***The Safest Lie* by Angela Cerrito – Lesson 1**

For students in grades 4 and up

**Setting:**This powerful historical novel takes place during World War II in Nazi-occupied Poland. When German soldiers, under Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler, invaded Poland in the fall of 1939, Britian and France declared war on Germany. Nazis planned to destroy the Jewish people.

*The Safest Lie* is a fast-paced, inspiring account of nine-year old Anna Bauman, one of thousands of Jewish children rescued from the Warsaw, Poland ghetto, and her struggles to both hide and hold onto her Jewish identity. Anna's grandmother always told her that the truth was the safest lie - but in Nazi-occupied Warsaw, the truth about Anna's identity is the most dangerous thing. Smuggled out of the ghetto to a Christian orphanage, Anna struggles to hide her true identity. The *Safest Lie is*a National Jewish Book Awards Finalist.  The novel’s inspiration is based on the life of Irena Sendler, the Catholic social worker and spy who rescued more than twenty-five hundred children from the Warsaw ghetto during World War II.

Visit the author’s website for her Educator’s Guide to the novel: <http://www.angelacerrito.com/educators-guide.html>

**Choose from these Activities for Students:**

**1. Learn more about the Invasion of Poland** at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s website:

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/invasion-of-poland-fall-1939>

**2. Pre-Reading Activity:** Read the short picture book *Irena Sendler and the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto* by Susan Goldman Rubin, OR read about Irena Sendler on the website: <http://www.auschwitz.dk/sendler.htm>

\**If your students are young, you may want to summarize Irena Sendler’s story from this website, as some of the information may be hard for younger students to take in.*

**3. Kansas Activity**: Irena Sendler’s work during World War II to save thousands of Jewish children, was discovered by 3 high school students from rural Kansas, who decided to put on a special play *Life in a Jar*. The title of the play *Life in a Jar* refers to the method which Irena used to keep the true identities of the Jewish children and their parents a secret, by hiding the names on lists in jars, and burying the jars in a neighbor’s garden. Thanks to these Kansas students for their work in writing and putting on the *Life in a Jar* play, Irena Sendler’s story came to light throughout the world, and she was eventually nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008.

Read more about the *Life in a Jar* project: [https://irenasendler.org/#](https://irenasendler.org/) or <https://irenasendler.org/about-the-project/>

Consider hosting a *Life in a Jar* play: <https://irenasendler.org/host-the-life-in-a-jar-play/>

Order the award-winning book *Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project* and learn more about Irena Sendler and the Kansas kids! <https://irenasendler.org/life-in-a-jar-book/>

**4. Write a Tribute:** Ask students to write a tribute to Sendler that might have appeared in newspapers on the day she died at the age of 98. (This activity is found on the author’s website).

**Other Children’s Literature on the Holocaust**:

*The Anne Frank Case: Simon Wiesenthal’s Search for the Truth,*

by Susan Goldman Rubin, illustrated by Bill Farnworth, Ages 10+

*The Cat with the Yellow Star: Coming of Age in Terezin* – (Czechoslovakia),

by Susan Goldman Rubin and Ela Weissberger, Ages 8-12

*Fireflies in the Dark: The Story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis & the Children of Terezin*,

by Susan Goldman Rubin, Ages 8-12

*The Grand Mosque of Paris: A Story of How Muslims Rescued Jews During the Holocaust*,

by Karen Gray Ruelle and Deborah Durland DeSaix, Ages 8+

*Irena Sendler and the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto*

by Susan Goldman Rubin, illustrated by Bill Fransworth, Ages 6-10

*Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project*

by Jack Mayer, Ages 10+

*A Picture Book of Anne Frank*

by David A. Adler, illustrated by Karen Ritz, Ages 4-8