



Stuchner, Joan Betty. Honey Cake. A Stepping Stone Book, Random House, New York, 2007.

An easy chapter book, *Honey Cake* is the story of David, a young boy living in Nazi-occupied Copenhagen in

1943. David's father is a baker; his sister - a member of the Danish resistance. Involved in some espionage and passive opposition, the imminent threat of Nazi capture leads the family to escape to Sweden.

Chronologically organized, Stuchner uses two short flash-back chapters to supply background knowledge about the Nazi invasion of Denmark. Whereas characters and everyday events are fictional, concrete historical figures and events anchor the story in fact. The attractive cover illustrations of the soldiers and the boy holding the bakery box by Joanne Renaud outshine the interior pictures by Cynthia Nugent. Even so, illustrations throughout extend the story and help young readers to understand the setting and plot.

Serious subjects are seldom the contents of novels written for early readers. The Danish resistance, Nazi persecution of the Jews, and the difficult choices made by King Christian X are challenging concepts for younger elementary students. The reality of food shortages, soldiers on the street corners, and cooperation among Christian and Jewish neighbors all impact David's life. Letters at the end reassure the reader of the family's safety, while the afterward further explains the story's historical context. Written for younger children, grades 2-4, *Honey Cake* not only includes straightforward, undemanding text, it also simplifies historical circumstances. The book may also have a place for older readers with lower reading levels.

Kristine Wildner,
Holy Apostles School,
New Berlin, WI