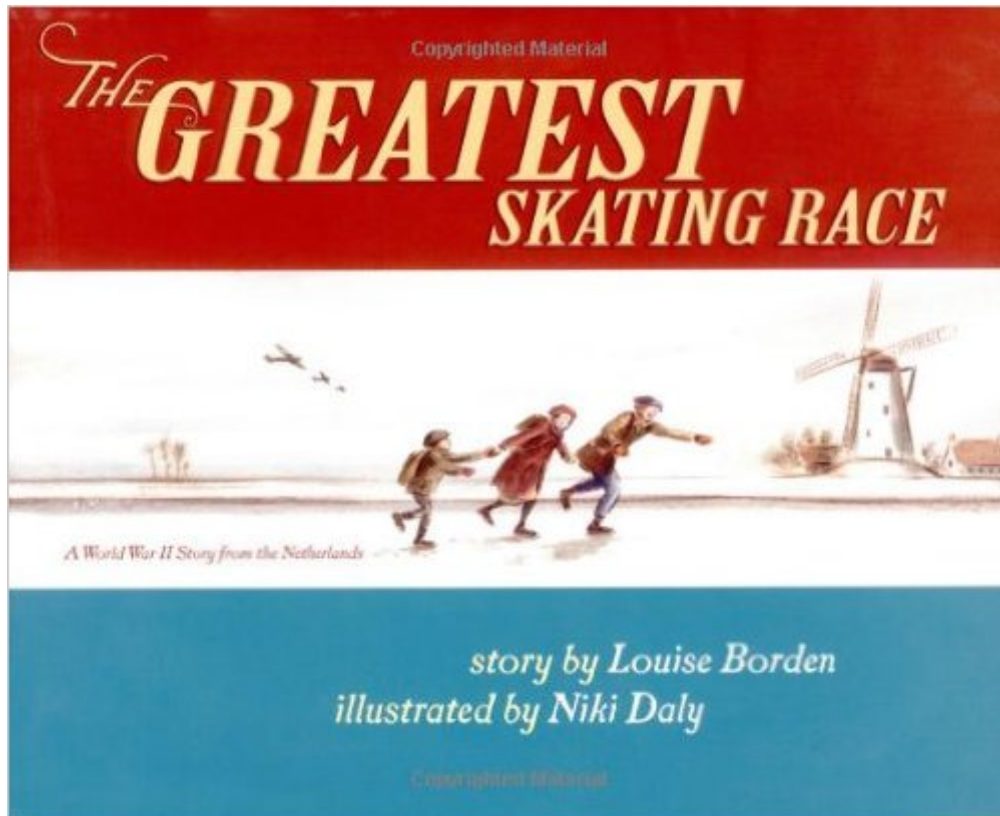


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The Greatest Skating Race: A World War II Story From The Netherlands



Synopsis

"You're a strong skater, Piet, and you have a quick mind. This is why I know you'll succeed in this important task. I wouldn't ask you to do this if I didn't know it could be done." In 1941 Piet, a young Dutch boy from Sluis, gets the assignment of a lifetime: He must skate along the frozen canals of the Netherlands and across the Belgian border, in order to guide two neighborhood children to their aunt's house in Brugge, where the children will remain for the duration of World War II. Their father has been taken by German soldiers, and the children are no longer safe in Sluis -- but the journey with Piet, past soldiers and enemies, is fraught with danger. Along the treacherous path to Belgium the three children skate using every bit of speed, courage, and strength they can muster. All the time they try to appear like innocent schoolchildren simply out for a skate, for if the German soldiers discover their escape plan, the children will be in grave trouble. During the journey Piet thinks about his hero, Pim Mulier -- the first person to ever skate the Elfstedentocht, the famous and prestigious Eleven Towns Race that takes place in his country. For years Piet has dreamed of proving that he is a skater as brave and strong as Pim Mulier -- but he had never imagined that his test would fall under such dangerous circumstances. Louise Borden's moving text captures all the tension, excitement, and fear that comes with Piet's mission, while Niki Daly's evocative illustrations bring the children and their perilous journey into vivid focus.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 750L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 48 pages

Publisher: Margaret K. McElderry Books (October 1, 2004)

Language: English

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Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (13 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Customer Reviews

Parents often find themselves amazed at the sheer number of WWII picture books available to kids today. Why the year 2004 alone was privy to such fabulous tomes as, "The Cats of Krasinski Square", by Karen Hesse and "The Greatest Skating Race", by Louise Borden. Usually such picture books are examinations of the Holocaust and/or Jewish oppression. Borden's book, however, takes an entirely different route. Concentrating on the German occupation in the Netherlands, the book shows how resistance and bravery can flower in children when the need is great enough. Though this book is far too lengthy and involved to seriously interest any child under the age of eight, I'd still recommend it to those tykes that can maintain their interest through a riveting race against time. Piet (pronounced "pete") has a single burning obsession that has yet to be thoroughly quenched. He loves to skate. This is not particularly peculiar in the Netherlands, of course. After all, he comes from a long line of skate artisans and often he traverses the many canals that run through his town. But Piet's real hope is to someday compete in the difficult Elfstedentocht race held in Friesland when the winters are cold enough. Piet's hero, Pim Mulier, once completed the 200 kilometer (roughly 125 mile) course in just 12 hours and 55 minutes and Piet's raring to do the same. But it's the second winter into WWII and the Netherlands are under German occupation. What's worse, a father of two kids in Piet's school was recently arrested by the Germans for passing on information to the British. This places the man's children in dire peril and their only hope is to somehow escape over the border to Belgium and then into the town of Brugge to safety. But how could two such children be able to find their way?

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