



The Library:

the story of a Jewish girl in Nazi Germany

written by Nora M. Whittaker

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Notes

The Library was performed at Muhlenberg College and traveled to the Jewish Day School, Eyer Middle School, Harrison Morton Middle School, Orefield School, South Mountain School and Springhouse Jr. High School – middle schools in the Lehigh Valley.

The play was developed through improvisations and workshops with the cast, the survivors and Patty Carlis, inspired by Holocaust Testimonies and written works.

Developed by

Patty Carlis, director

Josey Fisher, assistant director of the Holocaust Oral History Archive, Gratz College
Inge Heiman Karo, for sharing her experiences as young Jewish girl growing up in Nazi-occupied Germany

Edith Rosenbaum, guide, Museum of Jewish Heritage, NYC

Peter Pettit, director of Muhlenberg's Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding

The cast of *The Library*

Eva Cutler, Holocaust survivor who shared her personality and stories with us

The original cast

Rachel	Shannon Lambert-Ryan
Mother	Rebecca Eckard
Father	Mark Sheska
Christa	Abby Mahone
David	Zack Einstein
Susan	Elizabeth Rogler
Fraulein Voycheck	Kelly Howe
Students in the classroom	Dane DeHaan, Tom Horne
Frau Schmidt	Kelly Howe

Set Suggestions: Since the original set required mobility, we used a very simple but effective design. Lightweight rehearsal blocks painted different shades of brown, simple costumes, a wooden table and some props. The original production did not use the image of the accumulating restrictive signs. This image is encouraged, yet optional.

Performance Suggestions: Because of the sensitive nature of the material of this play, we followed up the play with a cast/production team talk back with student audiences. We also sent a study guide and accompanying bibliography to teachers so that they could prepare students more effectively. Directors are urged to accompany the play with discussions, talk backs, drama workshops or other follow-up methods to encourage as much thought as possible in the minds of the student audiences.

THE LIBRARY

Characters:

Rachel	Fraulein Voycheck
Mother	David Speck
Father	Susan Bergdorff
Christa Schultz	Frau Schmidt
Students in classroom	Library patrons

Scene 1: In Rachel's home

(Rachel is sitting at dinner with her parents and her friend, Christa. The family says a prayer and passes bread around the table, according to custom. Christa just watches them. When finished, Rachel steps away from the table and addresses the audience.)

Rachel: I am German. I am Jewish. I am a German Jew. When I was younger I didn't think of myself as particularly religious. I thought of myself as German first, Jewish second. But after the new political party, the Nazis, came into power in January 1933, I became more aware of my religion. Besides that, my life was fairly normal.

(Rachel, her father and her mother rise to say good-bye to Christa. Rachel remains respectful to her parents even when she contradicts them. It is important that we preserve a parent-child relationship that is more formal than such relationships in 20th century America.)

Father: It was nice to have you over, Christa.

Christa: Oh, thanks. Hey Rachel, do you want to go see a film tonight?

Rachel: I'd love to.

Father: Not tonight, Rachel. It's a school night.

Rachel: But-

Mother: (warning) Rachel.

Rachel: I never get to do what I want to do. I'm sorry, Christa.

Christa: Oh, it doesn't matter. I'm sure I'll find someone else.

(Rachel looks really disappointed)

Mother: (after Christa leaves) I don't like that girl.

Rachel: (picking up her book) Mama, she's my best friend.

Mother: Well, you have other friends. What about that nice David?

Father: Yes, he seems like such a nice young man.

Rachel: He's a boy. He's fine as a friend, but... you know how boys are!

(Rachel's father chuckles. Rachel begins to read her book; she becomes more and more engrossed in its contents. Rachel's father starts reading himself, equally engrossed.)

Mother: We just don't want you to get hurt. (She begins to clean up from dinner. She continues doing an activity while she speaks to Rachel, and, later, Rachel's father)
Rachel, you have to make sure that you finish your homework soon or you won't get it done before school tomorrow. I don't want to get another note from your teacher. Also don't forget to clean your room. You can sort through the things you don't want and...
Rachel? Rachel!

