Dick Thelen was 17 years old when he joined the U.S. Navy to serve in the WWII Pacific campaign. He was assigned to serve on the USS Indianapolis. In July, 1945, torpedoes from a Japanese submarine sank the ship leaving the men stranded in the ocean. The men fought to survive through hot days and cold nights in shark-infested water. A pilot spotted them, and they were rescued by the USS Doyle ship.

#wwii#ussindianapolis#navy#michigan

Jewish Holocaust Survivor Inge Auerbacher survived three years in a concentration camp facing horrible conditions and illness. She was a young girl thankful to have her doll Marlene by her side. Today she speaks to groups encouraging youth to overcome obstacles in their own lives.

#germany#survivor#hope#newyork

WWII Veteran Al Taylor was a homeless youth who had a hard life during the Great Depression. At age 18, he was assigned to triage, making life and death decisions after the Pearl Harbor attack. Al's highly-decorated military career even after the war speaks to struggling youth today that it's not how you start in life but how you finish.

#texas#homelessness#resilience#iowa

Hungarian Eva Apathy and her husband were trapped in Nazi Germany because his medical school was there. Her greatest fear was losing their papers which proved they were not Jewish and being sent to a concentration camp. After the war, they came to America as refugees. Eva's story touches the hearts of young readers, especially those who are refugees themselves.

#hungary#hope#kindness#illinois

Irene Butter was born in 1930 in Germany. When Hitler became chancellor and began policies persecuting Jews, Irene's family moved to Amsterdam. The Nazi's invaded the Netherlands and took Irene's family away to concentration camps, first to Westerbork and later Bergen-Belsen. Irene survived, moved to the United States and later earned a Ph.D. in economics from Duke University.

#germany#survivor#triumph#michigan
Veteran John Gauthier was a medic on the front line during WWII, and his decisions each day meant life or death to his patients. After the Allies won the war, his unit liberated a concentration camp where a Jewish man he was feeding died in his arms. After the war, John became suicidal but managed to get help. Even into his 90s, he volunteered at the VA hospital.

#truestories#suicideawareness#iamstrong#iowa

Veteran John Moon was 103 years old when his young author heard about his reaction from the attack on Pearl Harbor. John recalled he thought, “I’ll fight to make the world a safe place for our young son.” He joined the United States Marines and fought a bloody battle on an island in the Pacific called Iwo Jima. Men in his division raised the U.S. flag as shown in the iconic picture on Mount Suribachi.

#truestories#patriotism#heathernecks#illinois

A white teacher named Viola Ruffner played a big role in the life of former slave Booker T. Washington by befriending him and teaching him to read. He would go on to great things, including being a leading voice of education to former slaves and their children. A young descendant of Viola Ruffner wrote this story, and a teenage descendant of Booker T. Washington helped her illustrate it.

#truestories#education#racism#westvirginia

Curt Lowens disappeared from his Jewish life during the war and became “Ben,” a teacher by day and a worker in the Dutch Underground by night. He helped save many Jewish children and aided an American whose airplane was shot down in Nazi territory. After the war, Curt became an actor and worked with many Hollywood greats, including actor Tom Hanks.

#truestories#courage#inspiration#california

Henry Langrehr was a paratrooper who crashed through a greenhouse roof (as seen in a movie called “The Longest Day”). He was taken as a prisoner of war and became an eyewitness to the horrors of Auschwitz before being taken to work as a slave laborer in the mines. Fearing that a guard might kill him, Henry successfully escaped his imprisonment.

#truestories#tolerance#compassion#patriotism#iowa

True Stories Written by Kids for Kids
understandingworks.org
Book Set 2 - Valiant Veterans
Real People who Triumphed over Adversity

Jesse Crawford was a small-town boy who went to war after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was a tank mechanic who saw the horrors of a Nazi work camp. There, he learned the only crime the prisoners committed was being Jewish. After the war, an act of kindness for a European child gave Jesse a sense of normalcy. He gave her parents a piece of leather to make shoes so she could play outside.

#valor#kindness#compassion#illinois

James Verheyen proudly served his country in the Philippines during WWII. While there, he was wounded by shrapnel from an artillery shell. After the A-bomb was dropped in Japan, he was ordered to go from house to house collecting weapons from the Japanese. He also served in an important role as General MacArthur's Chief Clerk. He is a great American hero.

#pennsylvania#patriotism#bravery#illinois

Alexander McCurdy fought bravely in the American Revolution. This was a war like no other, because it was waged for America’s independence from England. Alexander was 22 years old when he enlisted to fight for this freedom and was wounded at Yorktown in the very last battle of the war. This book is unique as the young author proudly wrote his ancestor's story. Through this experience, the young writer learned that we have to fight for what we believe in.

#ireland#bravery#dari#pennsylvania

Saul Schiff went to Europe to fight for his country during WWII. He never dreamed he would see fellow Jews suffering in a concentration camp called Dachau. Saul did all he could to help the survivors during his military duties. One day, he met a special survivor named Esther and, after she immigrated to America, he won her heart. They married, and he had a successful career with the Department of the Army at the Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois.

#newjersey#antisemitism#valor#illinois

Charlie Kirkpatrick volunteered for military service after he heard the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He sailed to England on the Queen Mary a very famous troopship used to carry soldiers to war and home again. His unit was sent to France days after the Normandy landing and then to Belgium where the Battle of the Bulge had just been fought. His duties were to guard General Patton as his first line of defense.

#honor#patriotism#worldchanger#illinois
Soldier Leland Chandler joined the Army during WWII and served in the Pacific theater. He was taken as a prisoner of war by the Japanese and treated horribly. Seventy years after the war, he was invited back to Japan where he learned to forgive the sins of his former enemies. Students at Costa Catholic School in his hometown of Galesburg wrote and illustrated his story for young readers.

