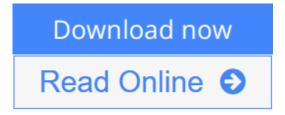


Hitler's Canary: A Daring Tale of Wartime Adventure

By Sandi Toksvig



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"My brother stood up so quickly he almost knocked Mama over. 'Why aren't you doing something? Do you know what the British are calling us? Hitler's canary! I've heard it on the radio, on the BBC. They say he has us in a cage and we just sit and sing any tune he wants.""

Bamse's family are theater people. They don't get involved in politics. "it had nothing to do with us," Bamse tells us. Yet now he must decide: should he take his father's advice and not stir up trouble? Or should he follow his brother into the Resistance and take part in the most demanding role of his life?



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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 5–7—When Nazi invasion brings a restrictive dictatorship to the fair and free-thinking Danes, Bamse's theatrical family chooses to ignore the increasingly dangerous circumstances in the hope that their gentile family and thespian lifestyle will not be affected. Older brother Orlando sees the writing on the wall and joins the Resistance while Uncle Johann sides with the Nazi sympathizers, hoping for survival through cooperation. Caught in a cage between the British and German fighting, Denmark is dubbed "Hitler's Canary." The increasing number of arrests and likely deportation of all Danish Jews force the Skovlunds to come to terms with reality. Bamse and his Jewish friend Anton begin to work secretly alongside Orlando until Anton's family is forced into hiding. Bamse's political-cartoonist father loses his job and his famous stage-actress mother makes good use of her acting talent to create an effective diversion for the Gestapo searching their home. Through the voice of 12-year-old Bamse, Toksvig mixes in a sardonic humor that adds spice and comic relief to a story about a very perilous and frightening time. Drawing on real events and the experiences of her family, she re-creates an episode in history when many citizens willingly put their lives at risk to participate in the 10-day rescue of the Danish Jews during the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur holidays of 1943. In total, close to 7200 Jews and 689 non-Jews escaped to Sweden. Readable, intriguing, and realistic, with a good epilogue and author's note appended.—Rita Soltan, Youth Services Consultant, West Bloomfield, MI

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From Booklist

In this novel based on the experiences of Toksvig's father, the Germans' 1940 invasion of Denmark sweeps a family into heartrending historical drama. Ten-year-old Bamse yearns to take a stand against the occupation like his daring older brother Orlando, despite their father's counsel of quiet cooperation. Gradually, though, the whole family sways to Orlando's position--refusing, along with thousands of other Danes, to be "Hitler's canary" and "just sit in a cage and sing any tune he wants." Mother Marie devises an ingenious subterfuge to shelter neighboring Jews; even blunt Uncle Johann, initially a Nazi sympathizer, does his part to rescue escapees to Sweden--part of the 1943 exodus, elaborated upon in an endnote, in which more than 8,000 were ferried to safety. Though such suspenseful episodes will thrill readers, it is Bamse's growing courage and deepening understanding that drive the story. For additional perspectives on the Danish resistance, suggest Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* (1989) and Ellen Levine's nonfiction work *Darkness over Denmark* (2000). *Anne O'Malley*

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Review

"An extraordinary story . . . Truly life-affirming." ?Michael Morpurgo, bestselling author of War Horse

"Through the voice of twelve-year-old Bamse, Toksvig mixes in a sardonic humor that adds spice and comic relief to a story about a very perilous and frightening time. Drawing on real events and the experiences of her family, she re-creates an episode in history when many citizens willingly put their lives at risk to participate in the ten-day rescue of the Danish Jews during the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur holidays of 1943. In total, close to 7200 Jews and 689 non-Jews escaped to Sweden. Readable, intriguing, and realistic, with a good epilogue and author's note appended." *?School Library Journal*

"Though such suspenseful episodes will thrill readers, it is Bamse's growing courage and deepening understanding that drive the story." *Booklist*

"There are not many classic children's novels about the Second World War but this is one of them. Toksvig's enchanting and inspiring tale reminds us of how even the smallest people made a difference." *?The Times*

"A page-turner written with warmth and wit, not to mention a keen narrative sense." ?Time Out

"Racily written and full of comic incident as well as suspense." ?Independent

"Brilliantly told . . . Never loses sight of the child's view of war." ?Guardian

"Funny and gripping." ?Funday Times

"Sandi Toksvig is a national treasure." ?Deborah Ross, Inside

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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