Rachel: Huh?

Mother: Were you listening to a word I said?

Rachel: Sure.

Mother: Then what did I say?

Rachel: Uh... to do the dishes?

Mother: No.

Rachel: To clean my room?

Mother: Good guess, but that was only part of it. When you're reading those books, you never listen to me! You should pay attention and practice being alert or you're going to get into trouble.

Rachel: Mama, I'll be fine. Why are you so worried?

Mother: Oh, no reason. Just go and do your homework, dear. Okay? Then, if you have time, you can read more of that book.

Rachel: But history is boring! I'd much rather be reading my book!

Mother: No buts! Go upstairs and get to work.

Rachel: Nobody lets me have any fun around her! It's always "pay attention, Rachel", "stop reading, Rachel", "do your homework", "be careful Rachel".

Mother: Young lady, go upstairs. I'll be up to check on you later.

(Rachel stomps offstage, frustrated.)

Mother (to her husband) Did you see that? That girl needs to keep on top of things more. (a moment.) Have you heard? The Nazi party has officially come into power in Germany. Their leader, Adolf Hitler, they say, is going to change things forever. I hear that one of his plans involves ridding the world of the Jews. (she shivers.) I don't like the sound of that. Even Frau Eckard talks about him as if he is some great savior – and she's Jewish. (a moment.) Have you been listening to me?

Father: Huh?

Mother: You're just as bad as she is. (She stomps offstage as well)

Father: What did I do?

Scene 2: Rachel and friends at school

Teacher: ... That concludes today's history lesson. For your annual project I want all of you to write an essay entitled, "Why I love my country". (David raises his hand) Yes, David.

David: (trying to cause a stir) What if you don't love your country?

(the other kids snicker)

Teacher: Now David Speck, that's not funny. Of course you love your country. Now, remember, there are sign-ups for the new youth group in the school office. Make sure that all of you sign in. (tired) Yes David?

David: Are we going to be tested on that?

Teacher: That's quite enough out of you, young man. See me after class. The rest of class is dismissed for lunch.

(The children run out to the playground. Rachel hangs out with her friend Christa and some other girls)

Rachel: (to the audience.) (Directing suggestion: As she brings up each new restriction

on Jewish people, she places a corresponding sign on the back wall.) I wanted to join the new youth group with their magnificent ceremonies and exciting activities. But the youth group was only for non-Jews. I wasn't all that worried because I still spent plenty of time with my best friends Christa and David and all the other children in the class. And my teacher was the nicest teacher in the whole school. That was lucky for David because he was always saying something sassy and getting into trouble. So I had the best teacher and two great friends: Christa was the prettiest girl in the class and David was the most popular... so I guess I had the best of both worlds.

Christa: Hey Rachel, let's play ring around the rosy.

Rachel: Isn't that a game for little kids?

Christa: Believe me, this version is really fun. In fact, I think Susan should play with us.

David: (entering, a battle hero) Hey!!

Rachel: What happened this time?

David: Ah, just another detention. (swaggering) Not a big deal. What are you playing?

Christa: (aside to David) We're going to play ring around the Susan! – Hey Susan!

Susan: (eager to be noticed by the other children) Hi Christa. What are you doing?

Christa: We're gonna play a game. Do you want to play?

Susan: Sure!

Christa: Are you sure?

Susan: Sure I'm sure!

(They enclose Susan in a circle. It is a game for them, but not for her. Finally they stop, laughing. Susan runs off with her face in her hands.)

Christa: Cry baby.

David: Is she okay?

Christa: Of course she's okay. It was just a game! Let's go do something else. I'm bored. (She stalks off)

David: Christa can be such a pain sometimes.

Rachel: Don't make fun of her, David. She's my friend!

David: I don't trust her. I heard that her father loves Hitler....

Rachel: You make such a big deal out of little things. *My* father says that Hitler won't be around for long.

David: *My* father doesn't think so. He has to have his meetings in secret now. And he says things are getting worse.

Rachel: She's still my best friend! Just because her father loves Hitler doesn't mean –

David: It's not just *that*. It's just that she's not very nice.

