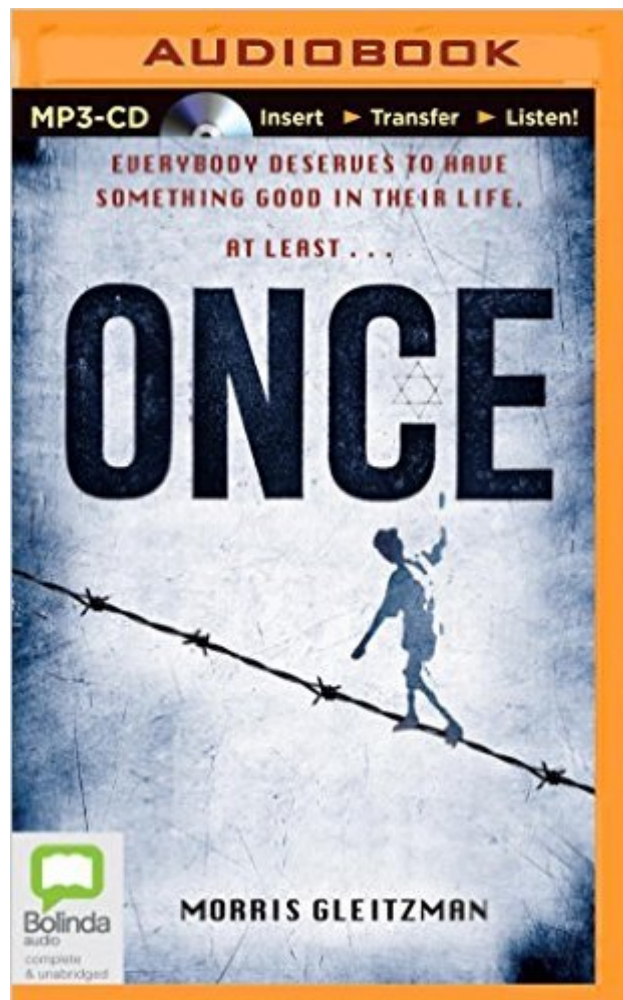


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# Once



## Synopsis

Once I escaped from an orphanage to find Mum and Dad. Once I saved a girl called Zelda from a burning house. Once I made a Nazi with toothache laugh. My name is Felix. This is my story. Everybody deserves to have something good in their life. At least once. "Gleitzman's reading is precise and lovely, often delivered in an understated whisper, emphasizing the intensity of the story and the author's skill as a consummate storyteller. Klezmer music punctuates the chapters. Once is very much a story about storytelling memory. Seldom does a story come along so powerful in its simplicity." —AudioFile magazine

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Booktalk: Once there was a boy named Felix who lived at an orphanage in Poland, only he wasn't an orphan. Almost four years ago Felix's secret alive parents left him with Mother Minka, at the orphanage, so they could travel and find out why their bookstore had to close. Once Nazis came to the orphanage and burned all the Jewish books in the library. Then Felix knew the answer to his parents' problem. See, Felix not only has secret alive parents, he's also secretly Jewish. Maybe if his parents sold more books that the Nazis liked, their bookstore wouldn't have to close. Armed with this revelation, Felix leaves the orphanage to find his parents. Instead of them helping and protecting him, maybe Felix can save them, just this Once. Review: Doesn't the whole premise of this book stress you out? It stressed me out. For a book of 163 pages\* I had to put it down more than a couple of times because I was just too nervous for Felix. He was so young when his parents left him at the orphanage. This is, presumably, why they didn't tell him why they were really leaving him in

the hands of a bunch of nuns, and the nuns certainly didn't tell him either. How could they? How could they explain that to 6 year old Felix when he entered the orphanage? Besides, if Felix didn't pray to God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Pope and Adolf Hitler like the rest of the orphans, he'd stand out. It was heartbreaking to watch Felix do things like return to his family's home in what used to be a Jewish neighborhood, try to flag down a truckload of soldiers when he needs help, or pray to Adolf Hitler to keep him safe, as he's been taught to do. He really has no idea what is going on in Poland and the rest of Europe. He has no idea that at ten years old he is a hunted man.

When I was in high school, I went to Germany on a school trip. In Germany, we went to Dachau, a concentration camp that has been turned into a memorial/museum. The emotions I felt at Dachau have never left me. The vast camp was completely silent except for the crunch of visitors' feet on the gravel. The pain within those gates was so strong, we couldn't even speak to one another. But more and more, I find my students are finding themselves disconnected from the Holocaust. Sure, they know the mass murder to millions of people is horrendous, but they really can't fathom the fear and agony felt by so many. We read books, we watch movies, but it is hard to grasp the same emotions I felt the moment I stepped foot into Dachau so many years ago. Therefore, as an educator, it becomes very hard to find quality books that will knock my students around emotionally the same way *Night* by Elie Wiesel did the first time I read it in high school. Once, by Morris Gleitzman knocked me around, and will certainly open the eyes of any jaded student. It's 1942, and Felix has lived in a Polish Orphanage for 3 years and 8 months since his parents left him there. They are Jewish and owned a bookstore in town, but they made a deal with Mother Minka to hide Felix, but they told him they were just going to take care of some bookstore business and be back. They still haven't returned. So Felix passes the day writing stories about them saving people and being brave in the outside world. When Felix gets a whole carrot in his soup one day, he decides it is a sign from his parents that they are coming to get him. When Mother Minka sadly tells him it isn't a sign, he decides to leave the orphanage to find them.

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