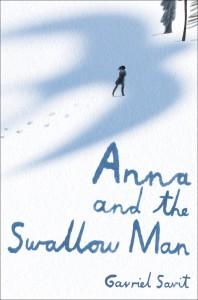
Anna and the Swallow Man

Gavriel Savit



Gavriel Savit was raised in a Jewish Orthodox household in Michigan. He was surrounded by Yiddish, Hebrew, and English.

Anna and the Swallow man is his first book, published by Knopf’s Books for Young Readers on January 26, 2016. It was written between acting in the theatre, including Broadway, with his degree in musical theatre. The book started out as a screenplay, and was later adapted into a novel. More information can be found at [http://gavrielsavit.com/](http://gavrielsavit.com/#ip-container)



**Summary**

Anna is a young child of seven who speaks multiple languages, but has no definition for “war”. When her father disappears at the beginning of World War 2, she finds a mysterious man who she understands. She follows him out of Krakow, Poland, her hometown, and he decides to bring her with him on his journey. They spend most of their time walking from place to place. Anna learns to adapt to their new dangerous world, from the Swallow Man. Anna makes decisions while growing up with the constant threat of war, learning what she is told and what she is left to figure out herself. She asks the big questions, and abides by what the Swallow Man made her promise to do as a child.

**Text Complexity**

**New Dale-Chall Readability Index:** Grades 9 - 10

**ATOS Score**

Atos Book Level: 7.1

Interest Level: Upper Grades (UG 9-12)

AR Points: 10.0

**Lexile Score:** 12 and up years

**Quotes**

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| It was perhaps a bit late, but at age 7 anna was very much still in the process of figuring out how the world really worked. Seven short years had been punctuated by a series of incredible upheavals and overturns in the way her life functioned- her mother gone, and then a world at war, and now a father disappeared as well. For all she understood, this was The Way Of Things. What one knew did not linger; what one expected disappeared. For a coddled girl of seven, then, Anna had become exceedingly skilled at adaptation. Whatever language someone spoke to her was the language she spoke back. (p 23) | In this quote, Anna’s worldview up until the beginning of the novel is explained. She has not known constants because of all of the change in her life. When she begins to travel with the Swallow Man, she accepts it as another change she must adapt to. This influences the rest of her decisions within the book, and sets Anna up as a character who the audience can relate to. Anna’s circumstances make her malleable to her situation’s needs. Anna |
| “The girl” he said. “She is very sweet, Mr. Noname. Incredibly good. And you taught her very well how to survive. I must be honest and say that I am not entirely certain what i think of you, but I do not doubt that you are a good man, and if I think so, she is the reason. The Swallow Man did not speak. “It's funny- being around her, it almost makes me see you the way she does. That's the difference between being a little girl and being a grown up: she doesn’t realize that you have a name, that all of this that you do, it’s a protective layer, like she's following around an empty suit of armor.” (p 132) | The speaker here is Reb Hirschl, a Jew that they begin to travel with later on. He is an outsider to Anna and the Swallow Man’s arrangement, and is often confused by it. He is commenting on how Anna has complete faith in the Swallow Man, and how he takes care of her. Reb Hirschl thinks that something is wrong or missing in the Swallow Man, because he acts the way he does. Their adopted methods of dealing with the war and its effects vary wildly, and don’t mesh well. Their characters are foils and interact with Anna differently. |
| “You must make me two promises,'' he said. “Ok”, said Anna. “First,” said the tall man, “You must always do as you did in the pasture last night. Do you promise?” Anna did not know what this meant, but she felt so near to escaping the empty void of Krakow that she would have promised whatever the thin man would have asked of her. “Yes”, she said. “Good”, said the tall man. “The second promise is that you must ask every question that you wish to ask, with no exceptions. But never until we two are alone. Do you promise?” (p 43) | When Anna makes this agreement with the Swallow Man, she does not fully understand what she is agreeing to. She has nothing to return to and wants to follow this strange man. However, the Swallow Man is willing to answer her questions. He tells her to follow him, and she takes this as a cue that he will take care of her. Swallow Man’s knowledge of survival in times of crisis takes the place of her father’s knowledge of languages as the one she learned. |

**Teaching Points**

This book should be taught in the curriculum because it faces a historical event that is widely known about from a child’s perspective and understanding. Reading about a young girl as she learns how to survive in her completely new world exposes the audience to a new perspective that is not commonly needed anymore.

Anna and the Swallow Man has many Exeter Qualities, including:

-an Exciting plot that includes secrecy, surprise, and tension brought about through narrative hooks and a fast pace,

-Characters who go beyond typical experiences so that readers can use the fictional experiences to learn and develop in their own lives,

-Lively, varied, and imaginative language that is grammatically correct while being neither patronizing and simplistic nor unnecessarily confusing through lexical density or complexity, -Themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns.

I would teach this book in conjunction with another book on World War 2, such as Maus I. Since books around this subject tend to be heavily contemplative and entrenched in the war, this book would serve as a counterpoint with its outsider perspective and younger voice. As an activity, I might get students to assemble their own survival bag from examples in the book. The Swallow Man only took what he needed, and they could decide what to take along as well.

The book falls under the category of Books About Death and Loss, Books about Courage and Survival, and Books about Identity, Discrimination, and Struggles with Decisions. Much of the plot is concerned with how Anna and the Swallow Man survive in World War 2, and how Anna shapes her identity and what she knows around her experiences and the Swallow Man himself. Throughout the books, there are small poignant examples of how Anna discovers what death is and what she has lost. She realizes her father is not coming back, she scavenges in a field of dead soldiers, and between her experiences, she pieces together what it means to live among the dead.

This book should be read because it is written in the voice of a child who has grown up steeped in the war and all that it means. She makes her memories there, she learns what is normal and what is not, and she learns to adapt with an ever changing shawl of identities.