Rachel: (adamantly) She's my best friend.

David: Never mind. (He exits.)

Rachel: David's family was not Jewish. His father was a member of the Social Democrats – a political party that had become more and more unpopular in those days. I didn't really understand what "social democrat" meant – I just knew that his family was always getting in trouble with the Nazis. David always had all these wild ideas about Germany and the world. He didn't understand why Christa and I were so close. He also didn't understand why I loved to read so much. David, like a lot of other boys, liked playing soccer and listening to the radio. I loved reading everything I could get my hands on. While David liked to play soccer with the other boys, I cherished the quiet moments I spent in the town library.

Scene 3: The Library

(Rachel is in the library with Christa. Christa is goofing off. Rachel is carefully selecting some books to check out. Susan helps out in each library scene as an aid, stacking books, etc.)

Christa: Can we leave now? This is boring.

Rachel: I'm not finished yet. Can you just hold on?

(Christa becomes progressively more disruptive and annoying.)

Rachel: (finally) Why don't you go on and meet up with David. I'll just finish up here.

Christa: Are you coming out to the film tonight?

Rachel: Of course. I'll see you there!

Christa: Bye!

Rachel: Bye!

(Rachel selects her books and brings them up to the counter. Frau Schmidt maintains an intimidating demeanor that Rachel interprets as dislike at first. Schmidt, however, actually takes a special interest in Rachel. The subtle complication of this relationship must remain apparent.)

Frau Schmidt: Back already, Rachel? Did you really finish all those other books in just four days?

Rachel: Yes, Frau Schmidt.

Frau Schmidt: I find that hard to believe. Tell me what the books are about.

Rachel: Well... the first book, *Emil and the Detectives*, was about a group of boys who solved a crime –

Frau Schmidt: Yes, yes. And who committed the crime?

Rachel: It turned out to be Emil's neighbor, the one everyone liked.

Frau Schmidt: Impressive... Let me see what books you want to borrow today. No, no, you can't take out these books. They are for children over 15 years of age and you're too young. You will have to bring me a note from your teacher certifying that you are capable of understanding this kind of material.

Rachel: Yes, Frau Schmidt. (she leaves)

Scene 4: In school (In this scene all the students, except for David and Rachel, have acquired Hitler Youth uniforms.)

Rachel: Things started to change. The German government began to issue laws called the Nuremberg Laws in 1935. These laws didn't pose any sort of drastic or obvious change at first. It happened slowly, in little steps. My father's business started losing customers, and some of my family's friends were losing their jobs. David's father was arrested, and there were more and more secrets that David couldn't tell me. The air was heavy with those secrets. – But I still loved Germany: the people, our town, the colors, the foods, the library and my friends. It was my home.
(to David) I don't think Frau Schmidt likes me very much.

David: Who's Frau Schmidt?

Rachel: She's the librarian, silly.

David: I wouldn't know because I'm never in the library.

Rachel. It figures.

David: Hey, what's that supposed to mean?

Rachel: (innocently) Oh, nothing.

David: Right. Right. Is this another dumb boy joke?

Rachel: (avoiding the answer, teasing him) Hi Christa.

Christa: Hello.

Rachel: That's a great uniform, Christa.

Christa: (Taking Rachel aside) Well, all the girls have them. It's for the German League of Girls – oh yeah...the youth group that you can't be in 'cause you're Jewish. I mean, can't you convert or something? My father says it's not a good thing to be Jewish these days.

Rachel: No I can't convert. (She feels she needs to make an excuse) My parents wouldn't let me. Do you want to play soccer after school with David and me?

Christa: I can't. I have a youth group meeting.

Rachel: You have meetings all the time. Everyone does except for David and me!

Christa: Well, we have no choice. They're mandatory, and they're really fun, too!

(The teacher enters and the students stand to greet her. The students beam at her and she beams back. She looks at Rachel. She sniffs. Rachel looks around her. The teacher sniffs again. The other children giggle.)

Teacher: Something smells in here? (The other students look around. The teacher looks at Rachel.) Susan? Do you smell that?

Susan: Smell what?

