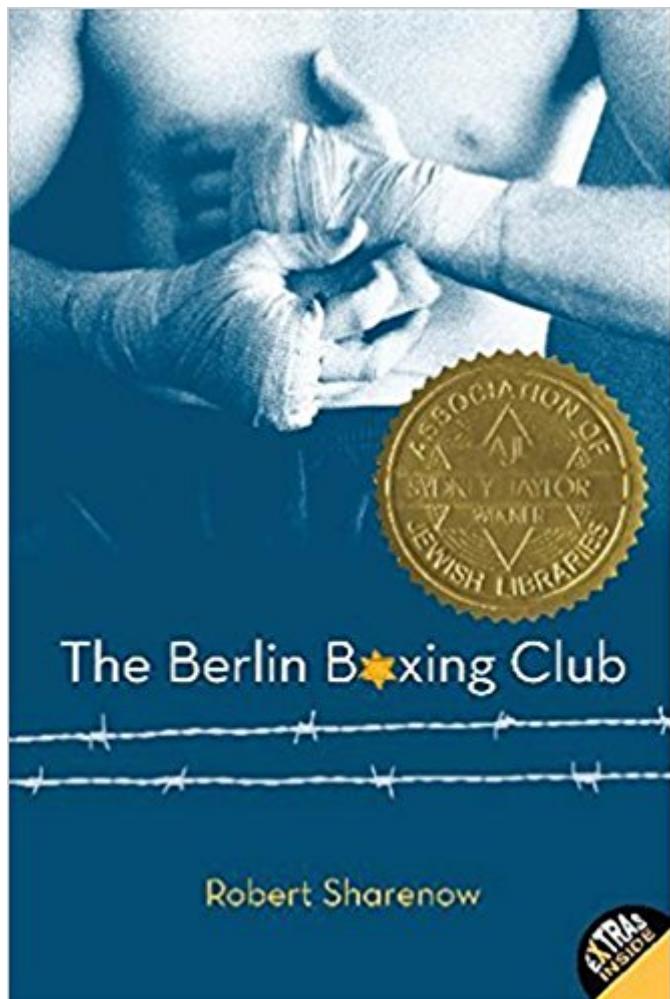


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# The Berlin Boxing Club



## Synopsis

Sydney Taylor Award-winning novel Berlin Boxing Club is loosely inspired by the true story of boxer Max Schmeling's experiences following Kristallnacht. Publishers Weekly called it "a masterful historical novel" in a starred review. Karl Stern has never thought of himself as a Jew; after all, he's never even been in a synagogue. But the bullies at his school in Nazi-era Berlin don't care that Karl's family doesn't practice religion. Demoralized by their attacks against a heritage he doesn't accept as his own, Karl longs to prove his worth. Then Max Schmeling, champion boxer and German hero, makes a deal with Karl's father to give Karl boxing lessons. A skilled cartoonist, Karl has never had an interest in boxing, but now it seems like the perfect chance to reinvent himself. But when Nazi violence against Jews escalates, Karl must take on a new role: family protector. And as Max's fame forces him to associate with Nazi elites, Karl begins to wonder where his hero's sympathies truly lie. Can Karl balance his boxing dreams with his obligation to keep his family out of harm's way? Includes an author's note and sources page detailing the factual inspirations behind the novel.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Sharenow delivers a masterful historical novel. (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) A story with well-drawn, complex characters, gripping history, and intense emotion. (School Library Journal (starred review)) A fine one-two punch with the author's previous powerful work, *My Mother the Cheerleader*. (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) Readers will be drawn [in] by the sports detail and by the

close-up narrative of the daily oppression. (ALA Booklist) "A meaty, readable account of the perils and pitfalls of daily life in Nazi Germany. (The Horn Book) "This beautifully written coming-of-age story puts a human face on both the victims and the tormentors during the holocaust while revealing on a national level the political importance and implications of the historic match between black boxer Joe Louis and German hero Max Schmeling. (Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)) "I held my breath as Karl Stern, fierce and thoughtful, fought his way through the Nazi Wolf Pack and his own insecurities to save his family and become a boxer and an artist. (Robert Lipsyte, author of *THE CONTENDER* and *CENTER FIELD*) "Set in Berlin just after Kristallnacht, this isn't just a story about the terrible events in Nazi Germany, it's also a story about identity, family, and growing up (in the article "11 Children" and YA Books to Help Remember the Holocaust). (Brightly.com)

Karl Stern has never thought of himself as a Jew; after all, he's never even been in a synagogue. But the bullies at his school in Nazi-era Berlin don't care that Karl's family doesn't practice religion. Demoralized by their attacks against a heritage he doesn't accept as his own, Karl longs to prove his worth. Then Max Schmeling, champion boxer and German hero, makes a deal with Karl's father to give Karl boxing lessons. A skilled cartoonist, Karl never had an interest in boxing, but now it seems like the perfect chance to reinvent himself. But when Nazi violence against Jews escalates, Karl must take on a new role: family protector. And as Max's fame forces him to associate with Nazi elites, Karl begins to wonder where his hero's sympathies truly lie. Can Karl balance his boxing dreams with his obligation to keep his family out of harm's way?