#forgive#justice#inspiration#illinois

Virgil Juliet was a young boy who was fascinated by airplanes. Little did he know that someday he would become a navigator in a bomber and fly many successful missions during WWII. He served in the Pacific and told his young author he saw the Enola Gay, the airplane that dropped the Atomic bombs on Japan. Virgil served three years in the military, and he spent the remainder of his life as a pastor, “navigating” people to God.

#minnesota#honor#patriotism#illinois

In the 1700’s Richard Rue fought the Indians and the British, and was captured, tortured and enslaved. After escaping these difficult situations, he achieved great success and wealth in his lifetime. Students can read about this amazing man’s life in early America and the sacrifices made for the many freedoms Americans enjoy today. This book is written and illustrated by Rye’s sixth great-grandson, a member of Children of the American Revolution (CAR).

#maryland#resilience#nascar#indiana

Harold Beard leaned on his faith as fear of death was with him daily during WWII. Once Allies won, he was shocked when he saw Jewish prisoners in a sub-camp of the famous Buchenwald concentration camp. This Christian man had never had hate burn in his heart before that day, but what the Nazis did to these people made him burn with hatred. He told his young author that it took many years for him to let go of hatred and forgive them for what they did.

#tolerance#empathy#integrity#illinois

Joe Lambert went from being a young man building a log cabin with his father to serving our country in Germany during WWII. He looked snappy in his dress uniform when promoted to Corporal of the Guard, Joe guarded General Eisenhower when he came to visit. After the war, Joe recognized that the German people were not to blame for the war, and he showed kindness to a German widow who did his laundry.

#missouri#accomplishment#empathy#illinois
Margaret Chicoski Clayton was a volunteer during WWII. Part of her duties was attending dances to bring joy to American soldiers. But some moments brought her to tears. When she helped at a hospital, one man taught her the power of the smile. His smile inspired her when she realized he had lost both his arms and legs during battle. Wars can affect people in many ways, but so can a friendly smile.

#newyork#dance#volunteerism#iowa

Dorothy Anderson was willing to serve in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) during WWII. She sailed on the same ship with a famous man named Bob Hope, who was well known for entertaining the troops. After the Allies won, she was serving in Germany as a stenographer and took dictation for General Eisenhower. On Thanksgiving, the women were encouraged when First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt joined them for dinner.

#idaho#commitment#courage#illinois

Frieda Roos-Van Hessen was a talented Jewish girl who sang in the role of Snow White on the radio and preformed at all the great concert halls in Vienna. When the Nazis invaded, she was no longer recognized for her talent. She wasn't even allowed to go to a restaurant or the concert halls. She survived the horrors of the Holocaust, but her family wasn't so lucky. Frieda was glad to immigrate to America for a new life.

#austria#antisemitism#singer#northcarolina

Joan McMullen was a meteorologist in the Royal Air Force during WWII. The war brought great advances in meteorology, as large-scale military land, sea and air campaigns were dependent on more knowledge about the weather. The Normandy landing and strategic bombing were especially looking at forecasts. Joan met the love of her life during the war. After the war, she married and immigrated to America.

#england#immigration#allies#illinois

Marion Blumenthal-Lazen was a Jewish girl whose family survived a concentration camp. She played a game in camp, pretending that if she found four perfect pebbles her family would live. They did survive, but her father died later, leaving his widow to immigrate to America with their two children. Marion is a speaker on the subject of the Holocaust and is known world-wide.

#germany#faith#perseverance#newyork
Amen Gabre was a high-school age, foreign exchange student who came to Iowa and won first place in a statewide essay contest. In the essay, Amen told Iowans about the horror of watching helplessly as four little girls became victims of female genital mutilation in front of their whole village in Africa. She knows there’s no medical reason for this ritual. It is estimated 140 million women worldwide have become victims of this terrible practice.

#ethiopia#education#endfgm#michigan

A DAR Chapter discovered that Julia Mattocks served her country during WWII. While working in a bomb factory, where there was danger in every move she and other women made, one of her friends was killed and another lost her arms during an explosion. Later, Julia answered the call for workers and headed west to labor as a “Rosie the Riveter” at Lockheed in California. Julia was a patriot, and she is very proud of her service.

#volunteerism#patriotism#duty#illinois

During WWII Dorothy Kamenshek played on the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. She played for the Rockford Peaches, and her character was made famous in the movie called “A League of Their Own.” After retirement from baseball, her life was with disabled children in California. Her young author, who has Cerebral Palsy, was very inspired by Dottie’s life.

#chiefgirlssports#leader#california

Elsie Bossola Little taught her young author that the U.S. Marine Corp was strictly male until WWII, when 305 female Marine Reservists served due to personnel shortages. This is how Elsie chose to aid her country and where her love story began. She met her husband, a fellow United States Marine, with whom she loved to dance.

#pennsylvania#service#leathernecks#illinois

Doris Warschawski Fogel and her mother were desperate to get out of Nazi Germany during WWII. Doris’ mother learned that they didn’t have to have a visa to go to Shanghai, China. That meant it was possible to escape. Like many other Jews, her mother took this opportunity to protect her young daughter by taking a ship to China as a “last resort.”

#germany#holocaust#courage#illinois

True Stories Written by Kids for Kids
understandingworks.org
Don Bein served in Europe toward the end of WWII. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He saw the victory in Belgium and then how the Bridge of Remagen was captured by the Allies. Don, now in his 90s, was an eyewitness of Bergen-Belsen and is still following Eisenhower's orders to tell people what he saw.

