



## Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project

By Jack Mayer



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During World War II, Irena Sendler, a Polish Catholic social worker, organized a rescue network of fellow social workers to save 2,500 Jewish children from certain death in the Warsaw ghetto. Incredibly, after the war her heroism, like that of many others, was suppressed by communist Poland and remained virtually unknown for 60 years. Unknown, that is, until three high school girls from an economically depressed, rural school district in southeast Kansas stumbled upon a tantalizing reference to Sendler's rescues, which they fashioned into a history project, a play they called Life in a Jar. Their innocent drama was first seen in Kansas, then the Midwest, then New York, Los Angeles, Montreal, and finally Poland, where they elevated Irena Sendler to a national hero, championing her legacy of tolerance and respect for all people. Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project is a Holocaust history and more. It is the inspirational story of Protestant students from Kansas, each carrying her own painful burden, each called in her own complex way to the history of a Catholic woman who knocked on Jewish doors in the Warsaw ghetto and, in Sendler's own words, "tried to talk the mothers out of their children." Inspired by Irena Sendler, they are living examples of the power of one person to change the world and models for young people everywhere. \* \* \* \* 60% of the sales of this book are donated to the Irena Sendler/Life in a Jar Foundation. The foundation promotes Irena Sendler's legacy and encourages educators and students to emulate the project by focusing on unsung heroes in history to teach respect and understanding among all people, regardless of race, religion, or creed.

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## Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project By Jack Mayer Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 7 Up-Mayer recounts the inspiring story of Irena Sendler, the Catholic Polish social worker who organized a rescue network to hide 2,500 Jewish children during the Holocaust, and frames it with a present-day story of three Protestant teens in Kansas creating a National History Project play about her life. Sendler's own life history is dramatic and inspiring; she was brutally tortured by the Nazis in the infamous Pawiak prison, and her extraordinary good work during the war was suppressed by communist Poland and remained virtually unknown for 60 years. Narrator Patrick Lawlor does an excellent job conveying the suspense and tension in Sendler's life. Lawlor's voice lends the right emotion and inflection to each character. He realistically re-creates the distinguishing inflections of each generation as the American teens travel to Poland to interview survivors and meet Irena Sendler herself. VERDICT This work's emphasis on survival and rescue will appeal to both adult and teen listeners.-Ellen Frank Bayer, Flushing High School, NYα(c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Review

"The story will take your breath away ... and haunt and inspire you, as well.  
... you don't want to put down the book." - **2014 Ben Franklin Digital Award**

"Mayer's superb novelization of her exploits elevates social work to the intensity of a spy thriller. . . A gripping real-life tale of extraordinary courage that had an enduring impact."- **Kirkus Review**

"Meticulously researched, this story has been told with grace and passion."- **Jay Parini, author of *The Last Station***

"A beautiful story, beautifully told . . . at last." - **The US Review of Books**

"While *Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project* is based on a true story, it reads like a novel. It will appeal to anyone with an interest in history, as well as teachers of all subjects . . . - **ForeWord Clarion Review**

"Every high school student and teacher should read this book. We all should."  
- **Michele Forman - National Teacher of the Year 2001**

"Jack Mayer masterfully weaves these two separate but intimately connected stories into one larger saga . . . It will inspire all who read it, especially the young."  
- **Francis R. Nicosia - Univ. of Vermont**

"The monument to Irena Sendler was raised neither in Poland nor in Israel, but in the hearts and deeds of young Americans. Jack Mayer's inspiring book brings to life the true story of high school students in Uniontown, Kansas and a Polish Holocaust rescuer. The teens conceived the theatrical performance called *Life in a Jar*. Their message was simple: one who goes against evil and rescues goodness, changes the world."

- **Professor Jacek Leociak, Polish Academy of Sciences**  
**author of *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City***  
**(with Barbara Engelking)**

#### About the Author

**Jack Mayer** is a pediatrician and a writer. He began practicing pediatrics in 1976 in Enosburg Falls, Vermont, a small town in eastern Franklin County on the Canadian border. His was the first pediatric practice in that half of the county. He was a country doctor there for ten years, often bartering medical care for eggs, firewood, and knitted afghans. From 1987 - 1991 Dr. Mayer was a National Cancer Institute Fellow at Columbia University School of Public Health in New York City, researching the molecular biology of childhood cancer. Most of his scientific writing was done during those four years. He was also an academic pediatrician at Columbia University's Presbyterian Medical Center.

Dr. Mayer returned to Vermont in 1991 and established Rainbow Pediatrics in Middlebury, Vermont where he continues to practice primary care pediatrics. He is an Instructor in Pediatrics at the University of Vermont School of Medicine and an advisor for pre-medical students at Middlebury College.

Throughout his career, Dr. Mayer has written short stories, poems, and essays about his years in pediatric practice and hiking The Long Trail in Vermont. He was a participant at Middlebury College's Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in 2003 and 2005 for fiction, and in 2008 for poetry. **LIFE IN A JAR: The Irena Sendler Project** is his first non-fiction book.

He lives in Middlebury, Vermont.

**LIFE IN A JAR: The Irena Sendler Project** has won several literary prizes:

**2015 Mom's Choice - Gold Medal - Young Adult**

**2015 First Horizon Award - Eric Hoffer Award**

**2014 Readers' Favorite Book Award - Gold Medal - Education**

**2014 Benjamin Franklin Digital Award - Silver Honoree**

**2014 Shelf Unbound Notable Book**

**2012 IndieReader Discovery Award**

**2011 Kansas Notable Book Award**

**2011 daVinci Eye Award - Eric Hoffer Award**

#### Translations:

Polish, Chinese, Russian - 2013

French - 2015

**YouTube book trailer (4:17):** [youtu.be/0bQAI0jKC7Q](https://youtu.be/0bQAI0jKC7Q)

#### Users Review

##### From reader reviews:

##### Sharon Gaines:

This Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project book is absolutely not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you have by reading this book will be information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. This Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project without we comprehend teach the one who examining it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't be worry Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project can bring whenever you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' come to be full because you can have it inside your lovely laptop even phone. This Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project having fine arrangement in word in addition to layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

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**Wanda Riddle:**

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