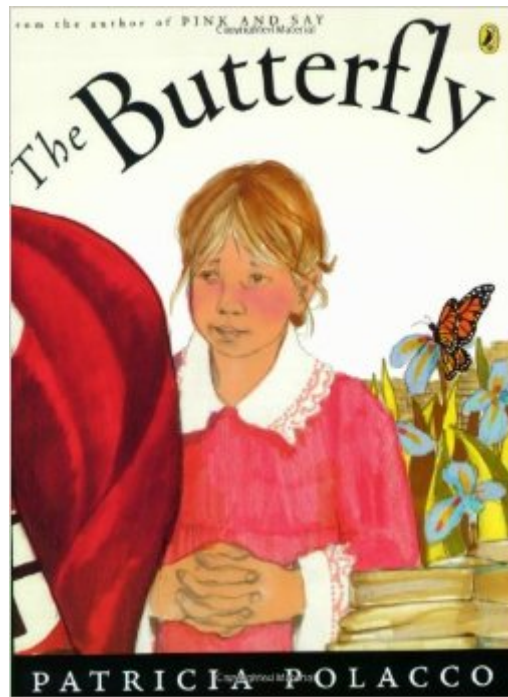


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# The Butterfly



## Synopsis

Ever since the Nazis marched into Monique's small French village, terrorizing it, nothing surprises her, until the night Monique encounters "the little ghost" sitting at the end of her bed. She turns out to be a girl named Sevrine, who has been hiding from the Nazis in Monique's basement. Playing after dark, the two become friends, until, in a terrifying moment, they are discovered, sending both of their families into a nighttime flight.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0430 (What's this?)

Paperback: 48 pages

Publisher: Puffin Books; Reprint edition (February 5, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0142413062

ISBN-13: 978-0142413067

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.2 x 10.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (43 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #36,343 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #10 in Â Books > Children's Books >

Education & Reference > History > Holocaust #20 in Â Books > Children's Books > Education &

Reference > History > Europe #101 in Â Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Historical

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

## Customer Reviews

Acquainting readers with holocaust history, *The Butterfly* by Patricia Polacco successfully maintains virtuosity to a war tale of sadness and tragedy while still exploring a delicate balance between the horrors of war and the childish innocence of two little girls cheerfully building a friendship. Based on the life experience of the author/illustrator's aunt Monique, the girl protagonist discovers that her family is hiding a Jewish family in her home. Secretly meeting and playing together each night after the other members of the families sleep, Monique and Sevrine build a poetic friendship full of hope, happiness, and a childish energy that defies the boundaries between war cultures. After a neighbor catches sight of the girls playing too close to the window, the girls realize that the secret hiding place might be suspected. The plot races onward to an exciting climax as Monique and Sevrine must divulge not only their secret friendship but also the new danger to their parents. Escaping to a

new hiding place, Sevrine's family is whisked away into the dark night of the unknown, while Monique hopes for her friend's safety. A symbolic butterfly fluttering through the French family's garden later assures Monique that her friend must be alive and safe. An author's note in the end pages assures readers that Sevrine did survive the holocaust-although her parents were not as fortunate. The characters, while handled lightly in words, convey roundness in the authentic sense of emotions as they run the gamut of fear, comfort, hate, and love. Convincing as a memoir, *The Butterfly* successfully conveys the quiet strength of individuals amidst trial. Perfect as a delicate and sophisticated handling of a cruel time in history, *The Butterfly* provides an appropriate way to dialogue with children about the uglier side of humanity-without crossing into the gruesome or blatantly shocking (although also true) stories of war that sometimes make war books inappropriate for younger children. *The Butterfly* provides allusions to war crimes that will be understood by older children while still providing an eye-opening tale of friendship to younger children. Targeting the age range of 6-9, *The Butterfly* adeptly provides insight into the beauty of life while describing life's fragility. Known as the author/illustrator of numerous books including *Pink and Say*, Patricia Polacco's pencil and watercolor illustrations highlight the contrast between the cruel and the innocent. The dust jacket of the book is a perfect symbol of the juxtaposition between innocence and cruelty since the front side of the cover depicts irises, a butterfly, and a young girl with warm watercolor tones and delicate chiaroscuro while flipping the book over reveals a Nazi officer with a hard-set jaw and unseen eyes with a swastika banner depicted in harsh black, gray, and browns. Polacco's story is an important history while her illustrations make that history palatable and vivid to child and adult viewers. Experiencing *The Butterfly* means contemplating unsettling human history while savoring the security of friendship.

I'm not quite sure why booklist would think it unfortunate that a book is sentimental and melodramatic. I feel this book reflects the Polacco style that we have all come to know and love. The voice is true, the artwork divine and the message is clear, yet not preachy. I think this is a wonderful book and a great way to open discussions about war and racism with children.

This story is about Monique, a little girl living in Nazi occupied France. One night she discovers what she believes to be a ghost sitting on her bed. Later Monique discovers that the figure she saw was not a ghost, but a little Jewish girl named Sevrine who was hiding from the Nazis in Monique's basement. Monique and Sevrine become close night-time friends. They play in the shadows of the night as Sevrine hides from the Nazis. Then one day Sevrine is discovered. Sevrine and her family

are forced to flee from this little French town. I was tremendously moved by this story, and my nine-year old daughter loved it as well. Patricia Polacco does a wonderful job of putting such a trying and horrible situation in words that a child can understand. I highly recommend this book.

The reviews state that THE BUTTERFLY has a target audience of ages 6-9 but I disagree! Polacco's lovely stories have appeal for all generations. Today is my daughter's birthday; she is a new 2nd grade teacher. My favorite gifts to her are six Patricia Polacco books. THE BUTTERFLY was written in honor of Polacco's great aunt, Marcelle Soliliage and her Aunt, Monique Gaw. Marcelle was part of the French underground and resistance during World War II. She bravely hid Jews in her home during the Nazi occupation. Monique was oblivious to these happenings until she met a young Jewish girl, Sevrine who happened to be hiding in the basement. A friendship developed that has endured many decades, right up to today! Polacco's exquisite story teaches the reader about true bravery, honor, and self-sacrifice (not to mention the history of a time not so long ago). How many of us would do today, as these valiant heroes have done many times in the past?

Monique finds her life changed by the Nazis during the war; but her real change comes when she discovers a Jewish girl is hiding from them in her own basement. The two become friends, but their friendship endangers their families. Good reading skills required for this fiction story of wartime friendships and experiences.

My 3rd graders had asked a lot about Hitler, Nazis, and the Holocaust after one student had brought up the subject. I tried to make it understandable to that age group. But when I was searching some of Patricia Polacco's books for another unit, I came across The Butterfly. I decided this was the perfect way for my students to access the subject, by seeing it through the eyes of these 2 girls. My class was so quiet and focused as I read it. We talked about it a lot when I finished. As usual, Mrs. Polacco handles a tough subject with sensitivity and art that conveys the deeper meaning, yet in a way elementary students can handle. I am an even bigger fan of her after reading this book.

I love a story about people helping the Jews during WWII but I'm not quite sure this is for very young children. Children about nine years old on up would like this story. I love all Patricia Polacco's books. She tackles some very controversial and sensitive subjects matter and does it well.

Patricia Polacco captivates young and old alike with this story of friendship and courage that is

based on real events. Polacco brings the story of the Nazi occupation in France to her readers through a family hiding a Jewish family in their basement. Polacco uses rich water color illustrations to evoke feelings of fear and hope. Told from a child's point of view, this story opens the door to discussions of prejudism and racism during this time of national unrest.

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