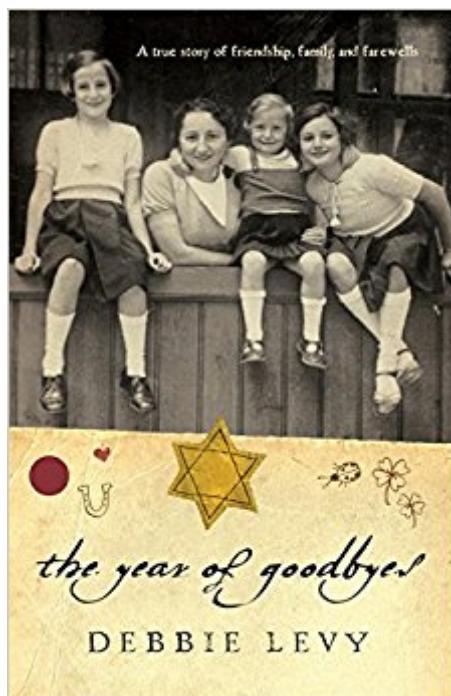


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The Year Of Goodbyes: A True Story Of Friendship, Family And Farewells



Synopsis

Like other girls, Jutta Salzberg enjoyed playing with friends, going to school, and visiting relatives. In Germany in 1938, these everyday activities were dangerous for Jews. Jutta and her family tried to lead normal lives, but soon they knew they had to escape-if they could, before it was too late. Throughout 1938, Jutta had her friends and relatives fill her *poesiealbum*-her autograph book-with inscriptions. Her daughter, Debbie Levy, used these entries as a springboard for telling the story of the Salzberg family's last year in Germany. It was a year of change and chance, confusion and cruelty. It was a year of goodbyes. Praise for *The Year of Goodbyes* * "Artfully weaving together her mother's *poesiealbum* (autograph/poetry album), diary, and her own verse, Levy crafts a poignant portrait of her Jewish mother's life in 1938 Nazi Germany that crackles with adolescent vitality." -Publishers Weekly, starred review * "poignant and chilling . . . [a]n immensely powerful experience ." -Kirkus Reviews, starred review * "An outstanding and emotionally taut read for children...." -School Library Journal, starred review "This would work effectively as an introductory class readaloud to the era, and it would appeal to readers who like their friendship tales grounded in history and truth." -Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 6-8
Inspired by her mother's *poesiealbum* (poetry album), which survived her childhood retreat from Nazi Germany, Levy has created a verse novel slim in length but long on beauty, power, and anguish. Jutta Salzberg lived a normal, happy life until 1938. Although Hitler's reign is in its infancy, Jewish Germans already face severe restrictions in their

lives; segregated schools, shops, and curfews are already the norm, with stories of the public humiliation of elderly Jews and concentration camps to follow. This book is comprised of actual entries in the *poesiealbum* penned by Jutta's friends, interspersed with verses in 12-year-old Jutta's voice that respond to and even challenge the sentiments conveyed within each poem. Although her entries get darker and more frightful during Germany's descent into madness, there is still some joy to be found in birthday presents, friendships, and gymnastics lessons. Jutta, based upon Levy's mother, is a character to whom many preadolescents and adolescents, on the brink of questioning spoon-fed platitudes, can relate. The foreword, explaining *poesiealbums*, and the afterword, detailing Jutta's post-immigration life, are essential reading. The author's extensive research, including tracking down the fate of the majority of Jutta's classmates, is detailed in an understated yet moving tone. A time line including pre- and post-World War II dates, as well as important dates within Jutta's life, is included, as are eight pages of family photos. An outstanding and emotionally taut read for children not quite ready for Jennifer Roy's *Yellow Star* (Marshall Cavendish, 2006) and other, more graphic depictions of the Holocaust.  Jennifer Schultz, Fauquier County Public Library, Warrenton, VA (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Holocaust titles appear every season, prompting some to overlook the genre, but the best always approach the topic from a fresh perspective, making them worthy purchases. Levy shares excerpts from her mother Jutta Salzberg's 1938 poetry album, in which friends and family express good wishes in poems and drawings. She includes reproductions of original pages, English translations, and free verse musings that reflect 11-year-old Jutta's voice and feelings as she watches Jewish friends disappear from Hamburg while her own family waits for U.S. visas. Levy also includes a few entries from Jutta's diary and oblaten (sticker) images from the original. Although entries are short, distinct characters and a strong sense of narrative emerge. Levy ends with the Salzbergs' November 1938 arrival in New York; an afterword provides family and Holocaust background and traces what happened to the people introduced. Similar in scope to Karen Ackerman's *The Night Crossing* (1994), this makes a good introduction to Holocaust literature, especially for those who aren't quite ready for scenes of death camps. Grades 5-8. --Kay Weisman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Debbie Levy's mother is the girl in this true story who, in the tradition of German girls in the 1930's,

had a memory book in which she collected poems, wishes, and autographs of her classmates and family in the memorable year of 1938. Because of terrible events fast unfolding for Jews, Debbie's mother and family barely escaped from Germany hours before they would have been rounded up by the Gestapo. Debbie's mother kept her memory book all through the years and it is amplified with photos as well as a follow-up years later when she was able to be reunited with some of her friends who survived World War II. This is History in action.... girls of today will find that girls back in the 1930's would still have so much in common with one another....this is a real way to understand History from a unique perspective.

