



Greater Than Angels

By Carol Matas

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Greater Than Angels By Carol Matas Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Matas (Daniel's Story) again returns to the Holocaust as the setting for this sturdy if earthbound work. Her topic this time is the tiny French village of Le Chambon, famous for offering help to all of the approximately 2500 Jews who sought refuge there during WWII. Matas's heroine, young Anna Hirsch, remains plucky when she, her mother, aunt and elderly grandmother are deported from their home in Germany in 1940 and sent to France (she tells jokes on the train). They are sent to the detention camp at Gurs; Anna, unbowed by the wretched conditions, helps arrange concerts, learns some French and has theological debates with her friends. The story picks up when Anna is sent to Le Chambon and the emphasis shifts from Anna's indomitable spirit to well-researched descriptions of the villagers' resistance, under the leadership of the pastors Andr? Trocm? and Eduoard Theis. Anna, too, becomes involved with the resistance, helping deliver false identification papers. Suspense grows as Anna and a younger girl hide in the woods after news of an impending raid reaches Le Chambon, and the danger culminates in an attempt to lead the younger girl and a boy into Switzerland. Although Matas neglects to explain what happened to Trocm? and Theis after her story ends (Milton Meltzer's book *Rescue* will prove a useful companion), she offers an inspiring and memorable lesson in courage. Ages 12-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 6-8A Set in Vichy, France, this novel covers a section of Europe often overlooked in Holocaust literature. Anna, 13, along with her mother, her aunt, and grandmother, are deported from Germany to Gurs, a refugee camp on the French-Spanish border. The details of the journey and the terrible conditions there are vividly and realistically described. Anna's grandmother dies and the girl's mother and aunt are eventually removed to a concentration camp and never heard from again. Relief workers arrange for Anna and some of the other young people to be sent to the village of Le Chambon where French citizens take them in and allow them to live with some semblance of normalcy. Anna is a strong young woman with a flair for acting and singing and a penchant for telling corny jokes. She and her friends spend long hours discussing the "why" of what is happening to the Jews of Europe, trying to understand a universe in which such evil could exist. A budding romance between Anna and Rudi, a childhood friend, gives a little extra zest to the plot. The French gendarmes who are collaborating with the Nazis provide a sharp contrast to the actions of the local people, who literally risk their lives to help the Jewish children. A map clearly shows the areas where the story takes place. In an afterword, Matas tells of interviews she had with survivors who spent the war years in Le Chambon. This well-researched historical novel will make a good addition to middle-school collections.

Bruce Anne Shook, Mendenhall Middle School, Greensboro, NC

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Users Review

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Joshua Rodrigue:

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Rhonda Silva:

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