

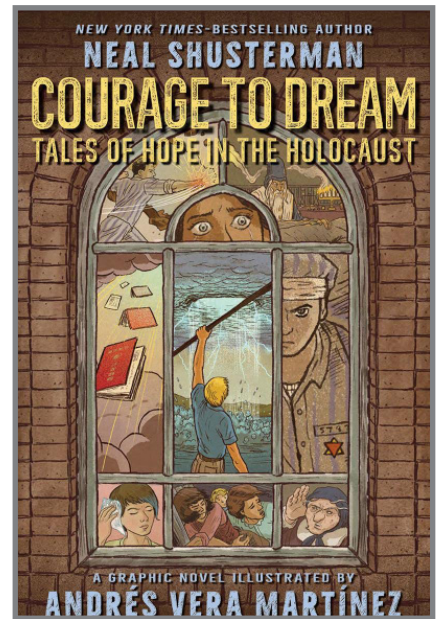
Courage to Dream: Tales of Hope in the Holocaust

AUTHOR

NEAL SHUSTERMAN

ILLUSTRATOR

ANDRÉS VERA MARTÍNEZ



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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Secondary
(Violence)

SYNOPSIS

Courage to Dream plunges readers into the darkest time of human history—the Holocaust. This graphic novel explores one of the greatest atrocities in modern memory, delving into the core of what it means to face the extinction of everything and everyone you hold dear.

This gripping, multifaceted tapestry is woven from Jewish folklore and cultural history. Five interlocking narratives explore one common story—the tradition of resistance and uplift.

Internationally renowned author Neal Shusterman and illustrator Andrés Vera Martínez have created a masterwork that encourages the compassionate and bold reaching for a dream.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Neal Shusterman is the *New York Times* bestselling author of more than thirty award-winning books for children, teens and adults, including the *Unwind* dystology, the *Skinjacker* trilogy, *Downsiders*, and *Challenger Deep*, which won the National Book Award. *Scythe*, the first book in his latest series, *Arc of a Scythe*, is a Michael L. Printz Honor Book. He also writes screenplays for motion pictures and television shows. Neal is the father of four, all of whom are talented writers and artists themselves.

Visit Neal at StoryMan.com and Facebook.com/NealShusterman.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Andrés Vera Martínez is a cartoonist and illustrator. He is the co-author of the graphic memoir, *Little White Duck: A Childhood in China*. Andrés' work has been recognised by The Society of Illustrators, American Illustration, 3x3, Junior Library Guild, Slate Cartoonist Studio, *School Library Journal*, *Horn Book Magazine*, NPR, and the *New York Times*. He currently lives in New England with his family.

For more, find Andres at andresvera.com.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:

- What genre do you think this book might be?
- What is the difference between a graphic novel and a comic book?
- What was the Holocaust, and when and where did it happen?
- Why can being able to dream, take courage?
- What does the title imply might happen in this book?
- What can you see happening in the cover artwork?
- Before reading the novel, as a class, read and discuss the Author's foreword. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
 - What is the difference between 'wondrous' and 'unthinkable' in this foreword? What connotations do these two words have in this context?
 - Why is it so important that we still talk, learn and think about the Holocaust?
 - Why do you think the author specifically includes 'the bystander who takes no action' in his list of people we can all become?
 - Who would you wish to be if the impossible suddenly became real?
- On p 69, while watching the trains arrive, Duvid remembers how the Rabbi has told him that false hope is better than no hope at all—but he wonders whether this is the case if that false hope is used against you. Do you think that the Rabbi is right and that false hope is better than no hope in this instance? Why/why not? And better for whom? Write a short explanation of your own personal opinion on the matter, sharing what you feel about the importance of hope, and whether it was better for the people who died in the Holocaust to have false hope, rather than having to experience total despair before they died.
- How many Nazi deathcamps (and 'work camps' and concentration camps) were there in WWII, and how many people died in them?
- What word is written on the golem's forehead and why?
- Do you think that imagining a golem coming to life and rescuing them might have brought some of the inmates of the camps comfort? Why and in what way? How do you think this relates to the Rabbi's opinions about hope?
- Why do you think the author uses the phrase 'dark cowardice' to describe what is happening? As a class, discuss what this phrase means to each of you individually, and in the context of the story.
- As a class, discuss what bravery is, in specific contrast to evil. In pairs or small groups write a series of contrasting definitions of bravery and evil, where bravery consists of doing the right thing even though you are scared or it is dangerous.
- Why is the role of the bystander so important in these stories, and in the history of the Holocaust? Who were the bystanders during the Holocaust, and how did they change what happened for many individuals?
- Compare the events in Denmark to those in any other occupied territory under Nazi rule during WWII. Why do you think the Danish people as a whole reacted so differently even while under Nazi occupation? What was King Christian's response when he was ordered to make sure all Danish Jews wore yellow stars on their clothing? How did the Danish people protect their fellow citizens, and how did they help thousands escape to Sweden (without the Rod of Moses).
- What does the story of Denmark tell us that we all can—and should—do as bystanders when we see bigotry, evil and wrong being done today?
- If you had to hide a magical staff (or rod) what everyday item would you disguise it as? Draw a picture of an everyday item in your own home, that could be a powerful rod or staff in disguise.
- Why did Søren expect the waves to part when Jory waved the rod? Who was Moses and why would his staff be expected to do something like this?
- Read the author's notes after each of the five stories in the book, and as a class, discuss what in the preceding story was fiction, and what was deeply rooted in the reality of what happened during the Holocaust.
- What mythologies does Shusterman draw on in his storytelling?
- Who is Baba Yaga, and what mythology surrounds her?
- Who were the Fools of Chelm, and why would you want them to build your enemy a bridge? What did they build the bridge from in the story, and why do you think it collapsed?

- What are nephilim?
- The author, Neal Shusterman, quotes Tuvia Bielski as saying ‘Don’t rush to fight and die, so few of us are left, we need to save lives. It is more important to save Jews than to kill Germans.’ Why do you think that Bielski saw it as more important to save Jewish lives than to kill Nazis?
- Look at the photo of the civilian military resistance group on p 157 and answer the following questions:
 - How old do the people in this photo look?
 - How old do you think Hannah and Yosef are in the story?
 - How old do Gussie and Hymie look?
 - Why do you think so many of the resistance fighters were so young?
- What would the people in the forest camp have eaten—and where would they have gotten this food? Why do you think that feeding them was such a big problem in the camp, but less of a problem once they could establish a village in the forest?
- How many countries were directly affected by the Holocaust and Nazi occupation during WWII? On a map of Europe, locate and mark where these countries are or were. Mark in a contrasting colour countries where it was still comparatively safe to be Jewish during this time.
- Look at the way SMASH is written on p 192. Design your own font for an onomatopoeic word using this as inspiration.
- What might be some of the other effects of the Holocaust never having happened that Caitlin would have had the chance to see? Think about what some of the flow-on or secondary effects of all these lives being saved might have been, and how Europe might have developed over the next 80 years had it not been devastated by war and trauma.
- In your opinion, is *The Untold* the most hopeful, or the most despair-filled of all these stories? In small groups, discuss your reaction to it, and whether you think that Caitlin made the right decision. Why or why not?

AUTHOR OF NOTES

RAE CARLYLE