



Who Was the Woman Who Wore the Hat?

By Nancy Patz

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Who was the woman who wore the hat I saw in the Jewish Museum? When did she buy it, and where did she wear it? I wonder if she wore it the day she left home the last time, that cold, cold day when the Jews were arrested in the Square. It could have been my mother's hat. It could have been my hat . . . or yours.

This book, a meditation on a woman's hat on display in the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, combines a pensive prose poem with arresting collage artwork. The illustrations, consisting of pencil drawings, subdued watercolors, and old photographs, sometimes suggest a distant memory and at other times bring the reality of the Holocaust into sharp focus. Subtle yet powerful, historical and personal, this book will have a lasting impact on everyone who experiences it.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 2-5-In this reflective poem drawn from a visit to the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, Patz recalls an exhibit she saw and asks, "Who was the woman/who wore the hat/I saw in the Jewish Museum?/What was she like?" In proselike poetry, the author poses questions about what the woman ate, whether she took cream in her coffee, and how she tilted her hat when she wore it. She reflects on whether the woman wore it the day she was arrested and taken to the Square in the Jewish Quarter. How did she know what she should pack, "Or how many sweaters/to put on each of her children-." Patz dramatically states on a spread with white letters against black paper that the hat might have belonged to her mother, herself, or you, the reader. Sepia-tone drawings and copies of old photographs are intentionally mixed together in a fragmentary manner, so as to "convey a sense of loss," as Patz states in the author's note. Loss is the perfect word for this simple, mournful poem reminding readers that the victims of the Holocaust went shopping, drank coffee, and wore hats like everybody else.

Leslie Barban, Richland County Public Library, Columbia, SC

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 3-6. When author Patz saw an unlabeled woman's hat in a glass case in the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, she wondered whose it could be. "Except for the winds of chance," she thought, "I might have been that woman." She drew the hat in her sketchbook and eventually created this quiet tribute to the woman--any Jewish woman-- who might have been forced to leave her home in Amsterdam for a cruel fate in the Nazi extermination camps. Patz combines an accessible prose poem ("What was she like? Did she lie awake in the morning / and watch / the way I did today, / as dawn brushed light through the sky?") with collages that blend historical photographs with her own sketches. A chronology of the Holocaust completes the book, which is as much about trying to personalize history as it is about the Jewish experience of the Holocaust: "Who was the woman? Whom did she love? And did she put cream in her coffee?" Teachers might use this subtle, meditative book as a supplement to Holocaust curriculum or as a tool to discuss the study of history itself. *Karin Snelson*

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About the Author

Nancy Patz has written and illustrated numerous books for young readers and illustrated *The Family Treasury of Jewish Holidays*, by Malka Drucker.

Users Review

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