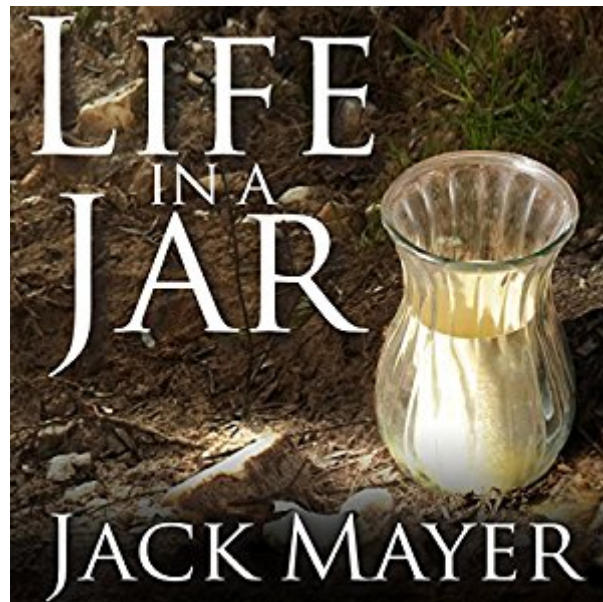


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## Life In A Jar



## Synopsis

During World War II, Irena Sendler, a Polish Catholic social worker, organized a rescue network of fellow social workers to save 2,500 Jewish children from certain death in the Warsaw ghetto. Incredibly, after the war her heroism, like that of many others, was suppressed by communist Poland and remained virtually unknown for 60 years. Unknown, that is, until three high school girls from an economically depressed, rural school district in southeast Kansas stumbled upon a tantalizing reference to Sendler's rescues, which they fashioned into a history project, a play they called *Life in a Jar*. Their innocent drama was first seen in Kansas, then the Midwest, then New York, Los Angeles, Montreal and finally Poland, where they elevated Irena Sendler to a national hero, championing her legacy of tolerance and respect for all people. *Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project* is a Holocaust history and more. It is the inspirational story of Protestant students from Kansas, each called in her own complex way to the history of a Catholic woman who knocked on Jewish doors in the Warsaw ghetto and, in Sendler's own words, "tried to talk the mothers out of their children".

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

One person can make a difference. This was, and continues to be, Irena Sendler's message to the world, and Jack Mayer's *Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project* conveys that message in a heartfelt manner that grabs and engages the reader from beginning to end. The book is a story of a Holocaust hero, plus one of Kansas students and their teacher. The world had not heard of Irena

Sendler until a group of students in Bourbon County started a National History Day project. The book is called a "novel" on the cover, but more closely the book is a "non-fiction" novel. The author went to Kansas on two occasions while writing the book, and he also traveled to Poland with the Kansas teens and their teacher, spending time interviewing Irena Sendler and child survivors. Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project is based on the true story of Irena Sendler and the Kansas students who "rescued the rescuer's story for the world." Jack Mayer's description of the constant fear and peril of Sendler's rescue of 2,500 children from sure death is vivid; the reader feels transported back to the ghetto as the suspense and difficulty of Irena's missions are described. Moreover, while the story of Irena's acts of bravery and heroism of rescuing children from the Warsaw ghetto is captivating, equally so are the acts of bravery the young women discovered within themselves to overcome personal obstacles in their lives while researching tirelessly to find information on Irena. Megan Stewart had to come to terms with her mother's breast cancer; Sabrina Coons had to come to terms with being part of a military family and frequently relocating; and Liz Cambers had to come to terms with her mother's abandonment when Liz was only five years old. Guiding the girls through their National History Day project and struggles was their history teacher Norm Conard, who with his dedication and encouragement, assisted them in eventually finding Irena. The young women's struggles reveal their vulnerabilities and move the reader to sympathize with the teens and cheer for their achievements. The meeting in Poland that takes place among Irena, the Kansas teens, and their teacher is nothing short of a miraculous act of fate. The emotions are palpable, and the events leading up to their visit keep the reader captivated. Tears flowed from my eyes as I read about the love and admiration that were felt between Irena and each student when they met and between Mr. Conard and Irena herself. The incredible manner in which this true story unfolded underscores the power good still has in this world, as well as the influence people have when they help others. Jack Mayer's book begins with the Kansas teens trying to develop their mission of "making a difference and repairing the world" through their National History Day project. By the end of the book, it is obvious they not only accomplished that goal but greatly exceeded it. Through their research about Irena and their close relationship with her, they made, and continue to make, a difference to an innumerable amount of people and repaired each other's lives. They most certainly will make a difference for anyone who reads their inspiring story.

Knowing the story of Irena Sendler, I looked forward to the publication of this book. I knew I would enjoy reading it but I was unprepared to be absolutely riveted by it. I took the book home planning to read a chapter or two but ended up reading it from cover to cover in one sitting. While I knew Irena's

story, I did not know the story of the three Kansas girls and their history project. On so many levels, this is an amazing story - the impact of a teacher on the lives of three young girls, the power of historical research, the incredible work done by Sendler and the human touch across both generations and continents. When the young women finally met the subject of their research, Irena Sendler, all differences were transcended. It did not matter that they had grown up in rural Kansas decades after Sendler did her heroic work in Poland in the late 1930's. Irena Sendler's life, continuing to be so beautifully portrayed in the "Life in a Jar" play, provides inspiration by demonstrating that ordinary people can do great things.

I have always avoided feeling the pain of the Holocaust until I read *Life in a Jar*. I let myself cry through many pages, horrified at how human beings can treat other human beings. By the end, I was crying for a different reason--how Irena Sendler and some students and Jack Mayer made a difference, living and telling this story. I would recommend this to anyone who wants to feel the worst and the best of what we human beings are capable of doing and being. Don't expect to have dry eyes. Thank you, Irena Sendler for saving so many lives and Jack Mayer and students for bringing this story to the world.

This book is a powerful story of protestant students from rural Kansas that found the story of a Polish Catholic woman who saved Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto during the Holocaust. I was moved by both parts to the story. Irena Sendler was a light during the darkness of the Holocaust; I am so glad her story is being told by this group of young people. The author, Jack Mayer, has presented both stories in a beautiful way.

This is one of the most wonderful, riveting books I have ever read. After reading this book I wanted to share it with everyone I know. It should be required reading for school children, because I learned so much about World War II that I never learned in school. I just couldn't wrap my head around the fact that such injustice occurred in my parents lifetime, it is heartbreaking and inspiring. This novel is now part of my soul.

*Life in a Jar* is one of those books that you stay up all night reading! It is an amazing story of an unsung hero - Irena Sendler - who risked her life to rescue 2,500 Jewish children during the Holocaust. Amazingly, the story of Irena Sendler might have been lost if not for several high school students from Kansas. *Life in a Jar* tells the story of how these teens rediscovered Irena and shared

her story with the world. This book is truly amazing! Don't miss it!

This book speaks to the reader on so many levels. We are reminded, or perhaps for the first time learn, of life and death in the Warsaw of World War II. We come to know Irena Sendler and her acts of courage and love which result in the saving of the lives of so many Jewish children. All of this we learn through the three American students who chose to write and perform a play for their History Day project about a Polish woman, an unsung heroine, who was little known in the USA or even in Poland. The story is beautifully written and a compelling read. At the end you celebrate that Irena now has gained the recognition she deserved and that the last children she has saved are these three girls.

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