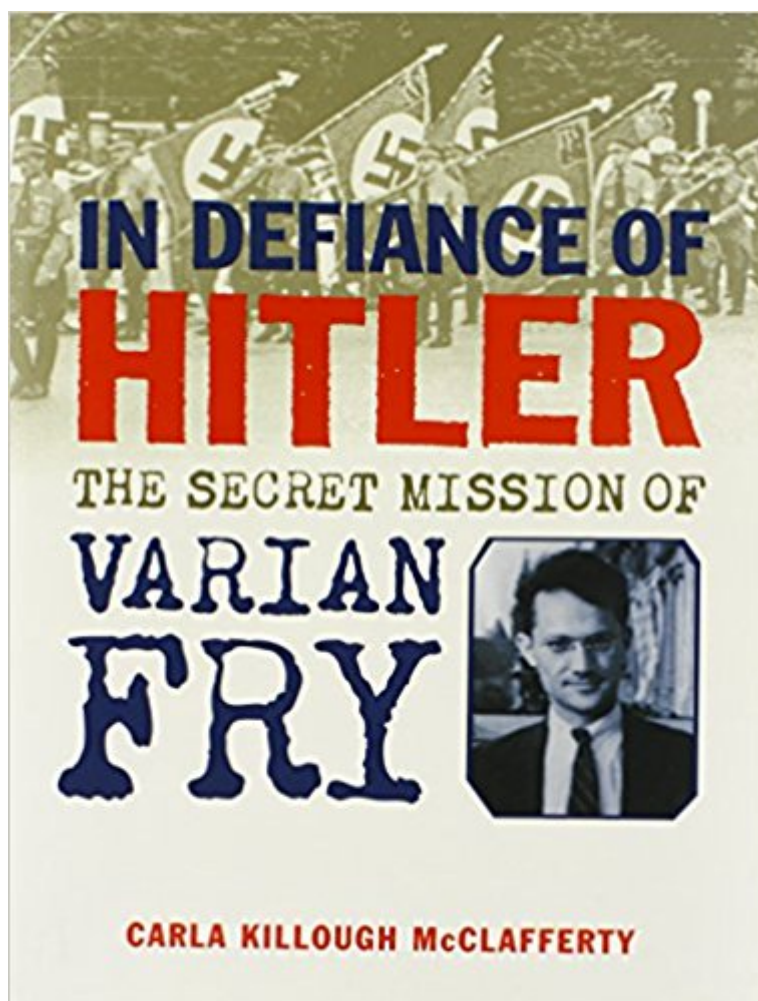


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In Defiance Of Hitler: The Secret Mission Of Varian Fry



Synopsis

On August 4, 1940, an unassuming American journalist named Varian Fry made his way to Marseilles, France, carrying in his pockets the names of approximately two hundred artists and intellectuals – all enemies of the new Nazi regime. As a volunteer for the Emergency Rescue Committee, Fry's mission was to help these refugees flee to safety, then return home two weeks later. As more and more people came to him for assistance, however, he realized the situation was far worse than anyone in America had suspected – and his role far greater than he had imagined. He remained in France for over a year, refusing to leave until he was forcibly evicted. At a time when most Americans ignored the atrocities in Europe, Varian Fry engaged in covert operations, putting himself in great danger, to save strangers in a foreign land. He was instrumental in the rescue of over two thousand refugees, including the novelist Heinrich Mann and the artist Marc Chagall.

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Customer Reviews

Grade 6 Up • Fry was a young American journalist working in pre-World War II Germany when he witnessed an anti-Semitic uprising led by storm troopers, and he was inspired, over 13 months of espionage and clandestine efforts during the war, to save people from impending annihilation. Back in New York City and following the French-German armistice in 1940 that provided Germany control over France, he realized that numerous renowned artists, writers, and scientists, both Jews and non-Jews, would be trapped under the Vichy government. Fry joined the newly formed Emergency Rescue Committee and volunteered to lead an escape mission for as

many of these refugees as possible. His work began as a one-man operation in Marseilles and quickly grew to a fully staffed unit posing as a refugee center. Fry not only helped the famous and talented, but also many ordinary Jews to escape France through Spain and Portugal and then to ports beyond. McClafferty describes an exciting if not daring and altruistic episode in this righteous gentile's life. Numerous black-and-white photographs of the period and individuals who worked closely with Fry augment the readable and well-documented text. This is an intriguing look at how life completely changed for so many and how ingenuity and daring used by a few outwitted the enemy and saved lives.

