

Prisoner B-3087

Alan Gratz

Reviewed by: Rishi Chillara, 14 years old.

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

www.bethestaryouare.org

It is 1939 in Krakow. 10-year-old Yanek Gruener is a Jewish living a great and peaceful life, and he is happy with it, until the Nazis come and invade their homeland. One by one, the Nazis “liquidate” his home, and he tries to stay safe doing things he could not have ever imagined, like doing his bar mitzvah in his basement and living near a pigeon coop. But then, the Nazis find him and his family and send him off to the concentration camps. Now, Yanek is nameless (only known by his prisoner insignia B-3087) and now he is tasked with one thing. Survive.

Throughout this book which is based, he constantly faces adversaries and dangers, happiness and new friendships made in the camps snuffed away quickly in this fast-paced novel as Yanek strives to survive ten concentration camps (and tries to escape a few) in this tale of Prisoner B-3087, based on a real life story by Ruth and Jack Gruener.

This book is very hyped and heavily requested to be reviewed by many people of the Be the Star You Are! community, and with good reason. This book offers a real representation and point of view as a Jewish Holocaust prisoner during the long, dark years of World War 2. It opens our eyes to see the sadistic concentration camps that murdered Jews and other Non-Aryan ethnicities simply for the fact that they exist. This book, in my opinion, shows the concept of war and how bad it is very well. It provides a simple, short way to convey a grand and very meaningful message. This book also has a sense of friendship and talks about the complex feelings of survival and “all men for themselves”, as the main character, Yanek (who throughout the book is a charming boy who never gives up), weighs these opinions and more in the dialogue in this book that really makes you think. It also has a sense of adventure in it, as the main character who is obviously in a concentration camp faces adversaries from every corner and expertly evades them while weighing in on his own survival. Also, the connected storylines (10 camps. 10 good stories) tie together as the story’s flow stays consistent throughout the book. It establishes characters very well to the point you believe these fictional characters are real in this historical time.

However, as good as this book is, no book is without mistakes or critiques. This book does, unfortunately, have mistakes. For one, the pacing. Throughout this book, I feel that the pacing has derailed in some significant parts of chapters, yet then, without warning, automatically go back together again. I found this unfortunate mistake littered throughout this novel and made me feel weird when reading this book. I understand that the author intended this for younger audiences and wanted to gloss over some development due to them being a bit grisly and having too complex themes for the middle graders to understand, but I think that also had taken away some good, ACTUALLY NEEDED parts for the book. This book also has some VERY SLOW parts, so warning if you are kind of a fast-paced reader like me. Either way, though, this book is still very exciting, nonetheless. It DOES have some problems with the length (should be way longer) and with pacing (cutouts of the story), yet this book is still very captivating. I would recommend to any mature middle grader (4th to 5th graders and up, A.K.A. 9-10-year-olds and up) because this book has NO language whatsoever and the violence is just there for shock, but

notice how I said MATURE middle grader, because some themes will need explaining and a good way of handling. Will recommend this book for a good read from the library sometime soon!

Recommended Titles:

Number the Stars, by Lois Lowry

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas, by John Boyne

Night, by Elie Wiesel