Teacher: Something smells in here. (she looks at Rachel.)

Susan: I guess I smell a little something.

Teacher: Susan, please open a window.

(Susan opens a window near Rachel. The other children giggle, Rachel is mortified. David looks confused.)

David: What's going on? (to Rachel)

Teacher: That's better. We'll get rid of that Jew smell. (the children giggle again.) That's enough. Let's go on with the lesson. Everyone please pass in your homework.

David: Oops.

Teacher: What's wrong, David? Where's your homework?

David: Uh... the dog ate it? (the other children laugh)

Teacher: Very funny, David. You'll have to stay after class again, young man. Now, let's continue-

Christa: Fraulein Voycheck?

Teacher: Yes, Christa?

Christa: Can I move my seat?

Teacher: Why, Christa?

Christa: Because Rachel smells. I can't stand it.

Scene 5: The playground

(Rachel is sitting alone on one side of the stage while the other children are clustered around the other side of the stage. David is not on-stage. Rachel is writing in a diary.)

Rachel: Dear diary, since I have no friends anymore, I'll keep you to confide in. I want someone to tell me that this is all a dream. And, more than ever, I want Christa to be my friend again. We had so much fun before. Christa's new best friend is Susan. She always used to say that Susan was so stupid, but now they're best friends! I don't understand. I don't know what I did wrong to make Christa hate me.

Christa: Hey Rachel! Want to play a game?

Rachel: Sure!

Christa: Are you sure?

Susan: Play with us, Rachel! What are we going to play, Christa?

Christa: Ring around the Rachel. Hey, that kind of rhymes! (They both laugh)

(The children enclose Rachel in a circle. It's a game for them, but not for her. David rushes onstage before the game gets out of hand.)

David: Leave her alone! (The children scatter)

Christa: I'm telling!

David: About what? Me trying to break up a fight?

Christa: This wasn't a fight. It was a game. Right, Susan?

Susan: Right.

Christa: (to Susan) Let's go.

David: Rachel, are you all right?

Rachel: I'm fine.

David: Is your mom coming to get you today?

Rachel: She should be here any minute now.

David: Okay.

Rachel: David?

David: Yeah?

Rachel: I'd like to be alone right now, please.

David: Sure. I'll be right over there until your mom gets here. Okay?

Rachel: Okay. David? Thank you, David.

(David nods, smiles and walks offstage. It is a natural and unextraordinary thing for him to defend his friend. Rachel's mother comes to walk her home from school. The other children re-enter.)

Rachel: Bye Dave! Hi, mama.

Mother: Hey dear. How was your day?

Rachel: Okay. Mama?

Mother: Yes dear.

Rachel: Do I smell?

Mother: What?

Rachel: Do I smell? Smell me.

Mother: Are you crazy? Of course not.

(They begin to walk. The other children approach Rachel and her mother. One of them spits. The mother, as if sensing the spitting before it happens, protects Rachel. Rachel's mother turns to see innocent faces except for Christa's, but it is Susan who speaks.)

Susan: Dirty Jews.

(Rachel's mother rushes offstage with Rachel.)

Scene 6: Rachel's home

(Rachel's mother is praying. Rachel enters.)

Rachel: I wish I wasn't Jewish, mama. I hate being different like this.

Mother: Never be ashamed, Rachel. Never be ashamed of who you are. Think of yourself as connected to countless people out there – our family and our faith stretches back for centuries. When I look at you I see a beautiful girl who practices the Jewish religion. I see a beautiful girl who is perfectly healthy and normal. Not so different.

Rachel: They spit at you, mama. I was afraid.

Mother: I promise you everything will be all right.

Rachel: Yes.

Mother: You must believe me.

Rachel: Yes. (Rachel holds her mother.)

Mother: (As Rachel grabs her bag and turns to leave.) Where are you going?

Rachel: I need to go to the library? Will you be okay?

Mother: Of course I'm okay.

(Rachel's mother is left on-stage for a moment. Rachel's father enters, brightly, from work.)

Father: Hello honey!

Mother: How was work?

Father: The usual.

Mother: How many customers did you lose today?