#iowas#eyewitness#armoreddivision#illinois

Riva and her family had no choice but to leave Romania after the Nazi invasion in 1940. Jewish people, like them, were being killed for no reason. Traveling by train, there were bombings that could have cost them their lives but Riva's family safely made it to Russia where they survived the war. Riva's powerful story was told by young author Anna Vorozhtsova who began writing this story days after the current war began in her own country of Ukraine.

#romania#ukraine#survival#israel

Frances Mauro Masters is an original Rosie the Riveter from Michigan during WWII. She went to work at the Willow Run Plant making B-24 Liberator bombers on the assembly line. She worked there “for the duration” of the war. “Hard work and common sense make for a good life.” Rosie - Frances Mauro Masters

#b-24#wecandoit#rosie#riveter#michigan

Clara Hunter was born in 1921. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, she quit school to become a Rosie the Riveter. Until the war ended, she worked a man’s job on B-29 bombers at the Briggs Manufacturing Plant in Detroit, Michigan. A woman who did this kind of hard work became known as Rosie the Riveter, with “we can do it” as a battle cry.

#rosie#riveter#centurion#classy#michigan

During WWII, Beulah Evans McAlister worked at the Hudson Motor Car Company in Detroit, Michigan after her husband joined the army. Beulah worked on the Helirot aircraft, an open cockpit biplane used mostly in the Pacific Theater. Years later, these women who worked in manufacturing were given the name, “Rosie the Riveter,” and they became an American icon.

#tennessee#rosie#riveter#weddidit#michigan
Helen Preiss Kushnir was born in Dearborn, Michigan. As a child, Helen remembers doing without during the Great Depression. After high school graduation, Helen and a friend went to the DeSota automobile plant and picked up a job application. Helen was a riveter and since she was small, she was able to squeeze in and work in tight places. She tells kids “Don’t ever think because you are small you can’t do something big for your country.”

#excellence#rosietheriveter#wedidit#michigan

Whatever Louis Lee Myers did he did well. From doing chores on the farm during his childhood to serving in the National Guard in the Korean War then managing rioters protesting the Vietnam War, Brigadier General Myers earned the respect of those around him.

#honor#koreanwar#brigadiergeneral#illinois

Ernst Rehder of Germany turned eighteen during the final months of WWII. He was drafted and sent off to fight in Italy where he was shot and wounded. He lost an eye but his life was spared. Ernst immigrated to America where he married and raised his son in the Midwest.

#germany#wwii#immigrant#illinois

Lt. Steven Blinn fought in Desert Storm. As a Navy pilot, he faced additional dangers because of his Jewish faith. They would not print the Star of David on his dog tag for fear he would be captured and tortured. Steve was motivated to serve because of his family’s stories of those who fled Europe during the Holocaust (some perished) and the persecution they had experienced during the Russian Pogroms.

#pennsylvania#bravery#desertstorm#illinois

In the late 1800s, Lizzie Magie a game board designer from Macomb, Illinois invented The Landlord’s Game, that served as the basis for Monopoly, but she is seldom given credit for that creation. Read about Lizzie and how Monopoly even helped prisoners of war during WWII. Then, you’ll be among those in the know!

#illinois#inventor#landlordsgame#virginia

True Stories Written by Kids for Kids
understandingworks.org
Book Set 5 - Heart for Humanity
Real People who Triumphed over Adversity

A teen from Africa received a scholarship to come to America, where he told how his mother walks to a stagnant pond for water every day. Waterborne diseases, common in his village, plagued him as a child. Miracles happened when his exchange student group, host family, high school friends and community raised the money to dig a well. He returned home to meet a drilling team; they hit water on his birthday.

#kenya#humanity#miracle#iowa

Reed Robertson was a bombardier in WWII, stationed in the Pacific. He will never forget the day his unit was ordered to load cameras, instead of bombs, and fly over Hiroshima. They flew to where the world’s first atomic bomb had been dropped and captured photographs from the air. Then, they were ordered to take photos from the ground, where they saw firsthand the horrific aftermath.

#pennsylvania#hero#history#illinois

German businessman, Dr. Ernst Leitz II, manufactured the Leica camera and used his business to rescue hundreds of Jews out of Nazi Germany. To help his Jewish workers and friends, he established a brilliant plan, now known as the “Leica Freedom Train.” The plan allowed Jews to leave Germany because they were assigned to jobs overseas in France, Britain, Hong Kong or the United States.

#righteous#wwii#antisemitism#germany

Ray Fairbanks was raised in Montana. During WWII, prisoners of war (POWs) were hired to work on the family ranch from a German POW Camp nearby. They were fed the same food as family and treated with respect. Later, Ray joined the Army and was on the ground crew for Colonel Chuck Yeager when he broke the sound barrier.

#montana#integrity#respectfulness#iowa

Young Thomas Cook served in Eisenhower’s 103rd Infantry during WWII, fighting in the Battle of the Bulge of the Rhineland. After the Allies won, Thomas’s unit was ordered to liberate a concentration camp. Thomas told his young author he felt the hand of God protecting him during this time, but he still has bad dreams about the war. Thomas sat beside his young author at church, and he gave Timmy his Bible in appreciation for his efforts in telling his story.

#liberator#courageous#faith#illinois
Ralph Smith was an American soldier serving in Europe during WWII. Many men died in the Battle of the Bulge, and Ralph was in charge of taking their bodies to friendly soil for a proper burial. When the war ended, his unit was assigned to guard something valuable in a big castle in Germany. Ralph later learned it was famous art worth millions. It was stolen by the Nazis and recovered by the Monuments Men.

#kentucky#brave#art#illinois

Kenneth Moffett was a U.S. soldier in WWII. His duties took him to the Philippines, where he was taken as a prisoner of war by the Japanese. A young exchange student from the Philippines met Kenneth’s son and wanted to tell his story for young readers. Writing and illustrating this story gave her a better understanding of the price of freedom paid for her country.

