

Rose Blanche

Rose Blanche is a book written by Christophe Gallaz and Roberto Innocenti and published in 1985.

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Tier 2 terms

narrow, arrived, sparks, cobblestones, along, repair, collar, disappeared, crowded, clearing, carefully, pale, weary, clearing, swelled, overflowed

Web Version: <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts/rose-blanche>

My name is Rose Blanche.

I live in a small town in Germany with narrow streets, old fountains and tall houses with pigeons on the roofs.

One day the first truck arrived and many men left. They were dressed as soldiers.

Winter was beginning.

Now the trucks follow each other under the school windows. They are full of soldiers we don't know, but they wink at us.

They drive tanks that make sparks on the cobblestones. They are so noisy and smell like diesel oil. They hurt my ears and I have to hold my nose when they pass by.

Sometimes it seems things haven't really changed. But my mother wants me to be careful crossing the street between all the trucks. She says soldiers won't slow down.

Lots of times I walk by the river, just looking at it. Branches float along and sometimes old, broken toys. I like the color of the river. It looks like the sky.

The trucks are fun to watch. We stand in the doorway as they pass. We don't know where they're going, but we think they're going someplace on the other side of the river.

One day one of them stopped so the soldiers could repair the engine. A little boy jumped from the back of the truck and tried to run away. But the mayor was standing there in the middle of the street.

He grabbed the little boy by the collar and brought him back to the truck. Then he smiled at the soldiers without speaking. And they thanked him.

The sky was gray.

The soldiers climbed back into the truck; doors banged shut and it pulled away.

It happened very fast.

I wanted to know where the little boy went. So I watched the truck until it disappeared around the corner.

The street was crowded. Kids were playing. There were bicycles and farmer's tractors all over. It was noisy just like every day when school is out. But I walked on the sidewalk ignoring everyone – and no one saw me.

I walked for a long time, past the edge of town into the open fields, where I had never been. The clouds were gray. Everything was frozen. Sometimes I ran.

I followed the tracks into the forest and found a clearing.

Suddenly, electric barbed wire stopped me. Behind it there were some children standing still. I didn't know any of them. The youngest said they were hungry. Since I had a piece of bread, I carefully handed it to them through the pointed wires.

They all stood in front of long wooden houses. The sun was setting behind the hills. It was windy. I was cold.

Weeks passed by in the pale winter. Rose Blanche's appetite surprised her mother: she took more to school than she ate at home. All the bread and butter she could carry; even more jam and apples from the cellar.

Rose Blanche was getting thinner. In town, only the mayor was staying fat.

Everyone watched everyone else.

Rose Blanche hid her food in her school bag and sneaked out of school early.

By now she knew the road by heart. There were more children by the wooden houses, and they were also getting thinner behind the barbed wire fence. Some of them had a star pinned on their shirts. It was bright yellow.

When the snow melted and the streets were very muddy, the trucks full of weary soldiers drove only at night. This time in the other direction. They were coming with no lights on from the far side of the river, and they never stopped.

One morning all the people of the town fled, carrying pots and burlap bags and chairs. There were soldiers among them. Some had torn uniforms.

Some were limping. Some were in pain and asking for water.

Rose Blanche disappeared that day.

She had walked into the forest again.

Fog had erased the road. Rose Blanche was hopping around the mud puddles to keep her shoes clean.

In the middle of the woods, the clearing had changed. It was empty. Rose Blanche dropped her school bag full of food. She stood still.

Shadows were moving between the trees. It was hard to see them. Soldiers saw the enemy everywhere.

There was a shot.

At that moment in town, some other soldiers arrived. Their trucks and their tanks were also noisy, and they smelled like diesel oil. But their uniforms were a different color. And they spoke a different language.

Rose Blanche's mother waited a long time for her little girl.

The crocuses finally sprang up from the ground. The river swelled and overflowed its banks.

Trees were green and full of birds.

Spring sang.

Source

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TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

1. Question
What do you know about Rose?
2. Question
After school, Rose follows the truck with the little boy through the forest and into a "clearing." What do you think the word "clearing" means? What does Rose find in the clearing?
3. Question
What do you think the author means by, "In town, only the mayor was staying fat"?
4. Question
Are the soldiers that arrive at the end of the story the same soldiers from the beginning of the story? How do you know?
5. Question
What do you think happened to the soldiers from the beginning of the story?

TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Question

What do you know about Rose?

Answer

She lives in a German town, she goes to school, they watch the trucks full of soldiers from the school windows and she likes to walk by the river.

2. Question

After school, Rose follows the truck with the little boy through the forest and into a “clearing.” What do you think the word “clearing” means? What does Rose find in the clearing?

Answer

There are no trees in a clearing. She finds an area surrounded by barbed wire with wooden houses and hungry children—a concentration camp.

3. Question

What do you think the author means by, “In town, only the mayor was staying fat”?

Answer

Everyone else was growing thinner like Rose because they did not have enough food or were suffering in some way. But the mayor wasn’t, and he had all the food he needed, which is how he stayed fat.

4. Question

Are the soldiers that arrive at the end of the story the same soldiers from the beginning of the story? How do you know?

Answer

They are not the same. The story says, “some other soldiers arrived,” “their uniforms were a different color” and “they spoke a different language.”

5. Question

What do you think happened to the soldiers from the beginning of the story?

Answer

They left because the other soldiers were coming. It can be assumed that the boy who tried to run away from the truck was one of the children behind the barbed wire and the wooden houses were emptied the same time that the new soldiers arrived. So the first soldiers must have created the barbed-wire area and houses.