Father: Not many. The usual.

Mother: (She takes out a clipping from her apron.) Have you seen what's been happening lately? More and more things are happening every day. New laws. Things whispered. Rachel knows what's going on, and it's affecting her.

Father: And what, exactly, *is* going on? Hitler's a joke! People won't stand for these silly restrictions for long. Besides, I fought for Germany in the war. No one would dare harm our family. It won't happen to us.

Mother: You keep saying that. It's true that Rachel's been able to keep on attending school because you fought in that war. But the restrictions are starting to affect us now, too. We have to wear stars on our clothes. We can't even walk down certain streets at certain times – we have curfews. Us! Adults with curfews like small children! We can't even walk down the streets of our own home that we've grown up in and that we love. And when we do walk down those streets, we have to walk in the gutters with our feet in the mud. I even have to obtain these newspaper clippings illegally. Rachel can't go to the movie house anymore. Each day there are more and more of these restrictions, these laws. It's growing each day.

Father: What's growing? You're not making any sense.

Mother: This fear certain people have of Jewish people and everyone else who is different from them. And the actions, like these laws, that they throw down upon us. (she pauses.) Rachel's schoolmates spit at me today.

Father: (disbelieving) What? Children?

Mother: Yes, some children at school spit at us. At both of us. Children against the adults! It's abominable! (The father is silent) Each day I show you clippings from the newspapers: the Jewish papers, even the Nazi propaganda papers. I have boxes and boxes of these chippings that I've saved. It's getting worse and I fear for our family, for Rachel. Do you see now?

Father: But what about my business? I hear that people, once they get over to America, have to work as janitors or trashmen. Established businessmen over here go over there and become second class citizens. We go from the best jobs that took years to get to the worst jobs over there. I love my business. It's my business.

Mother: But the government boycott of Jewish businesses. Everyone knows about that. What good will a business be without customers? What good will a business be without your family alive and safe to come home to? What good is a business here in this place? Germany is sick. We have to leave.

Scene 7: In the Library.

(David goes to the library with Rachel. He watches her interaction with Frau Schmidt from a distance.)

Frau Schmidt: Did you get that note from your teacher I told you to get?

Rachel: Yes, Frau Schmidt.

Frau Schmidt: Good. Let me see your list. (She looks) I am giving you only three of the novels you requested, Rachel. I am also including some science books. You have a good mind and you must develop it. Do you keep a journal, Rachel?

Rachel: Yes, Frau Schmidt.

Frau Schmidt: It's good for a child to keep a diary. We forget how we see things as children once we grow up. You're an intelligent child and, when you read, you improve your writing as well. Good writing cannot exist without good reading.

Rachel: Yes, Frau Schmidt. Thank you.

Frau Schmidt: You're welcome. (She becomes immersed in cataloging)

David: Are you ready to go?

Rachel: Yes.

David: You're really funny around that Frau Schmidt lady. You get all funny.

Rachel: What do you mean?

David: I don't know, you get all shy. She's kind of scary, isn't she. Can you blame me for not wanting to go to the library? Science books? Blech!

Rachel: Well, I'm not going to argue with her. She knows what she's talking about.

David: Libraries are weird. They're too quiet.

Rachel: Quiet is nice sometimes. It's so hard to find the time and place to just sit and think these days. Besides, Frau Schmidt says I have a good mind! (David makes a face at her.) What?

(David makes a ridiculous face at her.)

(Rachel chases him offstage, laughing.)

Scene 8: At home. Rachel's mother is waiting for her. Rachel's mother is sewing a star on Rachel's new jacket.

Rachel: I remember one time in particular, a few months before we left, in November 1938. My mother was sewing a star on a new jacket she had made for me. Everyone knew I was a Jew with it on, and I felt even more weird and different. Each day the Nazis posted more and more rules. On this day, the rules affected me in a particularly personal way.

Mother: (She helped Rachel into her newly marked jacket) Rachel, I need to tell you something.

Rachel: Yes?

Mother: You know how the Nazis post the new restrictions on Jews in the papers and on the streets?

Rachel: Yes?