#oklahoma#pow#death#march#illinois

Anne Frank had a pen pal named Juanita Wagner. The two girls wrote back and forth from the Netherlands to Iowa just weeks before Anne’s family went into hiding. Anne wrote in one letter, “I’m looking at a map of Iowa and I see Burlington, are you near there?” Indeed, Anne was right, because the small town of Danville is just miles away from Burlington. The young author and illustrator of this book were proud, as they are from Burlington.

#netherlands#diary#penpal#iowa

Like many others, a young sailor named Virgil Dawson was aboard ship in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. Using binoculars, he was an eyewitness to the signing of the peace treaty with Japan. The signing ceremony took place aboard deck of the USS Missouri; it lasted 23 minutes. The event was broadcast all around the world, since it was the day that World War II officially ended.

#pacific#theater#surrender#victors#iowa

Fritz Marcus (later called Fred) was born to loving Jewish parents in Berlin in 1924. His happy childhood came to an end during WWII with the Nazis determination to exterminate the Jews. His parents decided to leave but few countries would take in Jewish refugees. They were able to purchase tickets on a ship to faraway Shanghai, China. Eventually, he would immigrate to the United States.

#germany#antisemitism#refugee#colorado

True Stories Written by Kids for Kids
understandingworks.org
As a teenage boy, David Wolnerman was taken to Auschwitz concentration camp. He watched the Nazis send the sickly, the very young and the very old into one line while those able to work went to another. He made a quick decision to lie about his age and say age 18. This was the lucky lie that saved his life. Since this book has been written about his life, David has spoken to hundreds of students in the greater Des Moines area.

#poland#antisemitism#holocaust#iowa

Two girls named Anne and Eva went into hiding with their Jewish families to escape the Nazis. Both families were discovered and sent to concentration camps. Eva and her mother survived, but her father and brother did not. Anne, her sister and her mother perished, leaving behind their father, Otto Frank. He fell in love with Eva's mother. The two married and traveled the world together, often speaking about Anne's famous diary.

#netherlands#tolerance#purpose#england

Teens created compelling text and images to share the life of Roman Frajman. Born Jewish in Poland, Roman believes it was a miracle he survived WWII. As a young boy, he was hidden in a work camp. Later he was hidden again with a neighbor, while his mother hid in a coal bin in the basement. After immigrating to America, Roman shared his wartime experiences and the danger of judging people by the religion they follow.

#poland#miracle#tolerance#ohio

German-born Ralph Troll was raised by his Jewish mother and Christian father. The Nazis took his mother to a concentration camp. Once his teacher found out he had Jewish blood, he was told he was not worthy of an education and was sent home. Thankfully, his mother survived, and his family immigrated to Chicago. Dr. Ralph Troll provided an education to students of all colors and faiths as a professor at Augustana College.

#germany#tolerance#antisemitism#illinois

Young Frances Shnurman survived the Lodz Ghetto, along with the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Stutthoff and Nuesdadt concentration camps. After liberation, she was aboard a ship when she was tossed into the freezing, shark-infested waters of the Baltic Sea. After many tragedies, most did not make it but Frances survived this, too, living to marry, have children and immigrate to the Midwest. She was in a nursing home when she met her young author, who came to hear and preserve her story.

#poland#prejudice#inspirational#iowa
David Tuck was born in Poland, where life became difficult when the Nazis invaded. For many years he suffered in a forced labor camp and three concentration camps. At one point, David's only possession was a red cup and he claims it saved his life. This 15-year-old was liberated in May of 1945, weighing only 78 pounds. He was fortunate to immigrate to the United States and start a new life.

#poland#annihilation#fighter#pennsylvania

Sammy Harris was one of the youngest Jewish children to survive a concentration camp. He lost his parents and four siblings in the camps, but during the war he dreamed of being an “American boy.” He was only nine years old when liberated, and that dream came true. Sam played a key role in establishing the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie. He believes “bashert,” which is Yiddish for “destined,” was at work in his life.

#poland#destiny#victor#illinois

Fritzi Lorber was born in Vienna to a wonderful Jewish family. They experienced the horrors of Kristallnacht, when Jewish stores and synagogues were burned. The worst came when his father was taken to a concentration camp. His father eventually returned, and his family was able to escape to America before things got worse in Europe. In New York, Fritzi changed his name to Fred and, after marrying, he moved to the Midwest.

#austria#terrorized#immigration#iowa

Paul Hauck was born in Germany, and his family came to America before WWII. Speaking German made him very valuable as an American soldier during the war, and he worked as a translator for high ranking officers. He often complained about being dirty, shot at or bombed. He’d wondered, “What are we doing here?” But, when he entered Nordhausen concentration camp and saw the inhumane treatment of the Jews, he understood.

#germany#farmstrong#blessedlife#illinois

During WWII the parents of a young boy feared for his life and wisely sent him to live with his aunt and uncle. Friedrich Kahn became “Freddy Lejeune,” which was a fake, non-Jewish name. This may have saved him from death in a concentration camp. He was finally reunited with his parents and immigrated to America. As a college student, his idea for a presidential debate in 1980 became televised and changed the world of politics in America.

#germany#presidentialdebates#hiddenchild#virginia

True Stories Written by Kids for Kids
understandingworks.org
**Book Set 7 - Bold & Brave**

*Real People who Triumphed over Adversity*

**Through His Eyes, The Bill Knapp Story**

Bill Knapp served in the U.S. Navy in the Pacific during WWII. He was a boat pilot whose job was to ferry Marines back and forth to the beach at Okinawa. It was the last fierce battle of the war and the Japanese were on suicide missions to stop the Allied advance. The men were solemn since they knew what was coming. Bill said “our boys knew that many among them were not coming back.”

