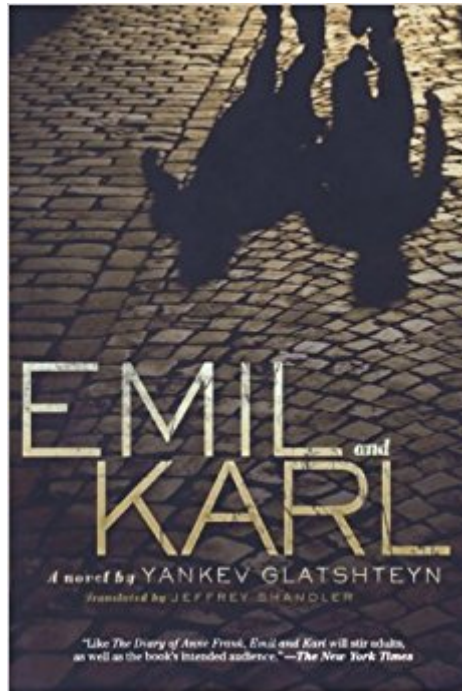




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# Emil And Karl: A Novel



## Synopsis

This is a unique work. It is one of the first books written for young readers describing the early days of the event that has since come to be known as the Holocaust. Originally written in Yiddish in 1938, it is one of the most accomplished works of children's literature in this language. It is also the only book for young readers by Glatshteyn, a major American Yiddish poet, novelist, and essayist. Written in the form of a suspense novel, Emil and Karl draws readers into the dilemmas faced by two young boys--one Jewish, the other not--when they suddenly find themselves without families or homes in Vienna on the eve of World War II. Because the book was written before World War II, and before the full revelations of the Third Reich's persecution of Jews and other civilians, it offers a fascinating look at life during this period and the moral challenges people faced under Nazism. It is also a taut, gripping, page-turner of the first order.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 720L (What's this?)

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Square Fish; Rep Tra edition (March 4, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0312373872

ISBN-13: 978-0312373870

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.6 x 0.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #942,585 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #136 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Holocaust #550 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Military & Wars #585 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Europe

Age Range: 9 - 14 years

Grade Level: 7 - 9

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 5-9 "This novel about two boys growing up in pre-World War II Vienna provides a unique perspective. The author wrote the book after returning to America from a visit to Poland in 1934, and was alarmed at how growing Nazi persecution was changing the face of Europe. It was published in Yiddish in 1940. Emil and Karl are school friends. Emil is Jewish and

has been forced from school. Although Karl is not Jewish, one day men drag his socialist mother away. He goes to find his friend only to discover that Emil's father has been murdered by the Nazis and that his mother has gone crazy with grief. The two boys are totally alone and must escape the omnipresent storm troopers and find food and shelter. They become both observers and victims of the attacks on Jews. Helped by resistance fighters, they eventually escape the city. This important book, newly translated into English, gives a chilling portrait of a world descending into madness as experienced by two innocent children. The excellent translation effectively conveys the helplessness of the characters. As terrifying as their experiences were, the story was written at a time when the full horrors perpetrated by Hitler were yet to occur. While Emil and Karl escaped, the majority of persecuted children did not. A useful comparison might be made to Hans Peter Richter's *Friedrich* (Puffin, 1987), which did not have such a positive outcome.â "Quinby Frank, formerly at Green Hedges School, Vienna, VA Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** Emil and Karl may be "one of the first books about the Holocaust for any age and in any language." So says Jeffrey Shandler, professor of Yiddish Literature and Holocaust Studies at Rutgers University, who has translated the book into English for the first time. The novel, written for children, was published in Yiddish in New York, appearing in February 1940. Its author, a Jewish immigrant from Poland who had written two adult novels, was part of a dynamic Yiddish-speaking community in New York. On a visit home to Poland in 1934, he witnessed growing discrimination against Jews, and he wanted American Jewish children to know about it. Now, long after, translator Shandler fills in what was happening when the book was first published. World War II had begun in 1939, but the U.S. was not yet part of it; Germany had invaded Austria; Jews were viciously persecuted and deported to concentration camps. But even Glatshteyn could not foresee the death camps and genocide that were coming. Why has his novel never been translated before? Beyond the amazing publication history, it's much more than a dutiful read. It's a clear, powerful novel that will bring today's readers very close to what it was like to be a child under Nazi occupation. Told in the third-person from the alternating viewpoints of two friends in Vienna—Emil, who is Jewish, and Karl, who is not—the story begins with the classic nightmare scenario. Karl watches the Nazis drag his mother away; they punch him in the stomach and warn him that they will be back for him. He remembers when his Socialist father was shot dead. Karl tries to find shelter with his Jewish school friend, Emil, but after Nazis shoot Emil's father, the two boys are left on their own. They find kindness and shelter with a neighbor, with a brave member of the Underground, and even with a

police supervisor; but they also find betrayal and vicious cruelty. They witness the destruction of Jewish stores, and, while being taunted by mobs, they are forced to scrub the city pavements with their hands. In an unforgettable ending, the two friends crowd onto trains, and they are separated. Will they be transported to a safe country or to concentration camps? The fast-moving prose is stark and immediate. Glatshetyn was, of course, writing about what was happening to children in his time; his story was not historical fiction then. At times, the story reads like an adventure, but the harsh reality is always there, neither sensational nor sentimental. The translation, 65 years after the novel's original publication, is nothing short of haunting. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A thoroughly engaging and dramatic story that would be appropriate for both young adults and adults. The story moves without stopping and gives an accurate portrait of late 1930s Austria. When my child is in her early teens, and starts learning about what happened in Austria and Germany at that time, I will suggest she read it.