Mother: I'm afraid I have some bad news. I'm sorry, dear.

Rachel: What is it?

Mother: We can't use the libraries anymore.

Rachel: Why?

Mother: We've been able to avoid restrictions again and again because of your father's service in the German army. We can't anymore. The Nazis are getting more and more strict, and now we have no choice. (she says this with difficulty) You'll have to turn in your library card, sweetheart. I'll go with you if you like.

Rachel: No.

Mother: Do you remember when I promised you that everything would be all right?

Rachel: Yes.

Mother: I really meant that. (beat) Your father and I have some questions to discuss. But I'll be sure to tell you when I get those answers.

Rachel: Yes, mama. (She leaves. The father enters in a panic.)

Father: The Speck family is gone.

Mother: What?

Father: I went to their home as usual after work to say hello and their home was ripped apart. They're gone.

Mother: Oh my god! David, too?

Father: They've all disappeared. And it gets worse. They're burning down Jewish businesses and homes all around us. They're burning the city to the ground!

Mother: We have to go get Rachel.

Father: Should we tell Rachel about David now or wait?

Mother: David's the only friend Rachel has left. We should wait until tomorrow. It would be too much for her.

Father: They've just disappeared. Where are they?

Mother: We must save our home. Where's the deed to our house?

Father: Why?

Mother: I have an idea.

Father: What is it? You're not going to give up our home, are you?!

Mother: Do you want our family to survive? Do you want them to burn our house to the ground? (The mother puts her hand on her husband's face.) We have to leave.

Father: It's easy to say we have to leave. But it's *not so easy*.

(Rachel's parents hold each other.)

Rachel: My mother gave a Nazi officer the deed to our house in exchange for not burning it down. Our house survived, but we only had a short amount of time before we would have to move out. Later on they called that night Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass.

Scene 9: Rachel's school.

(Rachel's seat is set up separately from the other children. She wears a yellow star on her clothes. David is not in his seat. The turn of events has not made Rachel apathetic, it has made her angry. She speaks her version of the assigned essay to the audience while Christa reads hers aloud to the class.)

Christa: "Why I love My Country", by Christa Schultz. I love my country because it loves me. My country protects me from other countries that try to invade us and take over our government. We are also protected from evil political forces. My country, Germany, has provided a job for my father and a school for me. S.S. officers patrol our streets and protect us Aryans from criminals and Jews....

(Christa's essay continues as Rachel speaks over it to the audience.)

Rachel: I love Germany because it is where my family is. I have a lot of relatives that live here. Germany is a powerful, proud country. She is *my* country.

Christa: ... Hitler, our leader, has set up special youth leagues. We learn about the German superior race there, like in school, but it is much more fun than school. I am no longer overlooked in exercises at school. I've been awarded a pin for physical education because I can run so fast. Before the Reich came into power in Germany, I really didn't like my gym classes. But now I feel so important...

Rachel: The Hitler youth group seems like so much fun. They wave all these beautiful banners, and they have really exciting rallies all the time. Sometimes I really want to join them and help them wave those bright banners...

Teacher: Excellent work, Christa. Susan, you're up next.

Susan: "Why I love My Country", by Susan Bergdorff. Every day we sew pieces of silk together to make parachutes for our brave soldiers. It makes my mama proud to see me doing so well in school and my activities. I'm able to sit in the front of the class now.

I'm glad that I can please my parents and help my country because they have helped me...

Rachel: Sometimes I want to hate Germany. The streets I grew up on are changing. The posters on poles have cruel cartoons about Jews. Signs say "Dogs and Jews not permitted here". They depict us as money and power hungry devils. The SS troops walk down the streets and yell at me to get inside immediately. My father came home from work the other day and told me that the Nazis were burning down Jewish businesses. I had to hide inside that night, The Night of Broken Glass. I love Germany, but she is turning against me.

Susan: I love my country for many reasons. It protects me, but it also provides many ways for me to have fun and learn at the same time.

Rachel: In a couple of short months, I was told I had to leave school because I was Jewish. (Directing suggestion: By this time the restrictive signs, which have been accumulating behind the stage action, have formed a swastika on the back wall.)