#michigan#okinawa#navy#iowa

**A Nazi Loved Me**

As a young child, Marguerite Mishkin lost her father who was murdered in a Nazi concentration camp. Her Jewish mother hid her with a Catholic family to protect her. This new family ran a pub which served lunch to Nazi soldiers. One leader held young Marguerite on his lap while bragging he could “smell a Jew from a mile away.”

#belgium#racism#empathy#illinois

**From Sukey to Cece**

Sukey was born enslaved in the south in the 1800s and thanks to abolitionists, found her freedom in the cornfields of Illinois. Cece was abandoned at birth and sex trafficked as a young girl. She found a different kind of freedom in Illinois. Both women’s lives fell into the wrong hands and both became stronger and helped others find their freedom. Cece is a modern day abolitionist who helps women and men of all colors to break the chains of trafficking.

#overcome#help#freedom#illinois

**The Story of Bob Stouway**

When WWII started, Bob’s brothers went off to serve their country. Bob agreed to stay home to help his dad on the farm. When his older brother came back home, it was his turn to serve. Bob served postwar in Yokohama, Japan and afterward came home to farm once again. He was like thousands of other small town farm boys during the WWII era who did their duty to keep America free.

#integrity#generalheadquarters#army#illinois

**The Other Side**

Edelraut was a child growing up in Germany during WWII. Her father fought in the war and her mother was home with their children. All was well until the war came to their hometown. The Russians flooded in and the women and children were ordered to evacuate to a ship in the harbor. Because it was overcrowded, her mother took the children home. The decision saved their lives since the Wilhelm Gustloff sank shortly afterward with few survivors.

#germany#tragedy#survival#illinois
WWII Veteran Toby Stoudt remembers the hard times during the Great Depression. He joined the Merchant Marines at 16 years of age. He served aboard ships that transported soldiers and supplies for the Allies. These men risked their lives facing attacks from U-boats and enemy aircraft.

#purpose#bravery#inspiration#illinois

Those who helped runaway slaves were called abolitionists. They provided a network of secret routes and safe houses, called the Underground Railroad, for those escaping slavery. These helpers risked a lot to do the right thing by assisting people who simply wanted their freedom.

#landoflincoln#abolitionist#survival#illinois

Rossi was trained by the military to detect drugs or bombs. After his service in Iraq and Afghanistan, Rossi worked security for high profile Americans like U.S. Senators, Congressmen, even President Obama. He also served with Homeland Security at the southern border and protected Americans at NFL games. This amazing dog deserves to be honored and remembered for his faithful service to the United States.

#militarydog#loyal#exceptional#illinois

Nance's parents were indentured servants in the free state of Illinois. Poor Nance was born enslaved even if it was known by another name. A smart young teenage girl, Nance knew she was being wronged. She was connected with a young attorney by her friend who served him in the Black Hawk War. Abe Lincoln represented her and won her freedom and the freedom of her infant son William.

#abrahamlincoln#abolitionist#freedom#illinois

Mary Bickerdyke was commissioned by Pastor Edward Beecher, brother of Harriett Beecher Stowe in Galesburg, Illinois. She was ready to nurse and care for the Union soldiers on 19 battlefields during the Civil War. She became known as Mother Bickerdyke and she organized over 300 field hospitals and saved many lives. General Grant supported her and General Sherman admitted "she outranks me" when someone complained about her work.

#ohio#civilwar#nursing#illinois
A Dutch woman named Miep Gies helped to hide Anne Frank's family before they were captured during WWII. After liberation, Otto Frank returned from a concentration camp only to discover the rest of his family had been murdered by the Nazis. Earlier, Miep had found Anne's diary, so she brought it to Otto upon his return and encouraged him to publish it. This Catholic woman, who later received honors as a Righteous Gentile, insisted, "I am not a hero. I don't want attention. I did what any decent person would have done."

#austria#courage#heroism#netherlands

Irena Sendler, using the code name "Jolanta," saved the lives of Jewish children while working in the Polish Underground Resistance during WWII. Secretly, she took the young children out of the Warsaw Ghetto and hid them with strangers. Her Catholic father told her when she was seven years old, "If you see someone drowning you must try to rescue them, even if you can't swim." So, with a network of brave Poles, mostly women, she smuggled 2,500 children out of the ghetto into safety.

#empathy#courage#antisemitism#poland

Casey Celske was a Catholic boy who served as a mechanic in Italy during WWII. He was in awe witnessing the Pope praying from his window at Vatican City. When the first Special Service Force came looking for replacements Casey volunteered. He saw an opportunity for more excitement, and this is how he joined a fearless group the enemy called "The Black Devils."

#wisconsin#valor#honor#illinois

Catholic zookeepers in Poland risked their lives by hiding Jews in the Warsaw Zoo. Some Jews went into cages and covered themselves with animal fur, some were kept in underground tunnels that led to the animal enclosures, and others were hidden in closets in the zookeepers' home on the zoo grounds. By not allowing themselves to be paralyzed with fear, the husband and wife animal keepers taught their young son to "do what is right, no matter what."

#inspiration#courage#compassion#poland

A high-school exchange student from Italy, who came to America, learned that the residents of a monastery in Assisi, Italy risked their lives to hide Jews during WWII. He went back home and met a Jewish survivor named Grazziella Viterbi, whose family owed their lives to the monks. As a young girl, she remembered her family risking everything to travel to Assisi during the war, hoping the story of the Catholic Church saving Jewish lives was true.

#faith#compassion#antisemitism#italy
During WWII there were no young men to play baseball at Wrigley Field in Chicago, so talent scouts went out to find young women to join the All American Girls Professional Baseball League. Catherine Horstman, nicknamed "Horsey," was chosen to play in the league. She was a great player for many years. After the war, she dedicated her life to the Catholic Church by becoming a nun and working in private schools to make sports available for girls.