—Rita Soltan, Youth Services Consultant, West Bloomfield, MI
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Starred Review Rescue stories bring hope to the Holocaust darkness, and this stirring account of a young New York City journalist who secretly helped more than 2,000 refugees escape Nazi-occupied France blends exciting adventure with the grim history. Before the U.S. entered the war, Fry, 32, spent a year in Marseilles, using his relief organization as a cover for a hidden rescue operation which saved well-known artists, politicians, and scientists, including Marc Chagall and Heinrich Mann. In fact, part of the story is how Fry chose the few to save from all the desperate who lined up at his office. Along with the suspense of police raids and the gripping particulars about the brave rescuers on Fry's team comes the knowledge that victims faced with extermination were not welcome in the U.S. The author begins with a brief overview of Hitler's rise and the threat to the Jews, and then draws heavily on Fry's autobiography and his letters home, which detail his increasing stress. Some readers will skip the details, but many will want all the amazing information about the unassuming hero who saved so many. Photos are scattered throughout, and source notes and bibliography are appended. Grades 7-12. --Hazel Rochman

When I was in college I had a very close Sephardic friend who was born in Paris in January 1939. She told me her family had escaped Europe on a false Portuguese passport and that she was a distant relative of the famous Italian painter, Modigliani. I don't know for sure if Varian Fry helped her family, but one mention of a Modigliani (a fleeing Italian socialist) is mentioned in the book. Fry gave up his job and his marriage, and was willing to give up his life, to help get refugees away from Hitler. This book is a fascinating portrait of a great man, his life and his work, as well as a fascinating addendum to WW2 history for a maven like me.

Amazing story of Varian Fry, the "American Schindler" that rescued over 2,000 people from

Nazi-occupied France in 1940. The 2009 Orbis-Pictus Award Winner, I selected and read this book for my Children's Literature class at The University of Texas at Dallas. I was thrilled to receive a response e-mail from the Author, Carla McCafferty, after writing to congratulate her on the story of Varian Fry, one that she so capably brought to life with vivid and historically correct detail. Geared to middle-school age youngsters, McCafferty's book thrilled the socks off this 55 year old Baby Boomer. A very good read! *****

One man can make a difference! This edge of your seat biography about Varian Fry, a little known hero who rescued hunted people from under the nose of the Nazis in occupied France is a shining example of that truism. Fry, a young New York journalist, an average person, whose knowledge of espionage comes from movies, finds himself on a startling war-time mission. Because no one else will go, he agrees to fly to Marseilles and help famous, therefore recognizable, artists, writers and scientists escape the Germans who have closed the French borders to round up Jews. With no training, Fry sets up a front refugee organization, develops a staff he can trust, hires a cartoonist to forge papers, finds maps for crossing the Pyrenees on foot, and locates the intellectuals on his list. His two week assignment lasts over a year, ending because he is thrown out of the country. It is legal to help refugees survive, but absolutely illegal to help them leave France without proper documents. Not since The Firm has paperwork been so tense and exciting. Sent to save 200, Fry saves 2000 including famous individuals (ex. Marc Chagall), British soldiers and frightened families. He does this in spite of the opposition of the American State Department whose officials in Marseilles and Vichy - with only one exception, a man now on a US postage stamp - hinder Fry and take away his travel papers. Fry is a hero who cannot handle a normal routine on his return to America; and the remainder of his life is sad. Near his end the French Government honors him for his important, brave war deeds. Long after his death he becomes the first American included at Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile. At a time when most Americans ignore the European disaster, Fry investigates rumors, understands Nazi goals, witnesses their atrocities, writes about them in US newspapers, and when asked, works tirelessly behind enemy lines to save trapped Jews and others. The author's clear language makes the chronological story thrilling. She gives useful historical background to the individual saga and provides a lot of wonderful photos. The action in the book relies on following a paper trail and keeping many names straight. Reviewed by Ellen Cole

Harvard-educated Varian Fry was a man with a conscience. He traveled through Germany before the outbreak of WWII and saw the rising hatred against the Jews. When Hitler took over and Jews

were forced to flee, many wound up in France. But Hitler was advancing into France and the lives of refugee Jews were endangered again. Their only hope - one man, Varian Fry. Almost single handedly Fry managed to rescue two thousand refugees. McClafferty does an expert job of presenting the prevailing atmosphere of the times, evoked by numerous historically accurate details. Yet, she does this with flair and makes the story engrossing for the middle grade reader, the young adult reader or the adult reader. The story is definitely a page-turner, a study in how to defy a tyrant and overcome the darkness of the Holocaust. We are tempted to believe that every brave man deserves to live happily-ever-after. Courage, though, takes its toll. McClafferty draws the picture of Varian Fry's later years with sympathy. If you are teaching a lesson on the Holocaust, plan to include this stirring story. McClafferty's previous book, *Something Out of Nothing: Marie Curie and Radium* was awarded the International Reading Association medal for the Best Nonfiction Book in the Intermediate Category; it was also an Orbis Pictus Honor Book. Also, see her first book, *The Head Bone's Connected To The Neck Bone: The Weird, Wacky, and Wonderful X-Ray*. For more, [...]

This is the newest and in my opinion best introduction to Varian Fry, still a relatively unknown and unsung hero of World War II. This book is targeted at a young audience, nevertheless I recommend it to anyone seeking an introduction to a remarkable man through whom we can all draw inspiration. The author has done an excellent job conveying the danger, intrigue, frustration and ultimate success of the Emergency Rescue Committee's most charismatic character. The photographs are excellent as well as the appendix and source notes. Great job Carla Killough McClafferty

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