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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Monique Polak is the author of 29 books for young readers. She has been teaching English and Humanities at Marianopolis College in Montreal for 33 years. Monique is also a frequent contributor to the Montreal Gazette. Because her mother was a survivor of the Holocaust, Monique has a special interest in Holocaust studies. In addition to teaching a course about Holocaust Literature, Monique also wrote a novel called *What World Is Left (Orca)*, which is based on her mother's childhood experiences at Theresienstadt, a Nazi concentration camp in what is now the Czech Republic. In *Room for One More*, Monique returns to the subject of the Holocaust, but this time her story is set in North America rather than war-torn Europe. To learn more about Monique Polak's work, visit www.moniquepolak.com

SUMMARY & CONTENT

For twelve-year-old Rosetta Wolfson, the war in Europe seems very far off from her home in Canada. Then Mr. Schwartzberg comes to tea and asks Rosetta's parents if they will take in a young war refugee. Isaac joins the family and becomes a ready-made brother to Rosetta and her two sisters.

Isaac's arrival brings change. Her best friend's handsome brother doesn't seem as attractive after he reveals himself as anti-Semitic, and Rosetta begins to suspect her friend may agree with him. As Rosetta and Isaac become friends and he shares his story with her, she helps him learn the fate of other family members and helps him shape a promising future in his new country.

BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES

Here are some questions to consider before you begin reading this book.

1. What was the Holocaust?
2. In the days during which *Room for One More* is set, there was no Internet. As a result, news travelled far more slowly than it does today. What did North Americans know about what was happening to European Jews and other groups targeted by the Nazis during the Holocaust?
3. Look up Hitler Youth. What do you learn?
4. What is the meaning of kindertransport?
5. The author chose to include some real life people in her novel. One of those people is a famous Montrealer named Samuel Bronfman. Look him up and see what you learn about who he was and what kind of contribution he and his wife Saidye made to Montreal.

AS YOU READ

THINK ABOUT THE NOVEL'S CHARACTERS:

When Monique Polak was growing up, one of her favorite novels was Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*. If you have read that book (or seen the recent movie), you will know that it is also about a family of sisters. The sisters in *Little Women* are very different from each other. Alcott is using a literary technique called "foils." She puts together characters who have opposite personalities. For example, Josephine is strong, outspoken and a tomboy; Beth is sensitive,

sweet and reserved. Consider the personalities of the three sisters in *Room for One More*. How do they serve as foils for one another?

CONSIDER THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THIS STORY:

Many of the characters in *Room for One More* are Jewish. Consider what being Jewish means to them. Why do the Wolffs attend synagogue and celebrate the High Holy Days? What is Isaac's relationship with religion?

THINK ABOUT SECRETS:

At their very heart, many novels have a secret. Who is keeping a secret in *Room for One More*? Why might this person want to keep a secret in the first place? Is there a downside to keeping a secret? Could there also be a downside to finally sharing your secret?

SETTING:

Have you ever been to Montreal? Most of Monique Polak's novels are set in Montreal, the city where she was born and where she has lived all her life. What do you learn about Montreal from reading her latest novel?

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

Most novels that deal with the Holocaust are set in Europe. Why did Monique Polak choose to set *Room for One More* in Montreal? What point was she trying to make?

Monique Polak says she is interested in what she calls "the grey areas." She says that she does not believe that people are all good – or all bad. How does this view apply to various characters in her novel? Consider especially Rosetta, and also Isaac's mother.

Montreal is one of Canada's most multi-cultural cities. As a teacher, Monique Polak has had the privilege of teaching students whose families have come to North America from all over the world. Monique says she has learned a lot from those students. What about you? Do you have classmates who were born in other countries? Working in pairs or small groups, interview some of the students in your class who have come from faraway places. Be sure to ask them what they miss about the countries where they were born. What are the things they do not miss? What was it like for them to begin their lives anew in a strange place?