#womanpioneer#faith#girlssports#ohio

A Catholic family hid one-year-old Michelle Trop, and her mother on their farm in France when the Nazis invaded their country. Michelle's father Jacob left them and became part of the French resistance. Six years later, when her father came to claim his family, young Michelle found out that they were Jewish. The Trop family resumed their lives in their original home and eventually found a sponsor so they could move to America, the "Land of Opportunity.

#france#antisemitism#survival#illinois

When Jeno Berta was six years old, his Hungarian parents decided to help a Jewish family survive by hiding them. During the last days of WWII, Jeno's job each day was to take food from the house to the barn for them. If the Nazis had found out, it would have meant death for their family as well as the Jewish family. Jeno, now an American, told his young author that life was still hard after the war when Russians brought them Communism and locked the door of their Catholic Church.

#hungary#courage#conviction#iowa

Veteran Richard Leahy was in the Navy during WWII. Young Richard went willingly into military service because of love for his country. Being aboard ship during a kamikaze attack made him more determined to win the war. Students who wrote and illustrated this book learned that living in America is not free; it has been bought with a high price. The illustrator attends Costa Catholic School in Galesburg, Illinois (a stop on the Underground Railroad and home of a Lincoln-Douglas debate).

#courage#patriotism#excellence#illinois

Nazis forced the Polish Catholic family of Jozef Kowta to serve as slave laborers in a concentration camp in Germany. Jozef's young daughter was blonde-haired and blue-eyed, and one day after kindergarten they were told she was dead. The family feared since she was "Aryan-looking," she was taken for experimentation. After the war, the family immigrated to America with their sons, but never forgot about the daughter they lost.

#poland#victim#antibullying#iowa

True Stories Written by Kids for Kids
understandingworks.org
Book Set 9 - Holocaust Heroes
Real People who Triumphed over Adversity

Esther Avrukh was a small girl in the Warsaw Ghetto when she slid under the barbed wire to go find food for her starving family. One day she came back to find the ghetto was liquidated, and she decided to pass herself off as a Christian. Esther stayed with kind families but feared for her life each day. Often, she was questioned by Nazis or SS officers. She survived and met her husband in a Displaced Persons (DP) camp. They immigrated to America, the land of opportunity.

#poland#ww2#kindness#illinois

It was a miracle that Esther Katz survived the horrors of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps. Her father and brother tragically perished, but she and her mother survived long enough for her beloved mother to die free and not a prisoner. Esther married and immigrated to the United States where they raised their family. She was inspired to speak in defiance of Holocaust deniers and became beloved by many in the Quad Cities community before her passing.

#czechoslovakia#antisemitism#miracle#illinois

Esther Schiff returned home from a friend's house and found her family had been taken away. A quick thinker, she adopted a typical name of Edwarda and stood in a line with other young people to go by train to Germany. There, she became a slave laborer on a farm. The radio constantly played anti-Semitic hatred, and she feared for her life every day. She immigrated to the U.S. and married a handsome Jewish American soldier, and raised a family.

#poland#survival#thinkfast#illinois

Holocaust survivor Yvonne Aronson was interviewed over the phone by teens who created this storybook. During Nazi persecution Yvonne hid in a convent with other women in her family. Her father died in a concentration camp, but she and her mother lived to immigrate to America and begin a new life. She told the teen authors, "What doesn't break you makes you," which inspired them greatly. Her words inspire their young readers as well.

#belgium#war#inspiration#illinois

The young author/illustrator for this book placed fifth in the nation at the National History Day competition in Washington D.C. The subject of her documentary was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was a true hero for resisters during WWII. Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and theologian, became famous for his opposition to Nazi dictatorship. This included his very vocal challenge to Hitler's persecution of the Jews. He was executed by Nazis at Flossenbürg concentration camp.

#poland#resistance#hero#germany
Two girls interviewed Eva Bostock via Skype and learned that she had lost both of her parents in Hitler's death camps. She was alone until she met and married her husband Bill who also survived the Holocaust. They immigrated to Australia where he had relatives. Like all survivors, they started over and had a good life there. He passed away, and she was alone again in a nursing home when the girls took on this project, which pleased her very much before her death.

#australia#trauma#startingover#australia

Leo Israel Samuel survived the war simply because of his trade skills. He was sent to the Krakow-Plaszow concentration camp where Arnon Goeth was the commandant. Goeth was infamous and brutal as shown in the movie Schindler's List. He became known as the 'butcher of Plaszow' and he was feared. But, it was this man who saved Leo's life. He needed a tailor, and that made Leo valuable. Raizel Samuel (Leo's son) told the young author Leo's important story.

#czechoslovakia#survival#miracle#california

American Soldier Eugene Parmer served in the European theater where he was ordered to get intelligence from Dachau concentration camp. Upon arrival, he shot the lock the gate and was mobbed by Jewish prisoners. They knocked him down to the ground because they all wanted the American flag pins from his uniform. They had waited a long time for liberation, and they wanted a souvenir. Afterward, they showed him where some Nazi soldiers were hiding in fear.

#allies#victory#survival#iowa

Oskar Schindler's story was made famous by the movie Schindler's List. He was a member of the Nazi Party who is credited saving the lives of over 1,000 Jews during WWII. He saved Jewish workers from deportation and death in the Naz concentration camps by employing them in his ammunition and enamelware factories in Poland. It cost Schindler dearly, as he had to give Nazi officials large bribes and luxury items obtained on the black market to keep his workers safe.

#righteous#courage#empathy#germany

Ida Kramer is famous in the Quad Cities for her hard work and dedication to Holocaust education. Her parents immigrated to America before the war, but Ida learned as an adult of the deaths of many of her own family members in the concentration camps. The death toll included her father's twin, and this made her passionate about equipping teachers to fulfill Holocaust education mandates. Ida was instrumental in an advisory position at the conception of A BOOK by ME.

