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My Guardian Angel



Synopsis

Winner of France's most prestigious children's book award, this vividly drawn novel tells the harrowing tale of a smart, feisty 12-year-old Jewish girl in 11th C. France during the first Crusade. Feisty and smart, Elvina is not your average 12-year-old. She adores reading, writing, and studying like the boys. And she detests silly girls' chores, like keeping chicken eggs warm until they hatch. But she is also skilled in the art of healing, a skill that ultimately gets her into trouble. It's the 11th Century in France, and the Crusades are on a campaign to rid France of the Jews. The Jews live in terror and are on high alert that danger is drawing near to their town. One night, while Elvina is alone in her house, she hears a rap on the door. Can her guardian angel keep her safe?

Book Information

Hardcover: 208 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (3 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

Customer Reviews

This title was named a 2004 Sydney Taylor Honor Book by the Association of Jewish Libraries. Twelve-year-old Elvina is the granddaughter of the great Rabbi Rashi. She has a curious and lively nature and a thirst for knowledge. Her goodness of heart and her knowledge of Torah lead her to assist a wounded Crusader, despite the cruelty the Crusaders show to the Jews in 11th century France. The guardian angel of the title provides a listener for Elvina's thoughts and worries. Elvina and her grandfather are real historical figures, and the real Elvina was "highly regarded during her lifetime for her knowledge and wisdom." This chapter book is translated from French, which may account for the strange stylistic choice to shift back and forth between Elvina's

voice and an omniscient narrator. Despite this odd structure, the story is easy to follow and the language flows. Elvina is a likeable character, very lively and full of interesting thoughts. The author breathes life into the descriptions of medieval customs, so that they feel natural rather than forced and educational. Additionally, Elvina truly lives her Judaism, rather than mouthing pieties as characters in historical novels often do. It infuses her life, not only in her behavior but also in her decisions, her fears, and her joys.

A Jewish girl named Elvina who knows how to read and write is living in France, 1096. Crusaders have entered her village, Troyes, and are worrying everyone in the Jewish community. During this troubling time, Elvina starts to talk to her Mazal, or guardian angel. When she hides a Crusader who does not want to fight, her life changes, but for better or for worse, you will have to read the book. If you like historical fiction, then you would really like this book. I do not like historical fiction that much, but this book went at a nice pace and it made you want to know what happened to the characters. The only thing that I didn't like was that sometimes the narrative would change from 3rd to 1st person. Other than that, it had a pretty good plot and it was pretty entertaining. Sylvie Weil could have made the book better by keeping the narratives the same throughout the book, but it was good overall. Reviewed by J. Plowe for Flamingnet Book Reviews, [...]

This is a wonderful story, rich in history, layered with details that are engaging and memorable. I highly recommend this book for young girls of all backgrounds but especially for those whose experience would be enriched by diving deeply into the past of European Hebrew history. The story is a pure delight. All girls would enjoy it; Jewish girls would love it!

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