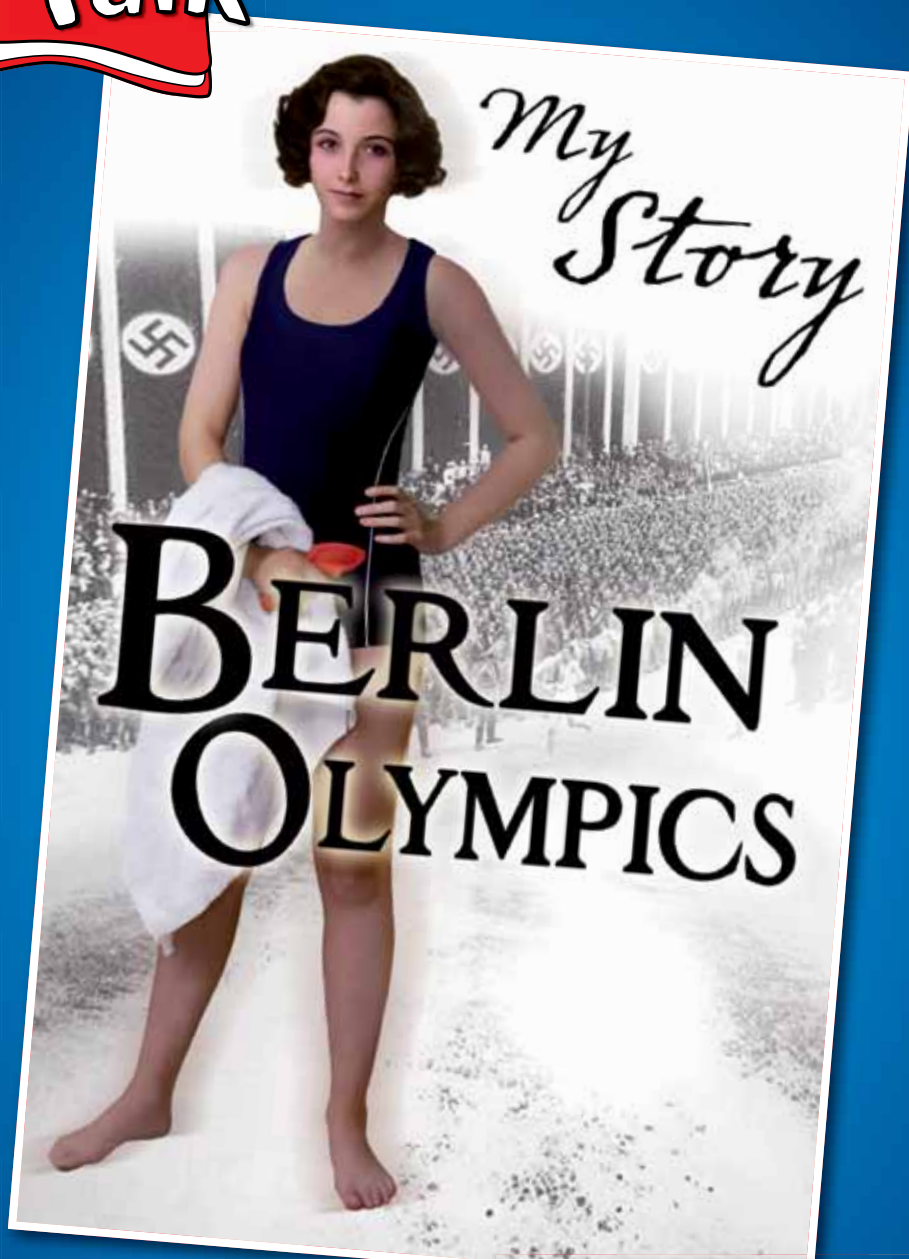


 SCHOLASTIC

**Book
Talk**



AGES 8+

**Engage and inspire your
pupils with a Book Talk!**



Look out for this book at your Fair!

AGES 8+

Price	£6.99 / €8.20
Case	Read On
Author	Vince Cross
Publisher	Scholastic Children's Books

Using this book in your classroom

Themes

This fictional account gives an insight into the controversial Berlin Olympics of 1936. The story includes lots of **historical detail**, touching on the **political situation** at the time, the rise of **Nazism** and in particular the worsening situation for **Jews** in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. This book will prompt readers to think about **Olympic values, loyalty, friendship** and the importance of **standing up to injustice**, however difficult it may be.

