



Daniel Half Human: And the Good Nazi (Richard Jackson Books (Atheneum Hardcover))

By David Chotjewitz

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In 1933, best friends Daniel and Armin admire Hitler, but as anti-Semitism buoys Hitler to power, Daniel learns he is half Jewish, threatening the friendship even as life in their beloved Hamburg, Germany, is becoming nightmarish. Also details Daniel and Armin's reunion in 1945 in interspersed chapters.

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- Sales Rank: #766987 in Books
- Brand: Atheneum/Richard Jackson Books
- Published on: 2004-10-12
- Released on: 2004-10-12
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.07" h x 6.04" w x 9.32" l, 1.02 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 304 pages



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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 7 Up—In June 1945, a U.S. soldier working as an interpreter for the Royal British Army visits the ruins of his childhood neighborhood in Hamburg and reflects on the events that changed his life forever. In 1933, 13-year-old Daniel, the well-to-do son of a prominent lawyer, and his working-class best friend, Armin, are wildly enthusiastic about the Nazis' rise to power. Both boys are eager to join the Hitler Youth, despite their parents' opposition. Daniel is horrified when his parents reveal that his mother is Jewish. He is furious with her for being Jewish, with his father for marrying "that Jewess," and with himself for being someone considered only half human according to the Aryan doctrine. While Daniel's father insists his status as a decorated World War I hero will protect his family, his mother urges her husband to emigrate. Armin, torn between loyalty to his best friend and pressure from Nazi leadership to sever his ties with Daniel, does his best to warn him of approaching danger. The author skillfully alternates between the protagonist's brief, first-person descriptions of his return to Germany and lengthier, third-person narratives of his life before Kristallnacht, the turning point that convinced his father to flee his homeland at last. The book's intense final scene is a fitting culmination to its exploration of the choice between official duty and loyalty to one's friends. Realizing the consequences of that choice makes a dramatic ending. Orgel's translation reads smoothly and movingly. An outstanding addition to the large body of World War II/Holocaust fiction.—*Ginny Gustin, Sonoma County Library System, Santa Rosa, CA*

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From Booklist

Gr. 7-12. In Hamburg, Germany, in the 1930s, Daniel enjoys being part of the Hitler Youth until he discovers his mother is Jewish and he is thrown out of his elite school. He still has fun with his best friend, Armin, who falls in love with Daniel's Jewish cousin; but tension mounts, racism is rampant, and Armin begins to stay away, though he takes risks and warns his friend to hide. Daniel's return to Hamburg in 1945 as interpreter for the Allies frames the novel, which switches among the viewpoints of too many characters, including Daniel's parents, who fight about whether to leave the country. But the detailed history woven into the fiction (including the effect of Germany's defeat in World War I, Hitler's rise, and the violence of Kristallnacht) helps make this clearly translated novel an important title for the Holocaust curriculum, especially given the friendship drama that keeps raising ethical questions to the very last page. *Hazel Rochman*

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Review

A young American army officer drives through the ruins of Hamburg in 1945, remembering his childhood there, from his celebration with his best friend of the rise of the Nazi party until his flight with his family after Kristallnacht. Daniel is appalled to discover that his mother is Jewish and that, therefore, he cannot join the Hitler Youth with Armin, but nevertheless the two remain best friends until history and ambition drive them apart. Chotjewitz tells his story deliberately, flashing back and forth from Daniel's post-war first-person narration to a measured third-person narration that moves from 1933 to 1939. Readers will feel Daniel's self-loathing upon learning that he is half-Jewish, his mother's growing hysteria as she realizes her blood damns them all, his lawyer father's increasingly desperate faith in the German capacity for reason, and Armin's conflict as he struggles to be both a good friend and a good Nazi. There are many Holocaust books for children, but this one stands out in its careful dissection of one family's experience before the war, and in its nuanced approach to the complexity of emotions and relationships under stress. (glossary) (Fiction. 12+)

(Kirkus Reviews)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Leonard Bassett:

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Mark Whitten:

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alone and confuse with what must you're doing of this time.

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