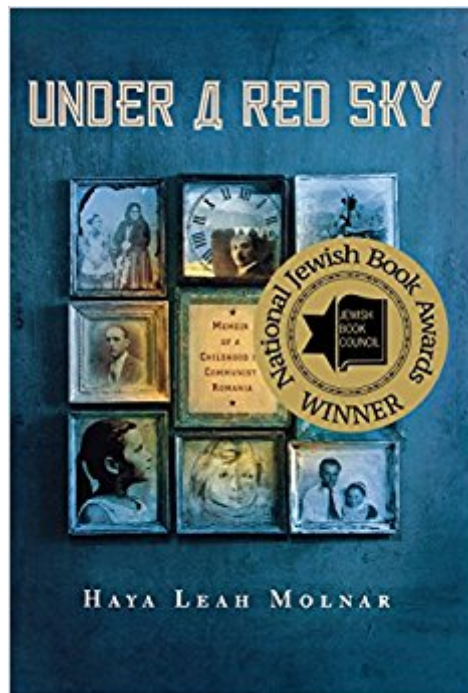




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Under A Red Sky: Memoir Of A Childhood In Communist Romania



Synopsis

Eva Zimmermann is eight years old, and she has just discovered she is Jewish. Such is the life of an only child living in postwar Bucharest, a city that is changing in ever more frightening ways. Eva's family, full of eccentric and opinionated adults, will do absolutely anything to keep her safe—even if it means hiding her identity from her. With razor-sharp depictions of her animated relatives, Haya Leah Molnar's memoir of her childhood captures with touching precocity the very adult realities of living behind the iron curtain. *Under a Red Sky* is a 2011 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Customer Reviews

Grade 5 Up • Molnar re-creates memories and family stories of living in postwar Romania, fleshing them out with dialogue that, while not exact, remains true to the essence of her experiences, resulting in a readable, informative, and engaging book. The only child living in a crowded flat with seven adults representing three generations, Eva is often the center of attention of her frequently squabbling anti-Communist relatives. Her life becomes more complicated when she discovers at the age of seven that she is Jewish. She tries to understand what this means, particularly in light of her father's undiscussed but hinted-at war experiences, but for once gets little help from her family. In the late 1950s, Eva's family begins the long process of applying to

immigrate to Israel, and their applications result in nerve-racking visits from Communist government agents who search their apartment. Once the grandparents leave, a non-Jewish family is assigned to their room, making it unsafe for the family to communicate with one another at home. The drama isn't over when Eva and her parents finally get the chance to leave; a less-desirable route and her father's return for a missing camera cause some tense days. Enough history and background are included to help today's readers understand the context of Eva's family's situation without detracting from the story. The book would make an interesting pairing with Peter SÄfÆ'Ä Å-s's *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* (Farrar, 2007). Photographs of Molnar and her family are included.Ãçâ –â •Nancy Silverrod, San Francisco Public Library (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Molnar began life as Eva Zimmerman, an adored only child living in the apartment shared by her parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles in Bucharest, Romania. The authorÃçâ –â„çs loving but eccentric family sheltered her as much as possible from the harsh realities of life under communist rule, when food and housing were scarce and the Securitate, RomaniaÃçâ –â„çs secret police, watched and listened everywhere. Her father, a cinematographer, believed in science, not God, and neither religion nor World War II were spoken of at home, so it came as a huge shock to Molnar when she learned in 1958 that her entire family had applied to emigrate to Israel and that she is Jewish. All I know is that yesterday I wasnÃçâ –â„çt Jewish and today I am, says Molnar in describing her struggle to understand her new identity. As Eva pieces together her familyÃçâ –â„çs history, a vivid story emerges, ranging from funny, tender moments of family life to the horrific revelations of the Romanian holocaust, about which little has been written. Black-and-white family photos illustrate this poignant, memorable offering. Grades 6-9. --Lynn Rutan

The intimate remembrance of Haya's early life is told with warmth, tenderness honesty and some humor. It made me smile, laugh and weep. The history of what Jews went through in both the Russian Revolution and Communist Romania is haunting. I learned about my own family's plight through Haya's story. Her family's love protected her from much of the pain they were living through. Each chapter offered an adventure. I was left with a feeling of warmth and hope. I enjoyed getting to know all of the different personalities and was left wondering what happened to each of them. Her story is the story of our human condition as people struggle with personal freedom every day.

I enthusiastically recommend this wonderful book that was so compelling and moving, that I wanted the book to continue past the end because I cared so much about the central characters who are beginning a new and exciting chapter in their lives. This is the story of a Jewish family struggling to survive in "Cold War" Romania in the 1950's as seen through the eyes of Eva, the child in the family. I felt like I was getting an education about Communist Romania in the context of a heroic family striving to maintain its identity in the face of relentless government pressures to conform to the ideals of the totalitarian state. Haya Leah Molnar (Eva's Hebrew Name) is truly a gifted writer. I consider her a painter as well, because Haya paints memorable pictures with her words that absorb the attention of the reader. Her pictures are connected to human emotions that are windows into our very souls. Eva's family hides her Jewish identity from her for her own protection. She gradually learns about her Jewish roots and the Torah through secretive visits to a Rabbi. Although these meetings put both Eva and her family at great risk, Eva's family is willing to chance it so Eva has the opportunity to encounter and nurture her Jewish identity. I would subtitle this book, "A Tree of Life Grows in Bucharest." Eva takes her readers along on her inspiring journey that leaves one feeling more hopeful and courageous about the possibilities for growth in a repressive society.

A perceptive and precocious young girl grows up in a house filled with adults. And what a cast of characters they are! There is Uncle Natan, who sleeps on a cot in the dining room and suddenly decides to get married (the marriage lasts about three months, with no explanations). Then there is Aunt Puica who lives with Uncle Max in a smoke-choked bedroom referred to by Grandma as the Bat Cave, spending her days reading trashy romance novels in her underwear and puffing on cigarettes. Grandma Iulia, Grandpa Yosef, Mama (once a ballerina) and Tata, a gentle man who's hardly ever home, all share the one little girl and dote on her accordingly. Young Eva's bedroom is separated from her parents' room by only a bookcase, a thought that would send shivers down the spine of any Freudian, but somehow Eva grows up loved and astonishingly normal, with the wise head of a much older person. She knows that her menagerie of a family cherishes her deeply and would do anything for her. These things are important, since Eva is living in Communist Roumania in the late 1950's, where a false word might land you in prison or worse. Under a Red Sky is a glimpse into this world for us coddled souls who probably can't imagine waiting most of the day in line to purchase a dozen eggs, or, dare we hope, a chicken. It's a delightful, funny tale and the odd characters come alive in the telling. Humor and humanity trump repression.

Interesting. Author is Jewish which made her life even harder than that of the average Romanian

which was hard enough. If you go to Romania check out the communist museum in Maremures (in Sighet I think).

I could not put this book down. I hope that this author has another book in mind. I will be one of the first to buy it. I love to read stories about how families endure and press forward. It reminds me of my own family. My family escaped the Czars from Russia. Only with support of family who all chipped in to put up the necessary bonds so they could make the trek and endure Ellis Island and arrive here.

bought this for Romanian friend who loved it.

Although I am not Jewish, I did grow up in Romania as a child so I could relate to the life of the author. Without giving too much away, it was a great book. Would recommend to open minded people that can understand other cultures.

Worth reading for a unique perspective. Parts seem long and drawn out, but overall worth reading if you are interested in first person perspectives of living under Communism.

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