Summary

Ellie Rhys Davies is a London schoolgirl in 1935, and a very gifted swimmer. She and her best friend Sarah have to juggle their enthusiasm for swimming alongside the demands of school work and their home commitments. With exams looming, it's not easy to get the balance right! Ellie can be feisty and hot-headed, and she quite often comes into conflict with the teachers, and even with her kindly father who is struggling with the idea that girls should be allowed to excel in sports.

Fortunately Ellie and Sarah – and their new friend and fellow-swimmer Tara, who has just arrived from the US – have the support of a dedicated teacher, Mrs Williams. She is keen to make sure the girls get the opportunity to try out for the Olympic swimming team.

At the same time as the girls' preparations for the competition are becoming more intense, there are unsettling rumbles of change in the air. Sarah, who is Jewish and has relatives living in Germany, knows that things are becoming unsafe for Jews under Hitler. And through her father's work, Ellie comes into contact with the British Fascist leader Oswald Mosley and his companion Lady Diana Mitford. It doesn't take more than one meeting to convince her that their views on the treatment of Jews are abhorrent. Partly through Ellie's influence, her father comes to realize this too.

The girls fail to make the Olympic team, but they are selected to accompany the team to Germany to take part in a special race. Here they learn more unsettling facts about life under Hitler. They have to make up their minds whether it's best to take part in the Olympics and hope to persuade Hitler to change his ways through dialogue and diplomacy, or whether the right thing is to refuse to have anything to do with Hitler and the Berlin Olympics at all.

Did you know?

- Vince Cross worked in the music industry for much of his career. He has composed, arranged and/or performed thousands of songs for children, and he has also written words and music for a number of stage shows.
- This is Vince's sixth book in the My Story series.

The Story Session

1. Introducing the book

- Look together at the cover image. What clues can the children find to show what the story might be about? What role do they think the girl on the cover might play in the Olympics? Can they see Nazi swastikas on the cover? In which period of history do they think this story is set?
- Discuss what the children already know about Hitler, the Nazis and the Second World War.

2. Reading the story

- Read Ellie's first diary entry (Saturday, 29th June 1935). Then pause to discuss what the children have found out about Ellie and her life. Go on to read the second entry (Sunday, 7th July 1935). What extra information can the children find out? Why do they think Ellie is so excited about her performance at the swimming championships?
- Continue to read the diary aloud (or encourage the children to read it independently or in groups). Encourage the children to look out for details that show how Ellie's life was different from their own – for example, what is different about Ellie's school? Do they think they would have liked to go to this kind of school?
- Focus on the entries that feature Sir Oswald Mosley (Friday 27th and Saturday, 28th September 1935). Do the children think Ellie was brave to say what she did? Do they agree with her? Why do they think Ellie's father was upset? Do they think that he was beginning to change his mind about Mosley and his views? Compare this with the entry for Tuesday, 24th March 1936. What do the children think has changed?

3. Follow-up

- At the end of the book, Ellie says, 'I now think that there are some things in life you just can't know: all you can do is be your best self, flip a coin, and hope that you're doing the right thing.' Do the children agree with this? Can they think of any other examples of times when this might be true? Do they think that Ellie was being her 'best self' when she took part in the Berlin Olympics? Why, or why not?
- Ellie points out that she and Elke have similar names and perhaps are alike in other ways. Do the children think it's true that they are alike? Encourage them to put Elke in the hot seat – one child can take the role of Elke and the others can ask her questions about how she felt about Sarah, as a Jewish person, being present at the Olympics. They can ask her if she did deliberately poison Sarah, and if so, why she did that and what she feels about it now.
- Encourage the children to use the Internet and books to find out more about the Berlin Olympics and about the build-up to the Second World War. Useful websites include <http://ww2history.com/outbreak>.

YOU TELL US

- Did you use these notes to have a Book Talk in class?
- Were they helpful?
- Are there any changes you'd like to see to make them more useful?

We're always happy to hear your comments, so please email us at bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk