

MEDIA KIT

[TIP SHEET * BIO * AUTHOR Q&A]

CRUSHING THE RED FLOWERS

by
Jennifer
Voigt Kaplan

Jennifer Voigt Kaplan



Jennifer Voigt Kaplan is an award-winning children's author. Her debut middle-grade novel, *CRUSHING THE RED FLOWERS*, was praised by James Patterson and won a 2020 Christopher Award in the Books for Young People category.

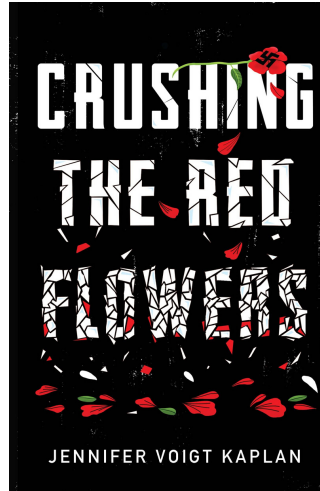
BOOK SYNOPSIS

What if the person you are supposed to hate is the one person who can save you? Emil Rosen and Friedrich Weber couldn't have less in common, but in the summer of 1938, they must both deal with changes steamrolling through Hannover, Germany. Friedrich struggles with a cruel new Jungvolk leader and an uncle in jail while Emil does his best to avoid the anti-Semitic fog that's seeped into every cranny of his life. As the rules of yesterday no longer make sense, they both find comfort at a private spot along the Leine River. Friedrich seeks order and logic and Emil can't keep from getting into one mishap after another, so when they meet at the river by chance, things don't go well. Then in the late hours of November 9th, the world unravels and nightmares leak onto the streets. They each must push past the person they thought they were because neither is certain they'll survive what comes next.

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TIP SHEET



Title: *Crushing the Red Flowers*
Author: Jennifer Voigt Kaplan
Publisher: Ig Publishing
Distributor: Consortium
Category: Upper Middle Grade
Age: 10-14
Format: Hardcover, Paperback
Pages: 308
Price: HC \$18.95 | PB \$12.95
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Publication Date: 11.19.2019

Praise

*"Germany in 1938 comes alive and will be unforgettable to young readers in this powerful debut novel, *Crushing the Red Flowers*."*

-- **James Patterson, Bestselling author**

"Never before have I read a piece of fiction that felt so true. This deeply powerful and poignant book is an important addition to world literature."

-- **Taran Matharu, New York Times Bestselling author**

"... a gripping story which avoids simple explanations in favor of implicit suggestion."

-- **Jewish Book Council Review by Emily Schneider.**

"Family loyalty, government opposition, bullying, and facing total upheaval in one's life are dealt with memorably in this multilayered tale."

-- **Kirkus Reviews**

The character development and complexity for both the boys and the adult characters is impressive."

-- **Publishers Weekly BookLife Prize in Fiction**

"The race against time at the climax of the book will not let you sleep until you flip the last page."

-- **Lucy Corona, Hicklebee's**

Awards

- 2020 Christopher Award: Books for Young People
- 2012 SCBWI Work-in-Progress Grant: Letter of Merit in the Multi-Cultural Category
- 2016 *Publishers Weekly BookLife Prize for Fiction: Middle Grade Category Winner*
- 2017 William Faulkner – William Wisdom Creative Writing Competition: Finalist

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Brief Bio

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BIO

Medium Bio

Jennifer Voigt Kaplan is an award-winning children's author. Her debut children's novel, *CRUSHING THE RED FLOWERS*, was praised by James Patterson and won a 2020 Christopher Award in the Books for Young People category. Jennifer was born in Germany, but moved to Philadelphia at the age of three. Her heritage is half German and half German-Jew, so she grew up with a multilayered understanding of the challenges that Jews and Germans faced during WWII. *CRUSHING THE RED FLOWERS* is fictional, but based on true family experiences.

Long Bio

Jennifer Voigt Kaplan is an award-winning author of children's fiction. Her debut children's novel, *CRUSHING THE RED FLOWERS*, was praised by James Patterson and won a 2020 Christopher Award in the Books for Young People category. It was also recognized in six literary contests before its publication, including earning a Letter of Merit for the SCBWI Work-in-Progress Grant and winning the middle-grade category of Publishers Weekly Booklife Prize for Fiction. Jennifer was born in Germany, raised in Philadelphia, and now resides in the New York City area. She holds degrees from the Wharton School of Business in marketing and from the London School of Economics in social psychology.

