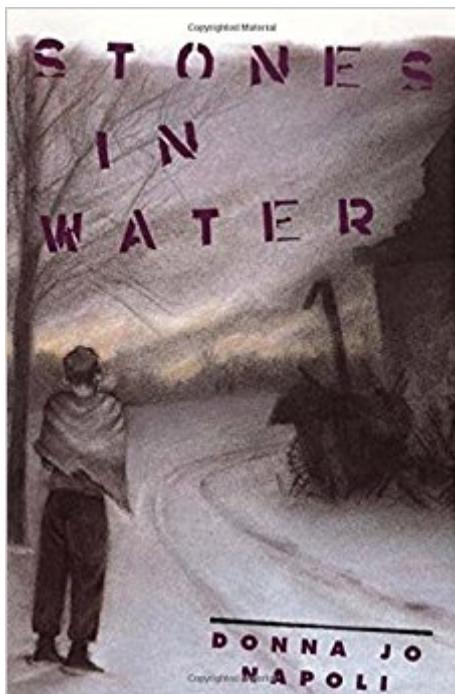


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# Stones In Water



## **Synopsis**

When Roberto sneaks off to see a movie in his Italian village, he has no idea that life as he knows it is over. German soldiers raid the theater, round up the boys in the audience, and pack them onto a train. After a terrifying journey, Roberto and his best friend Samuele find themselves in a brutal work camp, where food is scarce and horror is everywhere. The boys vow to stay together no matter what. But Samuele has a dangerous secret, which, if discovered, could get them both killed. Lovers of historical fiction will be captivated by this tragic, triumphant, and deeply moving novel.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

PW's boxed review called this story of a Venetian gondolier's son and two friends, one Jewish, who are forcibly taken by Nazi soldiers, "gripping and meticulously researched." Ages 10-14. (Nov.)

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Grade 4-9?Napoli, who has written in a variety of genres?fantasy, mystery, realistic fiction, legends?demonstrates that she has mastered historical fiction as well. Sneaking into the cinema to see an American Western during World War II has grave consequences for Roberto, a Venetian middle-school student, his brother, and two friends. The young male audience is trapped by German soldiers and transported by train out of Italy as cheap forced labor. The first project, constructing a tarmac, goes smoothly, despite wretched living conditions. Separated from his older brother, timid Roberto relies on his quick-thinking friend, Samuele. Both realize the necessity of hiding Samuele's Jewish identity from their captors and fellow prisoners. When a "shipment" of Polish Jews arrive and

are penned near the labor group, Roberto uses his ingenuity to help feed two Jewish girls with his meager rations. After Samuele is beaten to death trying to save Roberto's scavenged boots, Roberto escapes. He is a displaced gondolier trying to navigate his boat on a modern Styx, a hellish river journey with slim chances for survival. Few books view the Holocaust from this vantage point; few readers are familiar with the Venetian/Italian connection to the work camps. Others will be interested in this story as survivalism from the worst kind of nightmare. Many children will be ensnared by the author's paean to the art and value of storytelling. Samuele's legacy is the nourishing stories that keep Roberto alive. An intense, gripping tale. ?Marilyn Payne Phillips, University City Public Library, MOCopyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book was a very quick read for me and was interesting and well-researched. It is a good book for anyone who likes history, especially that of WWII. It's different than most Holocaust stories because it is set in Italy, which I think is almost ignored at this point in history. I also recommend it to more mature children because some of the content is a bit awkward. I think ages 10-14 would relate the most easily to Stones in Water.

I love this book! It was a really great story!

My son needed this book "in a hurry" for school. Delivery was earlier than expected and the book was in perfect shape. Thank you for the service!

This book will touch readers of all ages. An Italian boy is forced to face the troubles of war, and struggles to find his own way to survive and remain strong. Touching and well-written,... this is a fairly quick and easy reading, and is definitely worth it.

A book. What else to add. If you like the genre you like this as well.

Good product

I am often picky about what I read, but this book really satisfied me and it really tells a usually untold story about the Italians in WWII. The main character, Roberto goes on a journey as a laborer across northern Europe. Roberto is always consistent, the plot is strong and plays and you get strong

emotions from it. He makes you see through his eyes that not everyone working for the German soldiers believe in the same harsh views as most soldiers. Roberto's life in Italy is turned around when he and his friend Samuele gets captured by German soldiers at the movie theatre. Then they broad a train to Germany and on the way he sees terrible horrors. He and his friend then go to several work camps as they build airstrips across northern Europe. Roberto is always consistent through out the book. For instance, on page 31-32 after Memo, a kid Roberto knows calls Samuele, Enzo instead of his real name Roberto thinks, "Roberto blinked. He felt stupid, and that scared him worse. Of course he knew Samuele was a Jewish name. He just hadn't thought fast enough. He had to think fast. Much faster." And then later in the book it says, "It had been terrible luck that the wolf had fallen on his blanket. No. No, it wasn't a matter of luck. It was Roberto's stupidity." (p. 119). This tells us that he stays in character and doesn't suddenly learn to be better it takes time and he still makes some mistakes. Also, the plot is strong and plays in your head like a movie. The text says after all of the sudden the movie in the theatre stops and then "The hoots mixed with screams. German soldiers marched down the aisles. Soldiers, here in the theatre. [Enzo] Everything was loud, deafening-the confusion" (p. 15) I could really imagine the whole scene in which the German soldiers came rushing in. That's why I think the plot plays in your head like a movie. Also, you get a strong feeling from reading the book. In the book it says when Roberto wakes up "Enzo screamed. Roberto jumped to his feet. That's when he realized he was barefoot. They'd slit the bottom of his cement sack and stolen his boots. [Enzo] Enzo was fighting them. [Enzo] But Enzo was fighting for his boots-for his life." (p. 97-98). This made me feel angry at the people that were trying to steal the things that kept them warm and alive. Not only, that but they were seriously injuring Enzo in the process. This is a little sad, but Roberto learns to keep going no matter what even if you get pulled out of his home and forced to work hard he keeps on going and trying to return home. That is why I rate this book 5 out of 5 stars.

There are a few things I liked about this novel before I even opened it up. First, the cover caught my eye as I was scanning books at the library for inventory last week. The pain and the emptiness that is etched onto his face, the clothing that is fastened onto his body and those shoes, his shoes that are way too big for such a young child. It was Donna Napoli's name on the cover that struck another chord in my mind, for I had read

another one of her novels, one that I will never forget. It was The Wager and with that, I knew I had to read this. This was nothing like The Wager, this story centers on a group of Italian boys who had decided to attend an American movie in a town not too far from where they lived. Italy had just declared war on America and many older individuals were off serving their country. The movie had started when suddenly it got dark and German soldiers entered, ushering everyone out. Separated into groups, the four boys found themselves in a train car being driven farther from home. Amongst the four boys is a Jew, his star is back home and his identity is hidden for now. They have become prisoners, they are still boys yet they are working like men. They act alone but they are not alone. I like Donna FÃ¶rster's writing, it is carefree and effortless. I enjoyed the friendships and all the individuals that appeared within the novel. Everyone is acting alone, everyone wants what is best for them and friendship is not a priority for anyone. Making it to another day, is what is important and the connections the boys had with others had to be adjusted to account for this attitude. I felt that it was these connections that the boys had to these individuals that made the novel, I looked forward to where their travels would take them, always hoping that as they traveled, the war would end and they could go back home. This was a fast-moving story and I am glad that I picked it up. I think my favorite part was the sled. I smiled as I imaged what they must have looked like as they walked out of that village, their sled, the sled piled high with treasures.

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