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# A Faraway Island



## Synopsis

Two Jewish sister leave Austria during WWII/Holocaust and find refuge in Sweden. It's the summer of 1939. Two Jewish sisters from Vienna—12-year-old Stephie Steiner and seven-year-old Nellie—are sent to Sweden to escape the Nazis. They expect to stay there six months, until their parents can flee to Amsterdam; then all four will go to America. But as the world war intensifies, the girls remain, each with her own host family, on a rugged island off the western coast of Sweden. Nellie quickly settles in to her new surroundings. Not so for Stephie, who finds it hard to adapt; she feels stranded at the end of the world, with a foster mother who's as unforgiving as the island itself. It's no wonder Stephie doesn't let on that the most popular girl at school becomes her bitter enemy, or that she endures the wounding slights of certain villagers. Her main worry, though, is her parents—and whether she will ever see them again.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 26 customer reviews

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Grade 5—In this gripping story, Stephie and Nellie, two Austrian Jewish sisters, are evacuated in 1938 from Vienna to a Swedish island and placed in separate foster homes. Twelve-year-old Stephie has promised her parents that she will try to ease her younger sister's way,

a burdensome promise to keep. Auntie Alma, Nellie's Swedish mother, is warmer and more welcoming than Auntie Märta, Stephie's more austere foster parent. At first it seems that Nellie will have a more difficult time adjusting, but the opposite happens. Loneliness and a sense of isolation engulf Stephie. The shunning and taunting of cliquish, bigoted girls intensify her longing for home and the familiar, but Stephie bravely perseveres, bolstered by the hope that she will only be separated from her parents for a short time. Unfortunately this does not happen, and the girls must remain on this faraway island. Children will readily empathize with Stephie's courage. Both sisters are well-drawn, likable characters. This is the first of four books Thor has written about the two girls. It is an excellent companion to Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* (Houghton, 1989), Kit Pearson's *The Sky Is Falling* (Viking, 1990; o.p.), and Olga Levy Drucker's *Kindertransport* (Holt, 1995).

—Renee Steinberg, formerly at Fieldstone Middle School, Montvale, NJ Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

ANNIKA THOR's bestselling quartet featuring the Steiner sisters has been translated into numerous languages and was adapted into a hugely popular television series in Sweden.

Such a great children's book about two girls from Vienna fleeing the Nazis. I recommend this book to any parent, guardian, or teacher who wants their child(ren)/student(s) to get more of an idea of the pains of the Holocaust, understanding how Jewish children who fled and were separated from their parents (and often placed in Catholic or Protestant homes) had to deal with their new life while longing for their parents, going into the lives of those children of the Shoah who lost everything...and most of the time, everyone. It's very touching, especially when you know that while the characters of this book are not based on any one individual experience from children who were separated from their parents and sent to another country for real, they are representing all of them as a whole. And the characters' fear of the Nazis, their being placed in a Christian home, their new life with celebrating religious events not of their own, their persecution, their pain, their longing--all of this--all of this is based on true accounts, for it has happened to far too many Jewish children during HaShoah (the Holocaust). This is a great book to introduce to your child(ren)/student(s) to get more familiar with the Shoah and, more precisely, with the Jewish kids who were fortunate enough to escape (and even more fortunate to not be separated from their siblings while fleeing). Great, great book.

It was an easy read, so it's great for summertime camping. I found this book accidentally when I was looking for a book my daughter has to read for summer reading. I gave it four stars as opposed to three when I realized it was part of a series. Looking forward to reading the rest of Steph's and Nellie's story.

I loved the story. I'm addicted to WWII stories and half of my family immigrated from Sweden so it was my kind of book.

This series, translated from Swedish, is excellent and highly recommended for children, probably from age 10-12 up to adult, depending on reading skills. It follows the lives of two Jewish girls who escaped to Sweden during WWII.

The storyline was easy to follow. I loved it to the very end! I would recommend to any young adult.

I loved this book the only problem is that it has a lot of German words that take me a while to sound them out.

Excellent for young readers. It's first in a series. The second book is out....translated. I hope all the books will be translated soon!

Lovely and educational book for my granddaughter!

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