ForeWord Reviews

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Appel is Forever: A Child's Memoir
Suzanne Mehler Whiteley
Wayne State University Press
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The holocaust did not end for Whiteley when Russian troops marched into Bergen-Belsen, saving what was left of her family from the daily nightmare of her childhood in the concentration camp.

In Appel is Forever, Whiteley gives readers a glance at her scarred childhood as the daughter of a rabbi. She tells her story with the simple words and innocent voice of an eight-year-old of 1943 living in a concentration camp facing life's ultimate struggle—survival. "Do you die a little part at a time?" the young Whiteley hauntingly wonders.

Whiteley often found herself striving to understand her life. She knew only that her growing body ached from want for more than the daily allowance of one slice of bread and bowl of thin turnip soup. For two years, Whiteley lived in the camps. Every day she was pushed into submission, reminded of her fear, threatened with the whack of a Nazi club over her head. Every day she and all the other prisoners lined up with their stars of David showing. Every day they were counted and inventoried under a hateful gaze to be sure no one escaped in the night. It was a trauma that would stay with Whiteley even after she and her mother came to the United States. In America, they tried to leave the holocaust behind them. They tried to forget about Whiteley's dead father and grandmothers. They even tried to bury their Jewish identity.

In the second and third parts of the book, Whiteley describes her life and struggles after the holocaust ended and the world assumed everything could just go back to "normal." A timeline at the beginning of the memoir helps walk readers through the years of tough adjustment for Whiteley as she and her family tried to find a place they could again call home.

Through her very human struggle to heal in these post-World War II years, Whiteley creates a deep bond with readers. Her tale filled with horrors of the holocaust and complexity of recovery easily earns readers? adoration.

Marjory Raymer