

a compelling historical fiction that addresses issues with which the world is still struggling: lessons about civil liberties being taken away in the name of national security and the acquiescence of silence when wrongdoing is taking place. The Jewish content consists of Helmuth's frustration with anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda and the treatment of Jewish classmates and storeowners. There is also an account of Kristallnacht which shows the true character, or lack thereof, of the Nazis. This book is recommended for libraries with extensive Holocaust collections. It belongs on the shelf with *Someone Named Eva* (Clarion, 2007) and *Hitler Youth*, which give perspective on non-Jewish experiences during World War II. Given the detailed descriptions of torture, this book is appropriate for readers aged 14 and up.

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ISRAEL

***The Bat-Chen Diaries.* Trans. by Diana Rubanenko. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2008. 112pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-8807-8. Grades 6-10.**

Bat-Chen Shahak's collected journal entries, letters, poems, and photos introduce us to a charming and gifted Israeli girl, as she grows from age ten to fourteen. Her sensitivity, innocence, and her ultimate fate evoke an earlier diarist, who wrote, "despite everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." Although Kar-Ben Publishing focuses on books for Jewish children, here is one book that could have a much wider appeal. Almost any American youngster could identify with Bat-Chen's writings, wherein she describes her first schoolgirl crush, feelings of love yet annoyance with her parents, and sadness at the death of beloved grandparents.

Of course, there are a few experiences that non-Jewish (and even some Jewish) American children might *not* identify with so readily: fasting on Yom Kippur, struggling to learn to don a gas mask, and longing for peace. These American readers might wonder what Yom Kippur is, or why Bat-Chen has to learn about gas masks. And what is "Purim"—the holiday that coincided with her fifteenth birthday—the day on which she was killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber? Unfortunately, the reader's knowledge of these things is assumed.

This children's book, unique in that it puts a human face on the statistics about terror victims, might be the only place where American youngsters can meet a real-life Israeli child who shares her feelings and dreams. It would be so enhanced by a few explanatory notes to make Bat-Chen's life a bit more meaningful and comprehensible to them, and it would also benefit from captions for the photographs from Bat-Chen's picture album. Which one in this sleepover scene is Bat-Chen? Is that her friend Ye'ela hiking with her? *The Bat-Chen Diaries* is recommended for children in grades 6 and up, who will find making Bat-Chen's acquaintance a pleasure. However a golden teaching opportunity may have been lost. Perhaps a second edition will provide those few sentences here and there to put the diary's entries in context, and explain why, for example, a ten-year-old child wrote a poem called "The Gas Mask."

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Hanel, Rachael. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.* Days of Change Series. Mankato, MN: Creative Education, 2008. 48pp. \$21.95. ISBN: 978-1-58341-5481. Grades 7-12.

This is a survey of the Arab-Israeli conflict, from nineteenth-century Zionism through the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. Nearly half its 48 pages are full-page photographs, mainly archival photos, and the caption insets are well done, informative, and relevant to the narrative. This title offers a better effort than other, similar series books about the Middle East conflict, but it suffers from the common drawback of assigning free-lance writers to write books on complex subjects about which they have little expertise. While much of the narrative is excellent, there are a few errors of fact. Examples are the assertion that Palestinians began to "clamor for an independent state" before World War I, or that it was an "age-old belief among some Europeans that Jews were inferior to the Caucasian race." There are places where a lack of clarity misleads the reader. An example is the statement that the UN partition plan "created borders for Israel and designated areas for Palestinians." (The plan created borders and states for both peoples.) And there are important omissions. For example: yes—"Israeli tanks and troops poured into the West Bank" in 2002, but this was in response to the Passover massacre in Netanya, which killed 29 people and injured 140 others, as they prepared to observe the seder ceremony. The West Bank town of Jenin had become a center for launching these terrorist attacks and after the Netanya assault, Israel sought to root out the terrorist infrastructure.

Hanel is a good writer, who has written other titles for this publisher, on less controversial topics, such as penguins, parrots, gladiators, and koalas. But authors of books on complicated historical/political subjects should bring enough depth of background to their task that readers can trust that factual errors and subtle, if unintended, bias are absent. I'm afraid this solid effort fails that test. Includes index and short bibliography

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Luxenberg, Alan. *The Palestine Mandate and the Creation of Israel, 1920-1949.* The Making of the Middle East Series. Philadelphia: Mason Crest, 2008. 80pp. \$22.95. ISBN: 978-1-4222-0171-1. Grades 7-12.

"People often use the terms 'state' and 'nation' interchangeably. However ... it is important to understand the difference between these terms when studying the history of the Middle East ... a *state* is the political apparatus that governs a country, while a *nation* is a group of people who share a cultural heritage ... Nationalism is the idea that a nation should have its own state." As those opening words of text indicate, readers of *The Palestine Mandate and the Creation of Israel* will be treated to a clarity of writing rarely seen in social studies series books for pre-college age students. They will also meet with a striving for objectivity, which is the hallmark of the discipline of historical writing. From the Ottoman background to World War II's aftermath, from modern Zionism's origins to the development of Arab nationalism, the author chronicles the attempts, successes, and setbacks in the effort to satisfy the nationalistic drives of the two nations—Arab and Jewish—of Palestine. Trivia is excluded; the essentials of the historical record are included. The glossary and timeline entries are concise and devoid of propaganda.