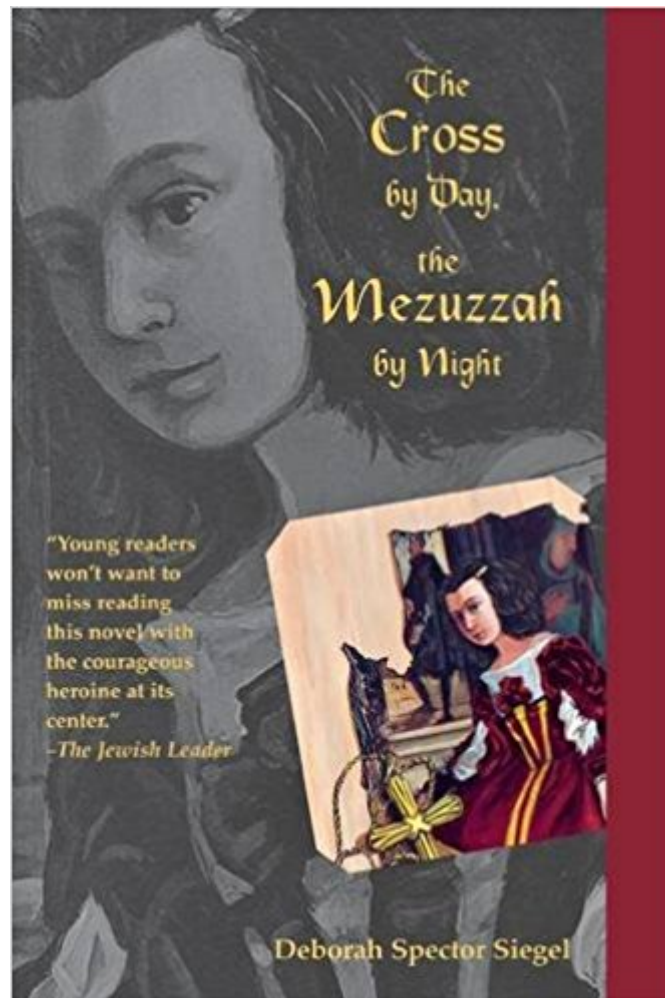




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The Cross By Day, The Mezuzzah By Night



Synopsis

A thrilling young adult novel that captures the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition and the strength and determination of one young girl to preserve her family and culture at any cost.

Book Information

Paperback: 124 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

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Customer Reviews

"This commanding novel jars us through its portrayal of the senseless brutality of the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion of Spain's Jews in the 15th century. It is a lesson related with suspense, emotion, and lasting impact."

Wonderful coming of age story and introduction to Spanish Inquisition. After living 13 years as a "Catholic", Isabella is presented with the truth that her family are Marrano Jews. As Queen Isabella begins to evict the Jews from Spain, 13 year old Isabella begins to see the world through different eyes and can choose to accept or reject the truth of her identity. I have begun to include this book with Bat Mitzvah gifts, as it really illustrates the life (and death) they have chosen.

The Cross by Day, the Mezuzzah by Night tells the story of Isabel, who, on her 13th birthday is told her family's secret: they are Marranos, Jews whose ancestors were converted by force 100 years earlier, who have secretly continued to practice Judaism in the privacy of their homes, passing down Jewish traditions like lighting Sabbath candles on Friday evenings. Isabel learns that she has a Hebrew name, Ruth, and is heir to her family's heritage, a beautiful gold mezuzzah. This revelation shatters Isabel's pampered existence in a wealthy Seville family. Spies are everywhere, seeking to

denounce those who practice Judaism behind the veil of Christianity, even as the unconverted Jews are being ejected from Spain by royal decree in 1492. As events become more frightening, Isabel's father makes desperate plans to spirit them out among the Jews leaving Spain. But will they flee in time or is it already too late...and will the Jews even accept them, as both Christians and Jews speak with disgust of the Marranos? This is a very well written young adult novel that tells the story of a horrifying time in Jewish history through the eyes of a brave narrator. As she reaches 13, the age of adulthood, Isabel is thrust into adult decisions and dilemmas. She has been brought up thoroughly Catholic and loves her faith; how is she to make sense of this other tradition? As things go from bad to worse with her family, can she pull them through it? The novel is an excellent window into this period but I would recommend it for mature readers. The narrative pulls no punches in the telling--Isabel witnesses prejudice, treachery, betrayal, an auto-da-fe (burning to death of discovered Marranos) and the tribulations of the expulsion edict. Yet the story is inspiring too, and is recommended for any young adult reader but especially young Jewish readers who need to learn of their past and to cherish their modern day freedom to worship.

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