#pennsylvania#dedication#volunteer#iowa
Book Set 10 - Race Against Racism
Real People who Triumphed over Adversity

The Emir Abd el-Kader is a Muslim hero known as a warrior for righteousness, a defender of his people and a protector of the weak. His brave actions saved thousands of Christian lives, winning him the admiration of many, including President Abraham Lincoln and the Pope. The town of El Kader in Iowa is named after this amazing hero.

#honor#empathy#integrity#algeria

At one point in our nation's history, African Americans were not allowed to play baseball with the white players. In 1920, the Negro National League was created to showcase their talents. Al Carmin played baseball in many cities across the nation on a Negro League team. Decades later, a girl from his neighborhood asked him if she could share his story in a book.

#owa#racism#civilrights#michigan

Jewish survivor Jack Welner was a teenager when his mother gave him her last piece of bread at Auschwitz concentration camp. This would be the last gift she gave to him before she was murdered in the gas chamber. After the war, Jack immigrated to America where he married and raised a family. Now, he spends time teaching children about the Holocaust, telling them to “live life to the fullest.”

#poland#livinghistory#integrity#colorado

Art Hlmo had Christian parents who encouraged him to help those in need. So, during WWII he worked with the underground to lead Jews and other refugees from Norway on skis, over mountains and into the safety of Sweden. He eventually immigrated to America, and decades later he was called back to his homeland where the King of Norway honored his work during the war.

#norway#courage#righteousness#iowa

Owen Lovejoy was a minister, an abolitionist, a conductor on the Underground Railroad and a congressman. As a young man, he witnessed the brutal murder of his brother for being an abolitionist. This drove Owen to become even more passionate about ending slavery. He became friends with President Abraham Lincoln and made a powerful difference in his home state and in Washington D.C.

#maine#antislavery#commitment#illinois
Yitzhak Lichtenfeld went with his family to the Jewish ghetto when the Nazis invaded Poland. Since Yitzhak and his sister had blue eyes and didn’t look Jewish, they were able to get bread when most Jews could not. After the war ended, his family started a new life in Israel, where he still lives today. This book was written by his grandson Eldad, who is the first young author to write a book in Israel.  
#poland#antisemitism#survive#israel

Katherine Magarian saw her father killed when she was just nine years old. The Turkish attempt to wipe out the Armenians during and just after WWII claimed the lives of more than a million people. When the Turks invaded, all Katherine had time to take with her was a little angel crocheted by her grandmother. The war separated her from loved ones, but after years of struggles she immigrated to America and was reunited with her mother.  
#armenia#race#perseverance#rhodeisland

Not everyone gets to meet and hear stories from a 100-year-old but it happened to this young author and illustrator. During WWII, John served in the U.S. Navy in the Pacific theater. The Allies’ goal was to capture Japan’s islands one by one and John’s ship’s role was to provide support to the Marines on the island of Okinawa.  
#ohio#livinghistory#honor#wisconsin

Lyle Johnson was a white man who felt strongly about standing alongside black men and women marching with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He and the others in his group joined them in Selma and were treated terribly by white people in the South. Lyle and his wife were committed to winning the war against racism. While his wife stayed home raising their children, Lyle took a stand against bigotry and hate.  
#minnesota#courage#commitment#illinois

Irving Roth was a teenage boy who survived the concentration camps in Europe. His brother was more religious and asked him to recite the Psalms during the death march, which ultimately saved his life. An exchange student from Lithuania heard Irving speak and wanted to write his story for future generations.  
#czechoslovakia#auschwitz#survivor#newyork

True Stories Written by Kids for Kids  
understandingworks.org
Paul Kessler was born at the start of WWII. When he was five years old, he awoke to screaming. He and his mother ran into the forest to escape the Nazis and hid there for weeks. Their friends, the Hajdak family, bravely agreed to hide them in a dirt hole in the floor of their storage room. Paul and his mother passed the time counting together and telling stories for seven long months until they were liberated.

#czechoslovakia#hiddenchild#hope#texas

Veteran Ron Star lived through the Great Depression. He worked as a boy delivering newspapers, polishing shoes and helping at a grocery store to help support his family. His father left and Ron became the main supporter of his mother and family. During and after World War II, he served in the Pacific theater. After the Allied victory, his job in the Philippines was to help their citizens get their lives back together.

#hero#philippines#wwii#illinois

Henry Wood was a small-town boy who was called to serve in Europe during WWII. He experienced digging foxholes and being shot at by snipers during the war. He was wounded and was very proud to have received a Purple Heart. He was also proud that his sister served as a WAVE during the war. Two middle school students interviewed Henry and preserved his story for young readers.

#hero#wwii#patriotism#illinois

Jewish Holocaust survivor Bob Behr from Germany was interviewed by students from Iowa. Their storytelling is shared as he and his mother were forced from their home in Berlin and taken to a concentration camp. They both survived the horrors of Theresienstadt but sadly, his mother was too weak and sick to immigrate to America with her son.

#germany#survivor#theresienstadt#maryland

Al Spearman was very young when his parents went their separate ways. He was raised by a single mother during the Great Depression. Racism and Jim Crow laws forced men of color to form a National Negro League, and Al was asked to join Chicago’s team. Decades later, the Chicago White Sox honored his team by wearing replica uniforms during regular season baseball games.

#courage#racism#resilience#illinois
Dean Urick was in college when he heard on the radio that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. After joining the U.S. Navy, his first assignment was in Hawaii at Pearl Harbor. In May of 1944, Dick was working when an explosion knocked him off his feet and the other sailors into the water. Many men died and more were wounded when explosion after explosion rocked the harbor. Americans weren't told what happened since it was decided this had to be kept classified so the Japanese wouldn't learn how much firepower we had.

