

Title- Milkweed

Author- Jerry Spinelli

Genre- Historical Fiction

Main Characters: Misha, Uri, Janina,

Setting: Warsaw Ghetto, WWII over the course of 3-4 years

Pages- 234

AR Points- 7

Reading Level- 4th +

Awards: Golden Kite Award (Fiction, 2003)

ALA Best Books for Young Adults (2004)

Iowa Teen Award Nominee (2007-2008)

Summary- The book starts with a flashback of life in Warsaw during WWII. The main character is a young boy who does not know his name, only that everyone calls him "Stop Thief" so he assumes that is his name. He is an orphan running the streets with a pack of boys living the good life during the time period. Over the course of the novel his life transforms into a poor, starving, frightened and somewhat adopted child to a family. He is given the name Misha. He is the sole provider of his new family in the Warsaw Ghetto. The misery and agony Misha has to overcome to make it out of the Ghetto is a reminder of how history should never repeat itself.

Themes- There are many universal ideas that could be covered in this book such as:

-Family

-Hardships

-Determination

-Gratitude

-Survival

Rationale- This novel lends itself effortlessly to 7th grade reading. The young boy and girl in the story are very relatable to students. While the travesty the children faced during the Holocaust is atrocious our

students can connect to the idea of belong or not belonging to a group and what it means to care for others through selflessness.

Having this book as a 7th grade novel is a good fit because the literary elements are clear for students, lends itself to discussion, writing projects, creating connections and will be easy to align with learning targets.