Outside of writing, Jennifer founded The Public Arts Council, her town's first organization dedicated to public arts. When she's not inventing people in her head, she's painting murals on underpasses, wishing she had more time to watch sci-fi movies, and arguing that there should be no limit on the number of garden gnomes that are considered socially acceptable. She lives with her husband, three children, and a cheeky beta-fish named Bubbles, who thinks it's hilarious to play dead.

Jennifer Voigt Kaplan

AUTHOR Q&A

What inspired you to write CRUSHING THE RED FLOWERS?

My heritage is half German and half German Jew. While the story is fictional, it is based on true family experiences. I grew up with a multilayered understanding of the challenges that Jews and Germans faced during WWII. Few children's books cover prewar 1938 and fewer use alternating points of view to explore Kristallnacht. 1938 was a turning point in history. It offers a unique vantage point to explore the past and glimpse the future, but I've often found this critical year overlooked. Particularly in today's political climate, it's important for young people to have access to authentic historical literature with diverse perspectives.

What do you hope a reader will take away from this novel?

I wrote the book to challenge assumptions about this era. Many people today do not understand the Holocaust and I believe the more access young people have to historically accurate information, the more it informs their ethics and decisions. The novel also explores the still relevant themes of kindness and bullying and provides a narrative explanation of how they progressed during this era. Ultimately, I hope to help children develop more self-awareness around morality, decision-making, and the evolution of hate in our modern day.

Why did you choose to alternate perspectives between two main characters?

The novel alternates perspectives between two very different twelve-year-olds, Emil, a German Jewish boy, and Friedrich, a boy in the Hitler Youth Jungvolk. I wanted to explore 1938 through divergent perspectives to shed further understanding on the complex era. Readers see how each of the character's lives were affected and what caused the characters to make their choices.

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AUTHOR Q&A *cont...*

How has your writing path been shaped? When did you start writing and how did you begin this book?

I first discovered a love for reading literature in my junior year in high school with classic books like *1984* by George Orwell and *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut. I've always had a creative itch, but it wasn't until I had children of my own that I discovered a joy for writing. I began writing children's short stories and picture books and then attended my first SCBWI writing conference in 2008. The experience opened new doors and inspired me to consider writing a novel. As my passion for writing grew, I began cobbling together the many stories I had heard growing up about my own family's experience during WWII. The accounts were all true, nuanced, and fascinating, but I still wasn't sure I wanted to write this particular book. It's been stated that a writer better be certain of her intentions before taking on a Holocaust project. The era remains one of the most complex and emotionally charged periods in history with as many viewpoints and truths as people involved. When I finally committed to writing *Crushing the Red Flowers*, my intentions were clear: to document and honor my family's stories, address pervasive misunderstandings, confront stereotypes, and inspire children to question the world around them.

What research went into writing the story?

Writers of history strive to genuinely portray events, but since writing fiction is by nature a subjective representation, some degree of distortion is inevitable. To minimize misrepresentation, I was counseled by Dr. Patricia Heberer-Rice from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, worked closely with Myrna Goldenberg, professor emerita of Holocaust history at Montgomery College, and interviewed multiple family members who lived through the era. A full bibliography can be found on my website, www.JenniferVK.com.

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AUTHOR Q&A *cont...*

What are some symbols used in the novel?

Red poppies are a well-recognized symbol of WWI. In this novel, crushing red flowers symbolizes the end of the distinct social, economic and political culture that emerged in Germany after WWI. The characters in Emil's life explore the optimist/pessimist dichotomy present in the German Jewish community before Kristallnacht, the complexities of emigration, early twentieth century German Jewish prosperity, patriotic loyalty to Germany, and newly clouded German Jewish identity. Some of the German characters underscore pro-Hitler mindsets and shed light on Germany's economic struggles that enabled Hitler's rise to power. The anti-Hitler German consciousness is represented through Friedrich's eyebrow twitch and Friedrich's mother, who is confused, silent, and broken.

Why do you write middle-grade books?

I'm drawn to the middle-grade years because I believe they are some of the most formative years of adolescence. Identity begins to solidify around the ages of ten to fourteen. Children are faced with added pressures and begin navigating their worlds through a more morally nuanced lens. Still, I find these years overwhelmingly and wonderfully hopeful. I love the idea of offering middle-grade readers stories that encourage them to question their own world. Because I wrote *Crushing the Red Flowers* specifically for middle-grade readers, I was able to create a novel that provided a solid introduction to the Holocaust and focused on the factors that led up to it. I was also able to focus on the culture of the Jungvolk, a group not as frequently studied as the older Hitler Youth.

How did you come up with characters?

While all characters are fictitious, they are loosely based on values, behaviors, and traits of the people in my own family. The accounts I heard from both sides of my family were filled with love and devotion as well as pain and loss.

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