#honor#westch#classified#illinois

Charlie Ogle is a farm boy from Illinois who had quite the adventure during WWII. When he first joined the U.S. Navy, he volunteered for the choir since he has a great singing voice. During his training the choir performed in different places raising money for war bonds. He shipped out to the Pacific to support fighting the Japanese. From aboard his ship, Charlie saw the historic signing of the peace treaty between the U.S. and Japan.

#wwii#pactentreaty#navy#illinois

Richard Roling made the best of things when he served all alone on a tropical island near New Guinea during WWII. He served as a weather observer for the United States Army Air Force. He was faithful to do this important job of plotting weather configurations on a map.

#hero#pacifictheater#weather#illinois

Ray was 17 years old when he joined the military and served his country in the Merchant Marines. He worked aboard a supply vessel that brought war equipment and essentials to Allies overseas. He went home and then he was drafted in the Army and sent to Japan as a member of the occupying forces. He saw the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombing sites.

#merchantmarines#patriotism#army#illinois

Some dogs have a special way of capturing our hearts. Jasper, who was found in a dog pound, is no exception. A young author and a young illustrator from the Middle East have told how Jasper became a remarkable service dog for a girl named Kelsey. Jasper learned how to warn her parents when Kelsey was about to have an epileptic seizure. In fact, this pound puppy saved her life! This is an underdog story you will never forget!

#servicedogs#epilepsy#lebanon#illinois

True Stories Written by Kids for Kids
understandingworks.org
Eugenia Clark Woodward grew up helping her parents at their camera shop, not knowing one day she would use the skills she had learned there to defend her country. After high school graduation, she enlisted with the United States Naval Reserve in their new branch called the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). Her role was to repair the cameras that were attached to the bottom of bomber aircraft. These photos were helpful in providing naval intelligence and ensuring targets were hit.

#newjersey#ww2#navy#hawaii

Evi Kohn was only 8 years old when the Nazis invaded Vienna. Her mother was a smart woman, and she sewed locket diamonds into Evi’s toy clown so she would have valuables if she needed food or other necessities. She bought passage on a ship to America so Evi and her sister could be safe. Once they reached New York, each girl was assigned a family through a Jewish agency. The girls were kept safe until their mother, a Holocaust survivor, came to join them after the war.

#austria#courage#tolerance#illinois

A young sailor named Eldon Baxter was aboard the USS West Virginia when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Thankfully, he lived, but many of his fellow servicemen lost their lives that day. Many years later, his young author learned firsthand about December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy. Eldon passed away in 2017; it was fitting that he was laid to rest on the 76th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Eldon was the last known Pearl Harbor survivor residing in the Quad Cities.

#veteran#survival#honor#iowa

Harold Kasimow was a young boy whose wise Jewish parents knew they must hide to survive the war. They made arrangements with a farmer for their family of five to hide under the floor of their barn until the war ended. They call their hiding place the “grub” which means grave in Yiddish. Over nineteen months later they learned the war was coming to an end and it was safe to come out. They hadn’t used their legs for so long that Harold couldn’t walk and his mom could only crawl away.

#poland#antisemitism#resilience#iowa

Pete the horse was for sale. He was older and had a swayed back, so he appeared ready to be put out to pasture. But, Karen Angotti saw the promise in him as a therapy horse for Rainbow Riders Therapeutic Horseback Riding Center. Pete proved right and became a hero to the children with disabilities who came there to learn how to ride horses. Pete may not have looked perfect, but he had a big heart and became the backbone of the riding program.

#purpose#empathy#inspiration#illinois
Young Floyd Ragsdale was ready and able to serve his country during WWII. The Battle of the Bulge was a bloody battle which resulted in the most American casualties of the war. The Allies regrouped and won the victory, but Floyd was wounded. Decades later, this man was able to wear his WWII uniform to the interview. This meeting happened just days before the old soldier passed away in his sleep.

#iowa#courage#livinghistory#illinois

Roy Kouski was very pleased when his granddaughter volunteered to write his story for young people. This WWII veteran served in many ways in Europe. After the Allies won, he helped Jewish survivors from Wobbelin concentration camp start a new life. He had a special encounter with a Jewish boy named Paul that haunted him until his death. His young author and artist are both very proud of their hero.

#compassion#dignity#tolerance#illinois

Paul Schick was born in eastern Europe in 1932. As a child, he remembers practicing putting on gas masks for protection in case they were bombed. He had no idea his friend was in Hitler’s German Youth Movement, until one day they painted swastikas on a building. His parents were mortified but realized their son didn’t understand that it was a Nazi symbol and that the Nazis hated Jews. His parents had a friend who helped them get to America, but loved ones who remained in Europe were murdered by the Nazis.

#czechoslovakia#tolerance#compassion#pennsylvania

Miyoko Mikasa was the proud daughter of Japanese immigrants. Their lives changed when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. The U.S. Government feared Japanese Americans could not be trusted and sent them to Internment Camps. Her father had just bought a small farm, but once interned, he couldn’t pay the bank note. His frustration and depression caused him to commit suicide. Miyoko became a nurse after the war and had a wonderful family, but she could not forget the pain of the past.

#california#disadvantaged#resilient#michigan

Norman Salsitz used his education and his clever mind to lead a double and even triple life during World War II. He was born in a small town in Poland in 1920, and became the man who saved the city of Krakow from being destroyed by Hitler’s bombs in 1945. During the Holocaust, Norman changed his identity, thwarted Nazi commanders, endured hiding in the forest, and was forced to use lethal weapons to survive.

#poland#survivor#fighter#newjersey