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**Review of *The Silenced: A Novel*
By James DeVita**

Adult/ Educator Reviewer: J. Eric Hasty
Carver Middle School

Student Review: Hannah Lundebo, 7th Grade



DeVita, J. (2015). *The Silenced*. Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions.

ISBN: 9781571319371

Adult Review: J. Eric Hasty

In all honesty, were it not for this project *The Silenced* by James DeVita would not have survived the 40 page test. I found the opening somewhat formulaic and predictable. That said, after 70 pages, the story verged from the typical dystopian narrative to explore the humanity of all the characters, and I was hooked. As a whole, I found the book a thought-compelling read filled with hope for humanity. Despite my initial feelings, I highly recommend the novel and look forward to putting it into my student's hands.

"It explored how loss informs one's understanding of life and politics and how everyone is working to do what he or she thinks is best for society and humanity."

Set in a dystopian future, the story follows the student Mareana as she challenges the rules of an autocratic government working to shut down all dissent. She and her friends challenge a new school director as he works to instill a sense of discipline and civic belonging in his students. This challenge has its consequences that lead Mareana to understand her friends and family more as she faces the ramifications of her choices.

What I enjoyed most about the book was how it humanized all the characters, both protagonist and antagonist. It explored how loss informs one's understanding of life and politics and how everyone is working to do what he or she thinks is best for society and humanity. There is a complex metaphor built

around the idea that violence and oppression dehumanizes those in power that I found particularly prescient and important. However, the book did not allow me to blindly hate a villain in support of the main character, but forced me as a reader to appreciate the humanity of everyone involved.

Ideal for middle school readers, I feel that this book would be a great companion piece for other texts examining how people resist authoritarian governments such as Ji Li Jiang's *Red Scarf Girl*. As I said, it was not an easy book to begin, but a great book to finish and well worth the investment.

Student Review: Hannah Lundebo

I thought this book was important because it gives us, the readers a peek of what life would have looked like if Germany had won the war in May of 1945.

I would recommend this book because it was beautiful how the author took real life events paired with fictional characters and compiled them into this story for people to read and learn to appreciate real life heroines, such as Sophie Scholl.

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I believe the most compelling aspect of this book for me was the main character, Mareana

and her never ending courage in the face of many trials. I admire her strong will to fight for her rights and rights of others, even after her mother was murdered by the Zero Tolerance Party. Marena's fighting and

determined spirit mirrored that of real life Sophie School and the resistance group, The White Rose, in that both ladies fought endlessly not to become one of The Silenced.