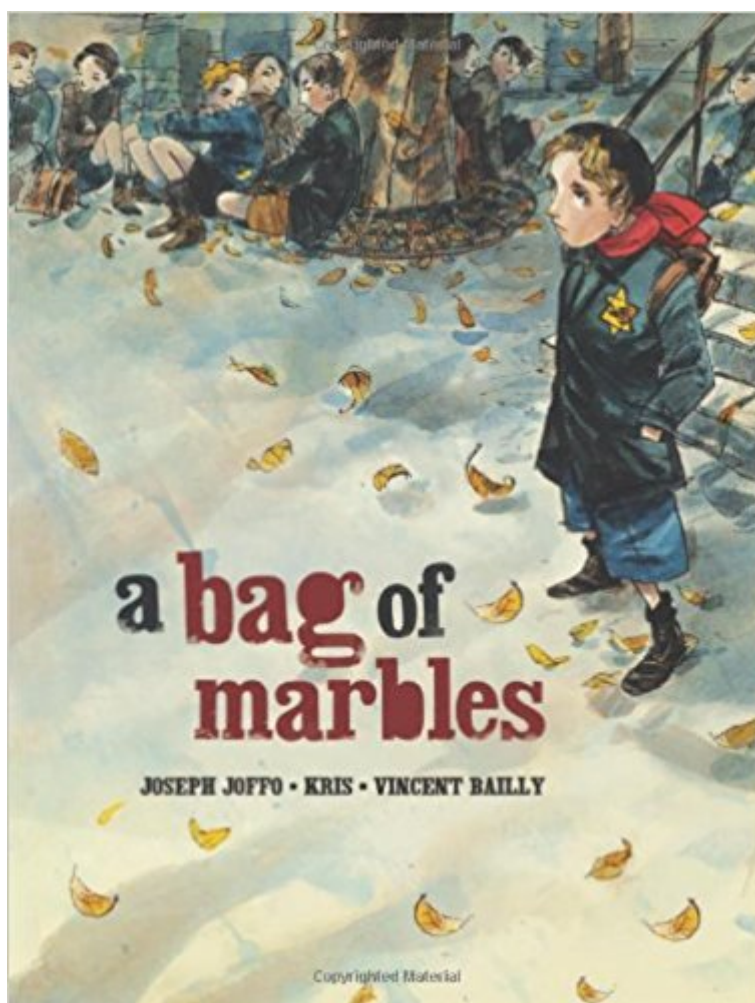


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A Bag Of Marbles: The Graphic Novel (Graphic Universe) (Junior Library Guild Selection)



Synopsis

"In 1941 in occupied Paris, brothers Maurice and Joseph play a last game of marbles before running home to their father's barbershop. This is the day that will change their lives forever. With the German occupation threatening their family's safety, the boys' parents decide Maurice and Joseph must disguise themselves and flee to their older brothers in the free zone. Surviving the long journey will take every scrap of ingenuity and courage they can muster. And if they hope to elude the Nazis, they must never, under any circumstances, admit to being Jewish. The boys travel by train, by ferry, and on foot, facing threats from strangers and receiving help from unexpected quarters. Along the way they must adapt to the unfamiliar world beyond their city and find a way to be true to themselves even as they conceal their identities. Based on an autobiographical novel by Joseph Joffo and adapted with the author's input, this true story offers a harrowing but inspiring glimpse of a childhood cut short."

Book Information

Series: Junior Library Guild Selection

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Customer Reviews

Gr 6-9—Ten years old at the start of the story, Joffo recalls his Jewish family planning their escape from Occupied France during World War II. Tension runs through the story as he and his brother set off on the long journey to the Free Zone, where they plan to meet up with their older brothers. Along the way the boys must hide their Jewish identity, evade train security, and find a passeur, or guide, to take them past guard posts and fences to safe territory. Readers are never

allowed to forget the danger the boys are in as they encounter friends and foes and attempt to discern whom they can trust. Bailly's painterly artwork is well suited to the compelling, well-told narrative. Unfortunately, it is crowded on dense, dialogue-heavy and tightly packed pages, preventing readers to view more closely the detailed, layered artwork. This title will appeal to readers interested in memoirs about World War II and has enough action to hold their attention. It's a welcome addition to graphic-novel collections, but layout problems preclude it from being a must-have.

—Liz Zylstra, County of Prince Edward Public Library, Picton, Ontario (c)
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Joseph Joffo was born in Paris in 1931. He is the author of several books, but he is best known for his memoir *A Bag of Marbles*, published in 1973. It has been translated into eighteen languages, and in 1975 it was adapted to film. Like many of Joffo's books, *A Bag of Marbles* was based on his life story. After the war Joseph, his mother, and his brothers returned safely to Paris. His father died in a concentration camp.

Jo crouched down on a cobblestone street in Paris taking careful aim with his last marble. He had lost the other ones to his brother, Maurice, and didn't want to lose his lucky one. Tears quickly came to Jo's eyes when Maurice pocketed the marble. "Ten-year-olds don't cry over marbles," Maurice exclaimed as he gave it back. It was time to hurry home to their father's barbershop and that dreaded homework. Outside the black boots hit the cobblestones on their way to Joffo's for haircuts. The skulls on the bands of their hats, the iron crosses on their pockets, and the swastikas could only spell trouble, trouble that their father was not unfamiliar with. One of the soldiers began to ramble on saying, "The war is rotten. The Jews are to blame." When Mr. Joffo told them that they were among Jews, their faces tightened and they soon left. Maurice's and Jo's nighttime stories from their father reminded them of the Russian pogroms and how their family was forced to flee. The stories were exciting and visions of the experience entered their minds. "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" was the motto that set the family free in France. Soon that very freedom would be threatened again by those who forced them to wear a yellow star. Jo and Maurice were banned from "the movies, the train," and began to be bullied and beaten. Their father had escaped the clutches of soldiers when he was seven and soon his sons would have to travel down a similar path. Their older brothers had already made it to the Free Zone. "Yes, my sons, you're going to go away. Today it's your turn." Money had been put aside for their journey to Menton, but

they would have to live by their wits. "There's one more thing you have to know," their father explained to them. "You're Jews, but you must never, ever admit to it. You hear? Never!" Would the Joffos once again escape the clutches of evil? This is the stunning, powerful story of Joseph Joffo and his escape from the Nazis. The tale is based on the true story *Un Sac de Billes* by Joseph Joffo. Told in a graphic novel format, the tension and excitement remain true to the much longer memoir. The tale is divided into two parts, the first concerning the long journey to the Free Zone, and the second once they arrived in Menton. Jo and Maurice, brothers who have to use their street smarts to survive, are very appealing young men. The panels of this novel are amazingly detailed and easily transport the reader back to 1940s Paris and environs. In the back of the book is a glossary, a brief discussion about France and the German occupation, and a map depicting Jo and Maurice's long journey. This book courtesy of the publisher.

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