

“Prisoner B-3087”

Alan Gratz

Reviewed by: Laura Zhang, 13

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

Yanek Gruner is only ten years old when German soldiers start infiltrating his home city. As a Jew in the middle of the Holocaust (a period of mass extermination of Jews), Yanek’s life changes drastically. His previous life of boyish games now turns into a fight for his life. When the Nazis start sending Jews to work camps, Yanek and his family hide in a chicken coop, convinced it’s the only way to avoid being taken. Sadly, it’s not enough to shield his parents who are taken away when Yanek is thirteen years old. Now parentless, Yanek must fend for himself in a terrifying world. When Yanek himself is taken as a prisoner at sixteen, he encounters a whole new evil that even the hardships of the previous years couldn’t prepare him for. Yanek is forced into grueling work camps with barely enough food to survive and horrendous living conditions. Innocent Jews receive terrible punishments and death for no reason except being Jewish. Yanek was carted off to ten of these horrible work camps, with long death marches along the way. He experienced many near-death experiences and heartbreaking moments. As life gets harder and harder, Yanek must push through all the misery and despair to survive. In this heart wrenching and terrifying account by Alan Gratz, Yanek must find the will to keep living in the darkest of times - or die trying.

I really enjoyed reading *Prisoner B-3087*. It is written in a simplistic way but still captures the inspirational story of Yanek in this terrible time in history. There was a lot of details and everything was very well put together. We learn about Yanek’s life before the Holocaust, which set up for later parts of the book and makes us realize just how devastating all his losses were. It is truly amazing how Yanek pushed through even in the darkest of times to find some sort of life to cling on to, even in such inhumane conditions. When I read the book, I could feel what Yanek felt, which takes a vivid book to do. I felt his despair when his parents were captured, and the terror mixed with determination at the work camps. I experienced heart pounding moments of suspense and small but bursting amounts of joy. This book made me think about the Holocaust in a deeper way and made me realize just how horrible it really is.

As much as I liked the book, there was one thing that stood out to me in a negative way. I found that the book would get a little repetitive at some points. After a while, all the misery and cruelty just overwhelmed me and didn’t make the story seem as interesting. There’s only so much you can read about suffering without getting a little bored of it. Aside from that, the story was extremely captivating, and I would highly suggest this book to anyone older than 10, especially students learning about the Holocaust. The violence is a little extreme at some points, but not too bad as Holocaust books go. If you want a gripping and emotional Holocaust story, look at *Prisoner B-3087*.

Recommended Titles:

Grenade by Alan Gratz

The Boy on the Wooden Box by Leon Leyson

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas by John Boyne