This book was very interesting. It offered a different point of view that helped me to get a better perspective on the whole Holocaust. I would recommend this book to children 5th grade and up. It would also be a great book to be read aloud as a family. We need to never forget!!!

Excellent book! Highly recommend for grades 5/6 and up.

This book was written right before WWII broke out in Vienna in 1940. It was written in Yiddish and it's primary target was Jewish children in the USA to let them know what fellow children in Europe were experiencing. The book is very moving to me as an adult one of the best I have read. Reading this as a child in 1940 and telling my parents about it I'd think it would have caused a bigger outpouring of cries to help the Jews escape. I know the USA suffered huge losses in WWII but I've not heard of groups of children trying to help the children in Europe. The Diary of Anne Frank is a household word, I think this book should be also. Karl and Emil are not real people but they portray what was happening to real people at the time. It was written when it was happening and not decades later. It just saddens my heart that so many were lost. I was not alive during WWII so I don't know what I would have done. I hope I would have begged to have one of these children come live with me. But that is easy to say now I know. Do not get me wrong..I 100% respect those who fought

and won the war for us, I am grateful to all the troops now also. At any rate this is a must read for all 9+yr olds. I at 52 was greatly moved. This is a classic and I am glad it got translated into English.

In 1940 Vienna, Austria, prior to the start of World War II, Karl, who is not Jewish, has just witnessed his mother - a Socialist - being beaten and taken away from his apartment by Nazi thugs. Alone, he must decide what to do. His first thought is to go to his friend Emil's house. Emil is Jewish. His father was taken away and murdered by another group of Nazi's. They cremated him and sent the ashes back to the house. The funeral has just taken place and Emil's mother is sitting shiva. When Karl arrives, they decide to stay together forever. Their experiences describe the sense of terror and horror the people of Austria - Jews and non-Jews - felt when the Nazi's took over their country. Emil and Karl encounter people of all types: the good who work to save people and end the occupation; the bad who force people to do terrible things like scrubbing the streets with their bare hands; and the indifferent who stand by and watch as all of this takes place. This is an excellent book to begin discussing how people reacted when the Nazis came to power. Why did people stay and not leave? Why did some people join the heckling, shouting, evil crowds? Why did others decide to stay and fight from within, saving as many people as they could? While today we know the tragic consequences of the Nazis, this book allows us to enter into a world prior to the war and imagine what we ourselves would have done under similar circumstances. Highly recommended! REVIEWD BY KATHY BLOOMFIELD (NEWTON, MA)

Emil and Karl is a historical fiction novel about two best friends living in Austria during WWII. The two main characters Emil and Karl are two nine year old boys, who are best friends. Emil's father gets executed by the Nazis and his mother goes into a depression, leaving him to take care of himself. Karl lives with his mother, who is a socialist. Because of her political views she gets arrested. Now the boys are without parents and no place to go. They wander the streets of Vienna by themselves always witnessing how Nazis mistreat Jews. They hide in cellars, and sometimes they get fed or sheltered by brave and courageous strangers who are compelled to care for them. Their greatest fear is not the Nazis but they fear that one day they will be separated. Any person who enjoys reading about WW II will like reading this book. The author Yankev Glatshteyn was born in Poland in 1896 and wrote this book in Yiddish. Later it was translated into English. It was written at the very beginning of WW II and it was one of the very first books about the Holocaust. It describes the early days of the Holocaust and how the friendship between a Jewish and a Christian boy remains strong. The author also pays tribute to the people who risk their own life to protect the

children as the Nazis gained more and more power.

The first thing to bear in mind about this book is that it was published in Yiddish in 1940 based on the first hand accounts by Mr. Glatshiteyn from a visit to Vienna in 1934. That means this book wasn't researched... it was WITNESSED. To me, that makes "Emil and Karl" as poignant and as real as Anne Frank's Diary. But this is not a Holocaust tale. This book stands out for me as a cautionary tale for ALL ages during ANY time in history as a succinct exploration of how a nationwide mob mentality can engulf an entire society and eventually result in a Holocaust. But I would be remiss if I didn't also mention that the book succeeds not only in its coverage of such an intense subject, but how it does so with such fine writing. The characters of Emil and Karl are designed with great care and sensitivity to a boy's mentality, and their friendship is truly palpable. Even the many incidental characters such as an old man ordered to clean the sidewalk help to create the tangible environment of a Vienna on the brink of catastrophic madness. Teachers looking to create a curriculum using firsthand accounts of the Holocaust for young adults might want to consider "Emil and Karl" as the FIRST book for their reading list. Then, move on to "The Diary of Anne Frank" and conclude with Anita Lobel's autobiography "No Pretty Pictures", which also stands out for me as a book partly dedicated to surviving the aftermath of the Holocaust.

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