historical figure? How has the author incorporated historical details about Mordechai and other resistance fighters into this fictional narrative? **(RL.9)**

### RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

- Altman, Linda Jacobs. *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: Striking a Blow Against the Nazis*. Enslow, 2011.
- Kazik (Simha Rotem). *Memoirs of a Warsaw Ghetto Fighter*. Ed. Barbara Harshav. Yale University Press, 2002.
- Kurzman, Dan. *The Bravest Battle: The Twenty-Eight Days of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*. Da Capo, 1993.
- Ringelblum, Emmanuel. *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*. Ed. Jacob Sloan. Ibooks, 2006.
- Thomson, Ruth. *Terezin: Voices from the Holocaust*. Candlewick, 2011.