Reading this was like being a young girl again, yet, also experiencing some of the fear and anxiety of the unknown in 1930s Germany. Its brevity adds to the strength of the story. Well done.

Very interesting and enjoyable in the words of a young lady; also sad as not all will survive the war. The maturity of these Jewish children under duress amazed me. Would we, could we as spoiled Americans do as well?

A beautiful and compelling story of family and friendship. I didn't want it to end.

Not much to this book..expected more. Very disappointed. I consider it a waste of money. I think it's destined for the landfill.

I was fortunate to have attended the Annapolis Book Festival in April as a panelist on the subject: Young Adult: Keeping It Real. I was even more fortunate to be on the panel with Debbie Levy, author of *The Year of Goodbyes*, who explained how she decided to write the *Year of Goodbyes* using the format she did. The book is about her young Jewish mother living in Nazi Germany, but Levy tells the story through in verse, based on entries in her mother's "posiealbum," a book in which friends record thoughts, poems, and creative postings. Levy also used her mother's personal diary entries and interviews and research to create this real story. I found this book fascinating and her approach most interesting. Although the subject is difficult, Levy treats it with great dignity and respect. The author's choices of which entries to include paint a true picture of an 11-year-old's wonderings about things in life she doesn't completely understand at that age, and some that she does. And Levy helps the rest us with a glimpse into a life that most of us, at all ages, will never comprehend. I highly recommend *The Year of Goodbyes* for people of all ages; Levy keeps it real

through the generations.

While there are many novels and non-fiction books about the Holocaust aimed at young readers, with more appearing every year, Debbie Levy's unique little volume deserves a place on school and public library shelves. Levy's mother, Jutta Salzberg, and her immediate family were among the fortunate few--they left Germany in 1938 for America, barely escaping arrest and probable death at the hands of the Nazis. One of the few cherished items Jutta was able to bring with her was her posiealbum, or poetry album, a kind of scrapbook popular with young girls in Germany in the 1930's. As Levy explains in the introduction, posiealbums were blank books in which young people "collected poems, drawings, and expressions of good wishes from friends and family." Levy intersperses reproductions of actual pages from the posiealbum, along with English translations, with free verse poetry written in her mother's voice. These poems link the entries together and narrate the tale of the family's experiences in 1938, their last year in their homeland, poignantly described in the title as the year of goodbyes. Through Jutta's reflections and those of her friends and family in the posiealbum, we see life go from bad to worse for this typical 12-year-old girl and her family. As persecution of the Jews worsened, Jutta's father obtains permission from the Nazis to leave Germany, but will he be able to get visas for them to emigrate to the United States? He becomes increasingly desperate, even threatening to jump out the window of the American Consultate in Hamburg. When the visas are finally obtained, we see the family's preparations to leave Germany, as they are forced to leave nearly all their possessions and money behind. None of their friends and family could imagine what was in store, however, for those who remained behind. Levy has carefully researched the fate of all those friends and relatives who inscribed their best wishes in Jutta's album; in an afterword, she reveals what happened to each. As the reader can easily imagine, many of them later perished in the camps. The afterword also provides a context for the year described in this book, so that young people without much knowledge of the period can understand the developments which surrounded Jutta's family and friends. In addition, Levy provides a helpful note on how she did her research on those who had written in Jutta's album and a selected bibliography for further exploration of issues surrounding the Holocaust. While the reader would imagine that Jutta, having safely escaped Nazi Germany, never saw any of her classmates again, there is an astonishing footnote to this story. When Levy wrote an article published in the Washington Post in 1998 about her mother's escape from Nazi Germany, the article was seen by several of Jutta's former classmates that were now living in the U.S. In 2000, seven of the "girls" from Jutta's Hamburg school held at reunion in Washington, D.C., bringing their posiealbums with

them. One can only imagine their joy and also their sorrow for those classmates who did not survive the Holocaust. Through a blog, Levy has begun a posiealbum project through which readers can continue the posiealbum tradition by posting their thoughts and feelings on an on-line album. Viewers can also see some of the original pages from Jutta Salzberg's poesiealbum, reproduced in full color rather than black and white as in the book--plus an image of the poesiealbum itself.

Told through the actual diary /autograph book entries of Levy's mother from 1938, Year of Goodbyes is a heartbreakingly touching look through the eyes of a young Jewish girl at the days leading up to the Holocaust. The entries were touching enough; however, Levy's follow-up research concerning what happened to everyone else mentioned in the days after the entries is chilling and what really hits the reader. A well-researched book that would be an excellent companion to Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl in the classroom, or a stand alone.

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