

**Farrar, Straus and Giroux Books for Young Readers
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For Immediate Release

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**Book Inspires Eighth Grade Students
To Find—and Reunite—Holocaust Refugees Separated in 1938**

“I am really hoping that you are the Gerda Katz we are looking for.” So began the email that Madison Junior High School teacher Catie O’Boyle wrote after her students were inspired by a book, *Is It Night or Day?* by Fern Schumer Chapman. They hoped to reunite Edith Westerfeld Schumer, the author’s mother, and Gerda Katz, who last saw each other 73 years ago. As a result of the efforts of the eighth-graders at this school in Naperville, Illinois, in July, Edith Westerfeld Schumer will travel to Seattle to see Gerda Katz (now Gerda Frumkin), in person.

Ms. O’Boyle had assigned her students to read *Is It Night or Day?* The assignment was followed by a visit by the author. After reading the book and hearing Chapman speak, the students were frustrated they could do nothing to change the evils of the past, and saddened to learn that Chapman had been unable to find Gerda. That’s when eighth-grader Jessica Deutsch stood up and asked, “Why can’t we find her?” And so the students of Madison Junior High School, aided by O’Boyle and Lisanne Carlson, the school’s Learning Resource Director, used Google, Facebook and other library databases to find Gerda. In less than a week, they narrowed down millions of leads to just two, and shortly thereafter found Gerda Frumkin.

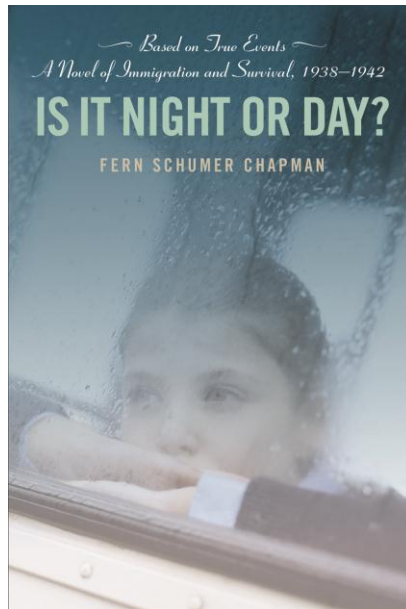


Upon hearing the news, both the author and her mother were overwhelmed, even more so when they were invited back to the school on Friday, May 13, when the students went even further in honoring the book, the author and the two child refugees. With origami, the students created 1000 boats to represent the One Thousand Children Program, a little known American rescue effort that saved European children from the Nazis. All were yellow except 10 to represent the refugee children on the ship that brought Edith to America— and two distinctively colored ones to represent Edith and Gerda.



The students also compiled a scrapbook of clippings from their search and wore bracelets to express unity. Commenting on the students' mission, author Fern Schumer Chapman said, "This is a story of love, loss, and recovery—AND what modern kids can teach us about righting the wrongs of the past."

A novel for young adults, *Is It Night or Day?* chronicles the journey of Edith, who escaped Hitler's Germany as one of the One Thousand Children. Largely unknown until about ten years ago, the program, under the auspices of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, allowed approximately 10 children at a time to escape Germany aboard cruise ships bound for America. The children travelled without parents or family. The program saved about 100 children a year between 1934 and 1945, totaling approximately 1000.



In 1938, Edith's distraught parents, who saw no other way of saving her from the Nazis, put the 12-year old aboard the *Deutschland*, one of these cruise ships. She would sail to America and make her way to Chicago to live with relatives. Also onboard that ship was Gerda Katz, another little girl sent alone to America. The two became fast friends. During their 10 days at sea and the subsequent three days spent in New York, Edith and "Gertie" were inseparable. Gerda ventured on to Seattle and Edith to Chicago to begin new lives in a strange land. That was the last time they were in contact... until April 28th when Gertie, now Gerda Frumkin, sent an email to Edith that read, "I have thought of you often and am so thankful that you found me. Can't wait until we speak together." It was signed "with love" and received by 86-year old Edith Schumer in Skokie, Illinois.

Is It Night or Day? published in March, 2010 by Farrar Straus Giroux Books for Young Readers, has earned accolades. In its starred review, *Booklist* wrote: "In Edith's bewildered, sad, angry voice, the words are eloquent and powerful. As with the best writing, the specifics about life as a young immigrant are universal." *Kirkus Reviews* called it "moving," and said: "Most Holocaust stories for children focus on the inhumanity that took place in European countries; fewer deal with the severe hardships experienced by children sent to America and their struggles to assimilate into a foreign culture....This empathetic historical novel rings with authenticity." The book also was selected for Bank Street College's "Best Children's Books of the Year 2011" list, and is an American Library Association Sydney Taylor Notable Book.

Fern Schumer Chapman is also the author of *Motherland: Beyond the Holocaust: A Daughter's Journey to Reclaim the Past*, which was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. She lives in a suburb of Chicago.

To arrange press interviews, please contact Liz Hartman. Additional information and photos can be found at these links:

- [Local coverage](#)
- [Huffington Post](#)
- [Chicago Tribune](#)
- [Is it Night or Day? Book and Author Blog](#)
- [Fern Schumer Chapman's Reunion Blog](#)



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