



# REVIEWS

From the Kids Can Marketing Team

Lynne Kositsky *The Thought of High Windows*

176 pp. Kids Can 3/04 isbn 1-55337-621-8 16.95

(Middle School, High School)

This is Holocaust fiction at its least romanticized. Esther, a sixteen-year-old Jewish girl, is on the run from the Nazis; as one of sixty refugee kids, she has found precarious asylum in a French castle. Still, her concerns are mostly everyday ones. Esther, "lumpy and fat," suffers the taunts of the popular kids and agonizes as Walter, an eccentric fellow refugee whom she adores, develops crushes on other, more beautiful, girls (at one point, a pair of twins last seen boarding a train for Auschwitz). Kositsky emphasizes Esther's loneliness and misery with squalid details: "Our new home is a filthy, cobwebby building, dirty straw strewn across the floor. No furniture, not so much as a chair"; "I've developed horrid, pus-filled blisters in my mouth that burn when I eat, and painful sores on my legs. Now my head is itching like crazy, too." Eventually, Esther escapes from the no-longer-safe castle (Walter stays behind) and gradually becomes involved in the Jewish underground. Again, the author resists glamorizing: pressed into service as repayment for shelter and false identity papers, Esther is unwilling and afraid. It's only the thought of Walter that keeps her going, and she achieves a moment of grace when they are reunited and briefly live together. Esther has gained strength and self-acceptance through her tribulations, and although the ending of the book is far from happy, it is hopeful. Kositsky's focus on human imperfection and quotidian detail poignantly reminds readers that the Holocaust in all its in happened to real human beings. m.v.p.

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