

LORGNETTE

Quarterly Review of Children's and Young Adults' Books

Author

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Illustrator

Illustrated by Alida Massari

Reviewer

Isbell, Melinda

Pages

Unpaged

Price

\$19.99

ISBN

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Classification

Nonfiction (305.892 or biography)

Grade Level

K-4

Book Review: DONA GRACIA SAVED WORLDS

"A person who saves even one life saves a whole world." This story is about Doña Gracia Mendes Nasi, a secret Jew who grew up in Portugal in the 1500s. During that time, the Spanish Inquisition searched for non-Christians, particularly Jews and Muslims living in Portugal and Spain. Doña Gracia grew up practicing her religion in secret. When she was old enough, she married a Jewish man who owned a shipping company that brought spices to Portugal from around the world. Doña Gracia and her husband brokered a deal with the king of Portugal that if they brought him treasures from around the world, he would not arrest secret Jews. Doña Gracia worked to protect her people.

Throughout the years, it became harder for Jews to practice their religion, even in secret, but no one was allowed to move to another country. However, Doña Gracia was determined to do what she could to save the Jews in Portugal. So, in the darkness of night, the secret Jews in Portugal boarded Doña Gracia's ships, and they left. These secret Jews were invited to settle in Istanbul, Turkey (then Constantinople), where they could openly practice their religion. Doña Gracia faced danger most of her life working to save her people from prosecution. This is a well-written, historically accurate book with illustrations that fit the time period of the story. I recommend this book for any public, school, or home library.

