

Sarah Shner-Nishmit and *The Children of Mapu Street*

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During the first twenty years after World War II, very few books about the Holocaust and contemporary events surrounding it were written for children and teenagers. One distinctly unique work that was written in those early years is Sarah Shner-Nishmit's book, *The Children of Mapu Street* (*Ha-yeladim me-rehov Mapu*). The first work of fiction for young people to be written by a Holocaust survivor, to this day it remains one of the most important and popular of works directed to young people about the Holocaust. This paper presents some of the distinctive aspects of this original, pioneering work, and seeks to explain why it has endured over the years and continues to be readable and relevant to reading audiences until today, more than half a century after it was written.

The Children of Mapu Street presents the young reader with a wide variety of events that were experienced by Eastern Europe Jews and by Jewish children in particular during the Holocaust, woven into a dynamic and compelling narrative. The writer focuses on a limited number of central characters, all of them children. Realistically and believably described, they draw the young reader's attention and interest, and encourage identification with them. Characters and events are portrayed naturally, without an artificial or overtly educative tone. The story sounds authentic and creates a sense of trust and connection between young readers and the subject of the Holocaust. Another important aspect of the work is the wide variety of characters it presents – of different nationalities, ages and backgrounds – and the particular struggles each of them had with the horrors of those years. The reader learns about some of the ways in which Jews survived, were saved, or met their deaths. All these features combine in this extraordinary and unique work and explain, to some extent, the secret of its continued success over the years.