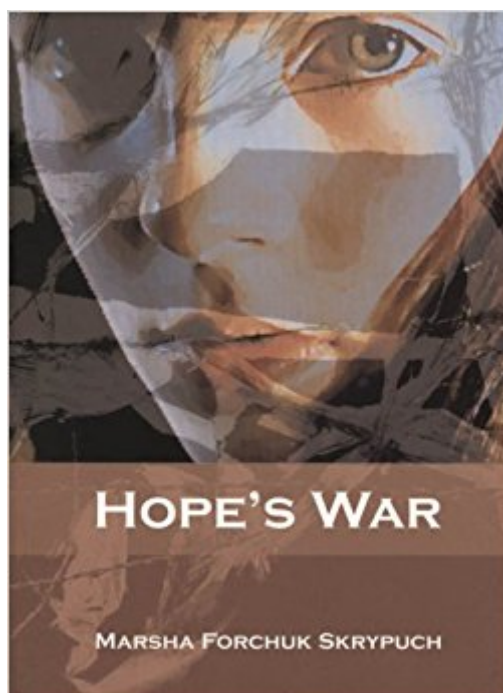


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Hope's War



Synopsis

Short-listed for the 2004 Rocky Mountain Book Award and for the 2003 Manitoba Young Readers' Choice Award and long-listed for the 2002 CBC Canada Reads People's Choice Book Kataryna Baliuk, a gifted fine arts student, is hoping to have a fresh start at Cawthra School for the Arts after a less-than-successful year at the neighbouring Catholic high school. But her hopes for a peaceful Grade 10 are shattered when she comes home from her first day at Cawthra and finds the RCMP interrogating her grandfather, Danylo Feschuk. Kat learns that Danylo is accused of being a policeman for the Nazis in World War II Ukraine, and what's worse, he is suspected of having participated in atrocities against civilians. When the story is exposed in the local newspaper, Kat and her family become the centre of a media storm. Her grades in school and her relationships with friends suffer. Her only support comes from her family and Ian, a classmate with whom she discovers she has more in common than just artistic promise.

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Age Range: 12 - 15 years

Grade Level: 7 - 10

Customer Reviews

Short-listed for the 2004 Rocky Mountain Book Award and for the 2003 Manitoba Young Readers' Choice Award and long-listed for the 2002 CBC Canada Reads People's Choice Book Kataryna Baliuk, a gifted fine arts student, is hoping to have a fresh start at Cawthra School for the Arts after a less-than-successful year at the neighbouring Catholic high school. But her hopes for a peaceful

Grade 10 are shattered when she comes home from her first day at Cawthra and finds the RCMP interrogating her grandfather, Danylo Feschuk. Kat learns that Danylo is accused of being a policeman for the Nazis in World War II Ukraine, and what's worse, he is suspected of having participated in atrocities against civilians. When the story is exposed in the local newspaper, Kat and her family become the centre of a media storm. Her grades in school and her relationships with friends suffer. Her only support comes from her family and Ian, a classmate with whom she discovers she has more in common than just artistic promise.

Kataryna's Grade 10 year is shattered when her grandfather is accused of being a policeman for the Nazis in World War II Ukraine and of perpetrating atrocities against civilians.

Imagine this scenario if you dare: You are 15 and have transferred to a new high school. Before you can make your way through the maze of teachers, students, courses, and cliques, you learn that the police have charged your 78-year-old immigrant grandfather with war crimes. Before you can make your way through the resulting maze of new emotions, questions, public scrutiny, and hearings, you learn that the government will deport your grandfather if it makes its case. To make its case, the government need not present incontrovertible proof or even strong circumstantial evidence. Tenuous innuendo is sufficient, for all the government must do is establish a remote probability that your grandfather lied during the immigration process about his activities in his former homeland. This probability can never be verified one way or the other, for the government has destroyed all the records. This is not another account of a Kafkaesque cold war regime or a cautionary tale about a twisted brave new world of the future. The powerful story that unfolds before teenager Kataryna (Kat) Baliuk's eyes in "Hope's War" is today's threatening reality for naturalized Canadian citizens who emigrated from Ukraine after World War II. (Naturalized U.S. citizens who emigrated from Ukraine live under a similar cloud.) A talented art student, Kat faces challenges of her own as she begins the 10th grade at the Cawthra School for the Arts after a stormy ninth-grade year at St. Paul's Catholic School. Her new classmates, with their diverse loyalties and cliques, already know about the incident that forced her to leave St. Paul's. Her grandfather Danylo has recently moved in with the Baliuk family after the death of his wife Nadiya (Hope). When Kat arrives home from her second day at Cawthra, she finds two RCMP officers from the department of immigration's war crimes unit interviewing Danylo about the forms he filled out 50 years ago. Multiple story lines intertwine in "Hope's War:" Kat must discover who her true friends are as she tries to fit in at school; Danylo must force himself to revisit the horrific days of the German occupation when 2.5 million