Scene 10: The Library

Frau Schmidt: Let me have the books you are returning, please. Don't just stand there holding them. (Rachel hands her the books but still stands there nervously.) Don't you want to take out any books today? You're holding up the line. If you don't want any books, you will have to step aside and let the next person check out their books.

Rachel: I have to turn in my library card.

Frau Schmidt: Are your parents moving?

Rachel: That isn't why.

Frau Schmidt: Then why do you want to turn in your card? You know how important it is for a student to read.

Rachel: But I have to turn in my card, Frau Schmidt.

Frau Schmidt: I have never heard of such a thing. You do not HAVE to turn in your card. I have a list of new books that I want you to read.

Rachel: They've passed a law – All Jews have to turn in their library cards. And I'm Jewish.

Frau Schmidt: Susan, can you take over for me, please. (She steps to the side with Rachel)

(Rachel holds out the card, and Frau Schmidt takes it)

Frau Schmidt: I have saved something for you just in case something like this happened. (She gives Rachel a package from behind the desk.) You didn't get this from me. Good-bye and good luck, Rachel. (She leaves as if preventing any more display of caring.)

Rachel: (looking after her.) Thank you Frau Schmidt. (puzzled) Good-bye. (She opens the package to find a small stack of beautiful, hard-cover books. She holds them to her chest and looks after Frau Schmidt.)

Scene 10: Rachel's home

Mother: We're leaving for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as soon as possible.

Father: We'll be living with some relatives of ours. Everything is settled, and I have the affidavits. We didn't want to tell you until we were sure. Unfortunately, you'll only be able to take one suitcase with you.

Mother: That means you'll only be able to take three books with you.

Rachel: I don't want to leave.

Mother: But why? After everything that's happened to you.

Rachel: I still love this place. I love my home. And we still haven't found David.

Mother: Darling, I don't know if David is coming back.

Rachel: But why?

Mother: We don't have answers. Not yet, anyway. I can only hope that you will search for them... and that you will continue to remember what has happened to us. There are no easy answers.

Rachel: My father and mother both had family in the United States, and thank goodness they did. If they didn't, I don't know what would have happened to us. They didn't tell me until much later that the affidavits were so hard to get. Even though Germany wanted us Jews to leave, they made it so *hard* for us to do so. None of the other countries wanted us. My father only obtained the affidavits because we had family in America and he was able to arrange an agreement with a wealthy American businessman. Without those affidavits, we might have been sent to a Jewish ghetto or a concentration camp. We were able to leave in 1939, just in time to avoid deportation.

When my mother gave me the choice, I decided to take the books Frau Schmidt had given me: She gave me the hardcover edition of *Emil and the Detectives*, *Life*

Science for Young People – for ages 15 and over! – and a book with blank pages. It was on those blank pages that I began to write. It was through writing that I began to reflect on my experiences as a child and speak out. (Directing suggestion: she begins to rip the signs down from the back wall.)

I still remember the afternoon before we left for America. I was sitting on the verandah looking at the sky, which was blue and cloudless, and at the beautiful garden that I enjoyed so much. I thought about Frau Schmidt, David, and my other family and friends who had not left yet. All these people shaped my voice and how I see the world. They compel me to keep on searching for answers today, like my mother knew I would.

I never found out what happened to David or his family, and, after the war, only small bits of information about the other people in my life traveled across the ocean to me. After the war, we found out that my grandfather had managed to survive in Germany for almost three years after we left him behind. He was deported to Theresienstadt Concentration Camp in 1942 and then to Maly-Trostinec, where he died in 1945 at the age of 72, just before he would have been liberated. It is my belief that David passed this way also, on from location to location until he became a ghost. David's ghost, along with the other memories from that time, has never left me: of the 15,000 children imprisoned in the Theresienstadt ghetto alone, only 100 survived. How likely is it that David would have survived? How likely is it that I would have survived?

I remember sitting on that verandah before our departure, wishing that something would happen so that we would not have to leave our home. Thank God my wish was not granted.

(the lights fade slowly in the silence until darkness envelopes the stage.)