A very disturbing, dark and anguishing story placed in the historical context of Nazi Germany in the thirties of the last century, the time shortly before the outbreak of war, probably the years from 1936 to 1938. It tells the story, strictly from within Germany, and answers questions like: What did it mean to be a Jew in Germany during that time, shortly before, during and after the "Kristallnacht". How did it feel to be a Jewish youngster (religious or not at all) who went to school with Nazis and not Nazis (but how to know who is and who is not ?!), and other Jews and wanted to be - as everybody - liked by his peers, who had the dream of becoming a Junior Boxing Champion, and the good luck to have the talent necessary to achieve that goal, and besides to be trained by the Heavyweight World Champion Max Schmeling, icon of German and Arian supremacy? What did it mean to be a German, not necessarily a Nazi, trying to just "muddle through" or even an anti-Nazi? How did the

climate (of collective paranoia and hate) that permeated every aspect of daily life, feel on either side? Very well written, transmits masterfully the climate one would assume reigned in those days.

The Berlin Boxing Club will be a classic. "Not all Germans are the same. It is only politics. It will pass." Every time Karl tries to talk to an adult about what is happening in his neighborhood in Berlin in 1934 that is what they say. Even his Jewish parents. Karl decides if he can become the greatest young boxer in Germany, it will change people's impressions of Jews. Max Schmeling is a family friend, and he arranges for Karl to train at his gym. Since no one at the gym knows Karl is Jewish, he continues to compete even after Hitler enacts the Nuremberg Race Laws. As things go from difficult to desperate to dangerous, many Jews, including Karl's parents, still say, "It will pass." By the time of Kristallnacht in 1938, Karl's father has lost his art gallery, the family has been forced to sell off all of their possessions so there is no money to escape, and most of their friends have already emigrated or been arrested. Teens will be engaged by Karl's determination and harrowing experiences. Some will be enthralled by the detailed descriptions of boxing training and fights. Adults will be dismayed at how naive Karl's parents are even as their family and friends are being arrested. The Berlin Boxing Club takes the reader to heart of Berlin in the 30's and into the lives of Karl, his family and his family's friends.

Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would have read a book about boxing. I did, however, and I loved it. Since it looked like a children's book, I read some of the reviews before I bought it. Basically, it is for young adults, but it can also appeal to adults. This is the story of a 14 year old Jewish boy named Karl Stern in the 1930's. At that time the persecution of the Jews in Germany was getting worse, with Karl being beaten up by his classmates and/or the Hitler Youth. Karl's father happened to be friends with Max Schmeling, the champion boxer of Germany. Due to an agreement between Max and Karl's father, Max agreed to take Karl on as a student boxer. Karl worked out on his own, and also at the Berlin Boxing Club. This book is historical fiction which I love especially when it is well written. I highly recommend The Berlin Boxing Club for both children and adults. If a book about boxing can interest me (since I have very little interest in the sport) then, it is a good book.

This story was well told. Exciting and sad. People do what is necessary to survive under all situations. Life is lived for the moment, decisions are made with the available facts. Read and enjoy.

My 14 yr old son read this for school. Blazed through it in a week. Really enjoyed it. Decided he wants to read more historical fiction now.

I have studied the Holocaust and Nazi Germany in school, but this book opened my eyes to the extent of hate and violence against the Jews. I literally laughed and cried. The beautiful blending of fact and fiction made this book come alive. The author did an amazing job of writing. If you are into Historical fiction, I highly recommend this book.

I absolutely loved this book. I couldn't put it down. The historical context makes the novel so believable!! The fiery fear and anguish that was felt by a once helpless boy transforms into unstoppable young man in the ring. A story of tough trials, pursuit of passion, and the will to survive in what seems like the pit of hell. Highly recommended this book!-Best of luck, Drake

This book captures a period in history that led up to WWII. The hero of the book, a young boy, befriends Max Schmeling the great German boxer who split two bouts with Joe Louis. The story describes the disenfranchisement of a Jewish family during the 1930's. It's painful to read but is told in a straightforward and honest manner.

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