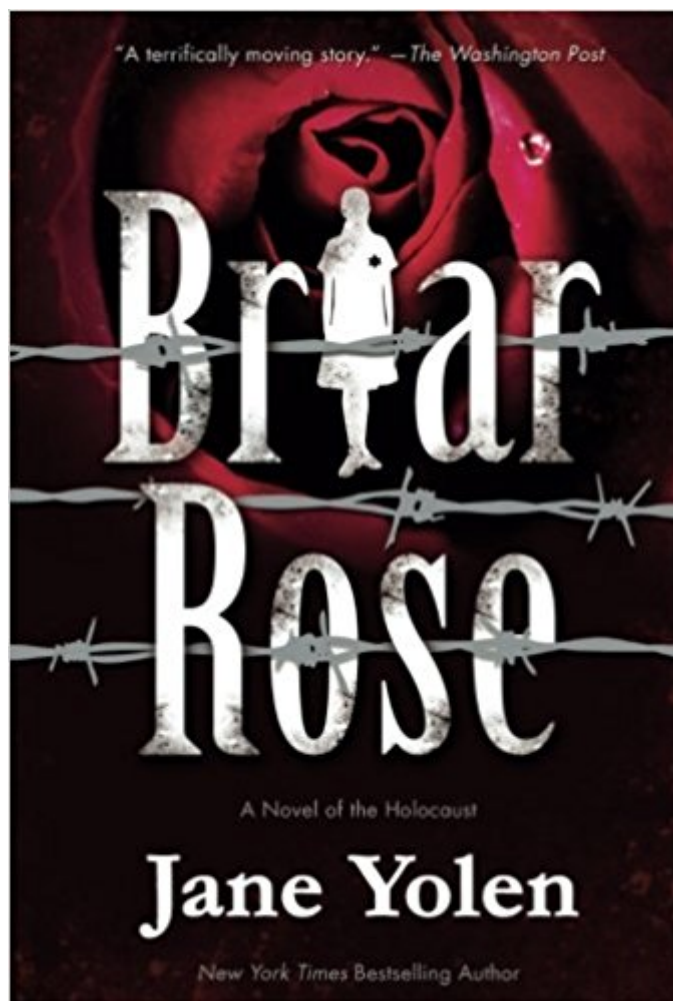


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# Briar Rose: A Novel Of The Holocaust (Fairy Tales)



## Synopsis

Briar Rose is a historically sensitive retelling of Sleeping Beauty set amid forests patrolled by the German army during World War II. In the heat of midsummer 1942, deep in a forest in the heart of Poland, Briar Rose arrives at a castle that has fallen into the hands of an evil army. Corrupted by dark deeds and choked by a poisonous mist, the castle will soon come to be known as Chelmno extermination camp. And in that place of death, Briar Rose is plunged into a deep sleep.... Ever since she was a child, Rebecca has been enchanted by her grandmother Gemma's stories of Briar Rose. Becca would have sworn the stories were made up, but on her deathbed Gemma extracts from Becca a promise to fulfill three impossible requests: find the castle, find the prince, and find the spell-maker. Her vow sends Becca on a remarkable journey to uncover the truth of Gemma's astonishing claim: I am Briar Rose. Yolen's graceful retelling of the German folktale of Briar Rose—known to some as Sleeping Beauty—sets the story amid forests patrolled by the German army during World War II. Yolen confronts the deeply tragic events of the Holocaust with lyrical prose and rich characterizations that tell a tale of good and evil, hope and despair. The Washington Post called Briar Rose "a terrifically moving story."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Windling's Fairy Tale series has produced several excellent fantasy novels inspired by classic fairy tales. This is one of the series's most ambitious efforts, and only a writer as good as Yolen ( Sister Light, Sister Dark ) could bring it off. Yolen takes the story of Briar Rose (commonly known as

Sleeping Beauty) and links it to the Holocaust--a far-from-obvious connection that she makes perfectly convincing. Rebecca Berlin, a young woman who has grown up hearing her grandmother Gemma tell an unusual and frightening version of the Sleeping Beauty legend, realizes when Gemma dies that the fairy tale offers one of the very few clues she has to her grandmother's past. To discover the facts behind Gemma's story, Rebecca travels to Poland, the setting for the book's most engrossing scenes and its most interesting, best-developed characters. By interpolating Gemma's vivid and imaginative story into the larger narrative, Yolen has created an engrossing novel. She handles a difficult subject with finesse in a book that should be required reading for anyone who is tempted to dismiss fantasy as a frivolous genre. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A young woman's promise to her dying grandmother leads her on a quest to discover the truth of her own family's mysterious beginnings in this grim retelling of the classic fairy tale "Briar Rose," or "The Sleeping Beauty." In Yolen's modern-day version, the wall of thorns becomes a barbed-wire prison, while the sleeping princess is both victim and heroine. The latest in the "Fairy Tale" series showcases Yolen's skill at transforming the real world into a realm of fantasy. A good selection for adult and YA fantasy collections. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book needs to be in every school in America, whether elementary or college. Far from just "another book about the Holocaust", this book celebrates the power of storytelling as a means of coping and taking control of traumatic experiences. It reminds us that history affects us every day, even if we aren't aware of it. I'd recommend it to any readers/teachers/parents in search of Holocaust/war stories, female-driven/female-centric narratives, family/historical sagas, fairy tales taken in new directions, or just damn good reads. This book easily deserves a place on the shelf or the curriculum with *Number the Stars*.

