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Reader's Guide

Resources for Teachers and Students



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Ages 8-13 | Grades 4-7

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About the Book



About the Author

Tammar Stein is the award-winning author of four young adult novels including *Light Years*, which was named a Sydney Taylor Notable Book of Jewish Content and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults. She is a graduate of the University of Virginia with a degree in English Literature. She lives in Virginia with her family.

Summary and Context

In *The Six-Day Hero*, a new middle grade novel from Tammar Stein, Motti knows that war is coming. Israel is only nineteen years old—the same age as Motti's brave older brother, Gideon—and the tiny country is surrounded by enemies. Motti wishes he could join the Israeli army like Gideon and be a hero. But when his best friend's family flees the country and his brother goes off to fight, Motti realizes this war isn't a game.

But hope comes to Motti in unexpected forms. In the kind Ethiopian priest who lives nearby. In his grouchy neighbor, old Mrs. Friedburg. In the young Germans who come to offer help. In his father's childhood friend, a Jordanian man. Even in a scrappy stray cat that roams the bombed city without fear. Motti knows his older brother is a hero—but through the six days of the war that will decide Israel's fate, he discovers other heroes in surprising places. He may even be a hero himself.

Reading Questions

BEFORE READING:

1. What do you know about The Six-Day War? When did it occur? What was its outcome?
2. What do you think it means to be a hero?
3. What are some reasons why countries go to war?

READING TOGETHER:

1. Find the description of Motti's house. What does his house look like? From the description, what can you determine about his family and their life?
2. How does Motti feel about his brothers? Do you think most people Motti's age view their siblings this way? If you have siblings, think about how you feel about them, and how they might feel about you.
3. Everywhere he goes, Motti meets people who immigrated to Israel from other countries. Who have you met that has come to your community from another country? What challenges do you think immigrants face in your community?
4. Was Motti brave or foolish to go outside while mortars were being fired on his neighborhood? Can you imagine what you might do in the same situation?
5. Why do you think Yossi and his mom leave to stay with family in Morocco? Do you think that was a difficult decision? Do you know any other examples in history when people decided to leave their countries seeking safety? Where in the world might that be happening even today?

AFTER READING:

1. What does it mean to be a hero? Has your answer changed from before you read the book?
2. Who is the hero in the book? Is there more than one? Are all heroic acts the same—can there be different kinds of heroism?

Q&A with Tammar Stein, author of *The Six-Day Hero*

Just in time for the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War, author Tammar Stein has written a middle grade historical novel set in Israel in the days leading up to the war. Though much has been written about the Six-Day War for an adult audience, her novel, *The Six-Day Hero*, is one of the only books geared for school age readers about the war.

Here's an interview with the author about the unlikely spark for her novel, and her personal connection to its subject matter.

Q: *What inspired you to write this book?*

TS: My mom called me after a rabbi from her synagogue told her he had nothing to assign his fifth grader to read about Israel. My mom followed this up with career advice for me: "You should write something." I kept thinking about this. Nothing about Israel for fifth graders? Really? Someone should do something! Then I had one of those aha moments. Oh wait...me. I should do something.

Q: *The Six-Day War took place before you were born. How did you become interested in writing about it?*

TS: It was remarkably easy to set a children's book in that time period. Even though the geo-political situation was precarious, children had an incredible amount of personal freedom. They were free to roam after school without adult supervision and had amazing scraps and adventures that their parents never knew about, daring each other to go right up to the barbed wire border between Israel and Jordan, racing each other in the streets, checking out protests and Arab markets. It made them scrappy and independent. It was fertile ground for a novelist. Anything could happen.

Q: *Did researching and writing about this war change any pre-conceived notions for you?*

TS: Yes! I thought it was a simple story. The war lasted 6 days. Israel won. Not much left to say. But as I started interviewing friends and relatives who had lived through it, I realized there was so much more to say. The month leading up to the war was a bitter, frightening time. For many Israelis, it felt like a redux of WWII, which for a small country with a significant percentage of Holocaust survivors and refugees, was a terrifying reality. Was history going to repeat itself? Were millions of Jews

going to be slaughtered again? Would the rest of the world sit back and watch it happen again?

Q: You spent part of your childhood in Israel. Was your family touched personally by this war?

TS: My dad was an 18-year-old Israeli soldier in the Six-Day War. He helped me with the details, the mood, sharing the thoughts and fears that raced through his mind. I spoke with my aunt and uncle, family friends. Because of the national draft, everyone of a certain age was personally touched, either as an activated soldier or as a relative of one. Leading up to the war they really thought they were going to be annihilated. Newspapers were using words like *Holocaust* and *catastrophic* and *existential threat*. To win so completely, to unify Jerusalem for the first time in 2000 years...it felt like a miracle.

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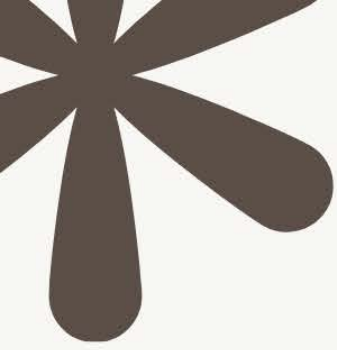
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DISCUSSION QUESTION

The Six-Day Hero

by Tammar Stein



- **1. WHAT DOES MOTTI'S DAD MEAN WHEN HE SAYS "DON'T BE A HERO"?**
- **2. DO YOU AGREE THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF HEROES?**
- **3. DO YOU THINK THAT MRS. FRIEBURG IS A HERO?**
- **4. IF YOU WERE LIVING IN A COUNTRY ABOUT TO GO TO WAR, WOULD YOU TRY TO LEAVE? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **5 "YOUNG MEN RUSH INTO WAR, OLD MEN THINK ABOUT IT A THOUSAND TIME." DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **6. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MRS. FRIEDBURG'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS GERMANS?**
- **7. MOTTI THINKS: "I DON'T CARE ABOUT ACCOUNTING BEFORE GOD, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, GOD HAS A LOT OF ACCOUNTING TO DO BEFORE ME." WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS FEELING? WHAT DOES GOD OWE US? WHAT DO WE OWE GOD? WHAT DO WE OWE OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES?**
- **8. DO YOU THINK IT'S TRUE THAT MOST PEOPLE PRAY FOR PEACE? IF YOU WERE AT THE WESTERN WALL, WHAT WOULD YOU PRAY FOR?**
- **9. WHO IS THE HERO OF THE SIX DAY HERO?**

