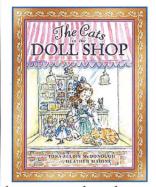


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## In The Spotlight



McDonough, Yona Zeldis. *The Cats in the Doll Shop*. Illus. by Heather Maione. New York: Viking, 2011. 140 pp. \$14.99. (9780670012794). Advance reading copy. Ages 7–11.

The Cats in the Doll Shop is the welcome companion book to last year's The Doll Shop Downstairs by Yona Zeldis McDonough. Reading about Mama and Papa Breitleman, their three daughters and their doll making shop in lower New York, around 1914, lets children travel back to the world where people wrote letters, washed and dried the dishes together, and made dolls by hand in a small shop. In those days, Jewish families did not keep cats or dogs in the house. This story features a kitten with a broken leg, who drops (is kicked) into the family's back yard, and a sad and lonely cousin Tania who is sent across the ocean to live with and cousins. But the Breitleman family is good at nurturing and repairing dolls,

her aunt and uncle and cousins. But the Breitleman family is good at nurturing and repairing dolls, lonely little girls, and even kittens. Sad Tania slowly begins to feel safe and at home, thanks to Mama, Papa, and the story's resourceful eleven-year-old narrator, Anna, who thinks of welcoming Tania with a doll, and makes it herself. Heather Maione's warm and lively sketches bring the book's characters to visual life.

There is considerable Jewish content here, both in the observance of Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah, and

**Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens** 

## HOLOCAUST AND WORLD WAR II

Diamond, Chavi. *The Promise*. Illus. by Luda Stekol. New York: Heart to Heart Memories, 2011. 32 pp. \$11.00. No ISBN. Pbk. Grades 4–6.

Holocaust picture books are problematic. The books are written to introduce the concept of the Holocaust to young children. However, the topic of the Holocaust is too heavy psychologically and contextually for young children. Experts do not recommend teaching the Holocaust until students are in the fourth grade or above (*Teaching the Holocaust*, Los Angeles: Torah Aura, 2007, p. 13).

A child of survivors, Ms. Diamond wanted to ensure that future generations know about the Holocaust. The publisher, Heart to Heart Memories, collects first-hand stories from survivors and their families. The story recounts how Diamond's aunt's happy childhood in Hungary is disrupted when Nazis tear her family from their home and send them to a ghetto. Later, the aunt and her sister are separated from the rest of her family and are taken to a concentration camp. *The Promise* serves as an excellent introduction to the Holocaust because Diamond's narrative excludes descriptions of Nazi brutality towards Jewish people. In addition, the illustrations are not scary; there are no dark, menacing images of Nazi soldiers. The story is written from an Orthodox Jewish perspective as the author describes the girls in concentration camps while they struggle to keep mitzvos but do not have a siddur to pray with. Footnotes are provided to define the terms. A psychologist's note to parents is included on how to discuss the Holocaust with children. Audiences of all denominations would benefit from the story.

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