I love new slants on old fairytales. This book, sets "Sleeping Beauty" against the background of the Holocaust. It incorporates family history, genealogy, and a most unusual hero prince. I have read that many survivors of the Holocaust prefer not to talk about their experience. In this case, the survivor turned it into a fictionalized tale that she told to her granddaughters. The youngest is determined to get to the root of her grandma's story.. I highly recommend this book.

Rebecca has always loved the story of Briar Rose aka Sleeping Beauty, a favorite tale of her grandmother's. Rebecca and her family know very little about this grandmother's past life as she seems to guard it as a dark secret and can tell it only as a fairy tale. When the grandmother dies, Rebecca embarks on a journey overseas to Poland that leads her into her grandmother's past in those dark days when Hitler tried to exterminate the Jews, homosexuals, the mentally impaired, and others deemed unfit to live. Jane Yolen does a great job of weaving in the story through the fairy tale, but I couldn't help but wish she could have just told the grandmother's story straight out. But I know she did it for a publisher who wanted a series of novels build around those classic fairy tales. She's an excellent writer. My grandkids loved her kids' book titled Sleeping Ugly, another take on Sleeping Beauty. Eunice Boeve, author of Ride a Shadowed Trail and soon to be released sequel, Crossed Trails.

Gemma's last wish is that grand-daughter Becca find the castle; her dying words are that she is Briar Rose. However, the truth is entangled in the single fairy tale that Gemma tells her three grand-daughters throughout their lives. The tale she tells is not standard fare. This tale is elusive. What does it mean that Gemma is Briar Rose? How could a castle be part of Gemma's past? The French gave us the word plot through "plait," which refers to the unraveling the reader must do as she reads. Imagine a plait of cloth lying horizontally with the loose part on the left (reading occurs left to right) as a closed book. Open the book, read and unravel, read and unravel. This is the task Gemma has given Becca: Unravel the past. The family knows nothing of Gemma's past. Her only clue is the fairy tale: Briar Rose, a new telling of Sleeping Beauty. The audience knows the power of fairy tales to hide universal truths, that sometimes an external force, in the form of a handsome prince, defeats evil characters and their spells, and sometimes the inner power of the character is the impetus. Jane Yolen's brilliant retelling of Sleeping Beauty through Gemma's tale, is one novel in the Fairy Tales series begun by Terry Windling, in which writers retell a fairy tale in a modern setting. In this tale is hidden the evil of the Holocaust in one hideous castle run by Nazis, and one princess, Briar Rose, awakened by the power of a kiss. No more than that will I tell. Yolen employs a favorite literary device in Gemma's telling of the tale. In the beginning chapters the reader is supposedly given the finished plait of the story. As Becca begins her quest in discovering the truth, Yolen begins unraveling the story, revealing one hidden fact, and another, and another, until finally toward the end the story is fully revealed and the reader is left gasping at its truth. Because Becca is a reporter, she knows how to uncover the truth. With the help of her handsome boss, Becca begins her task. A major truth she learns about him before she leaves for Poland is that he is adopted but

had his own quest of learning who his birth mother is. Is it necessary to know this truth? Is it better to leave some truths unknown? This is the crux of Yolen's book: Are there some truths better left unknown? Think of that plait. We read a book because we want to unravel the plot and get at the truth of the story. The handsome boss had to know his truth, Becca had to know her Gemma's story, and in the end learns her own identity. This is one of the most satisfactory Holocaust novels/stories I have ever read, not because it has a happy ending (it does and it doesn't), but because the way Yolen unravels the truth through first one thread then another. If this seems enigmatic, that is what Yolen wants--sometimes finding the truth is tricky and difficult. For many reasons this is an excellent book for girls 9-12, depending on their maturity. This is not a sanitized Walt Disney Sleeping Beauty, but an old-fashioned one in which evil is what it is, but that truth can be liberating.

I first read this book when I was in high school and fell in love with it.

ok

I've read this story 3 or 4 times since I discovered it 15 (?) years ago. Well written retelling in an interesting spin.....

Growing up, Rebecca listened to her beloved grandmother ("Gemma") recount the story of Briar Rose countless times. As Gemma lies dying, she tells Rebecca that she (Gemma) was Briar Rose and asks Becca to promise that she will look into Gemma's past. Becca agrees and embarks upon a journey to Poland that will open up past wounds but will also lead to a new beginning. "Briar Rose" by Jane Yolen is a powerful novel about the Holocaust. Set in the present day with flashbacks to the Holocaust, it is an unforgettable story. Yolen skillfully weaves Gemma's recounting of the Briar Rose story with what really happened and it is heartbreaking and moving. The novel is filled with great characters - Becca, who agrees to find out Gemma's story and pledges to do so no matter what; Stan, her editor who encourages her to do so; Magda, the irrepressible Polish girl who helps Becca; Josef Potoki, who fills in many of the blanks in Gemma's life (his story is one of the most moving parts of the book); and of course Gemma herself as her story unfolds. Also playing a powerful part in the novel is the visit to Chelmno - not only the place itself but the reaction of the people living near there to the visitors. Gemma and Josef's stories are moving in many ways - a reminder of how much people lost during the Holocaust. The discoveries that Becca makes about Gemma and also the

ones that she is unable to make are heartbreaking, yet heartwarming. "Briar Rose" is a powerful work of fiction. Highly recommended.

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