Ukrainians--600,000 of whom were Ukrainian Jews--were liquidated by the Nazi regime; the Baliuk family must pull together in the face of glaring headlines, protesters, hate mail and the impending deportation hearings to support a Danylo they may not know. Early on, Kat sneaks into her parents' bedroom and finds the official notice from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: "Kat dropped the paper back on the bed as if it were dirty. What did this mean? That her beloved grandfather was a war criminal? The paper talked about atrocities committed and collaboration and thirty days to respond." Did Danylo collaborate with the Germans occupying his Ukrainian village in 1943 and 1944? And if not, why is the RCMP claiming that he did? Author Marsha Skrypuch is in no hurry to weave together loose ends and the answers to such questions. Instead, she allows the story time to unfold naturally with grace, passion and building tension before Kat and the reader learn the truth and for whom it matters.

Award-winning Ukrainian-Canadian author Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch scripts on subjects which are based on true events (whether an anthology of memoirs, historical fiction, poetry, a picture book, or story based on a folktale)--they all share elements in common--they're enthralling, educational, and enjoyable. Historical fiction is one way of delivering the truth to the public. In *Hope's War*, her outstanding, well-researched, well-written historical fiction, the topic is the treatment of an alleged Nazi war criminal at the hands of the Canadian government, set against a background of the life of the accused's granddaughter, a high school sophomore. Written in a third-person narrative, high school sophomore, Kataryna Baliuk (called Kat), has transferred from neighboring St. Paul's Catholic High School to Cawthra School for the Arts. She's a gifted fine arts student hoping for a fresh start at Cawthra after a lackluster year and a bad experience the previous year at St. Paul's. Cawthra is considered to be a school of "self-important snobs." In fact, St. Paul's students call Cawthra the CGCC (Cawthra Golf and Country Club) and much tension exists between students from both schools, albeit both properties back unto each other. Life for Kat as a sophomore at Cawthra unfolds showing her to be a typical teen concerned with mundane events and daily decisions such as her school wardrobe, as readers encounter the characters in Kat's familial life, i.e., her older sister, Genya (known as Jenny, she was the perfect Ukrainian granddaughter, Danylo's malenka ptashka--his little bird), mother, Orysia (known as Iris), father, Walt, and her maternal grandfather, Danylo Feschuk, who loves gardening and picking mushrooms, but who has witnessed much in his earlier life, and now stands accused of war crimes. Her grandfather calls Kat *zolota zhabka*--golden frog. Kat is inconsistent in school, unlike her older sister Genya; but, it was Kat who visited daily her dying grandmother at the hospice, and it was Kat who loved to pick

pidpenky (mushrooms) with her dido (grandfather). As we later learn, picking pidpenky has special meaning for Danylo. After Danylo's wife dies, he comes to live temporarily with his daughter, Orysia, and her family, and it's while living with them that he becomes accused of being a Nazi war criminal. Daily living settles into a routine until one day when two men park in front of Kat's house. Danylo sees them. Thinking that they're Jehovah's Witnesses, and that it would be a pleasant opportunity for him to brush up on his English with them, he puts the tea kettle on as he waits for the door bell to ring, not knowing that the men in street clothes are RCMP officers. As Danylo lets them into the house, he takes a card from one of the men and reads, "Department of Immigration--War Crimes Unit." Puzzled, Danylo wonders what it could mean. They ask questions, they ask for details and dates; a tape recorder is turned on and off at various times. Danylo learns that he's accused of "obtaining Canadian citizenship by false representation" because he had "failed to divulge collaboration with German authorities" and that he had "participated in atrocities against the civilian population during the period 1941-1943 as an auxiliary policeman in German-occupied Ukraine," in Orelets, a village in the region of Volyn, Ukraine. Meanwhile, Kat settles in at Cawthra, and a classmate, Ian, asks her to do the set design for his piano solo for the Winter Concert. However, her dreams and hopes are soon shattered when Danylo Feschuk, her maternal grandfather, is not only accused by the RCMP of being a policeman for the Nazis in World War II Ukraine, but also is suspected of having participated in atrocities against civilians. The story becomes exposed in a local newspaper and life as she and her family knew it ceases to exist. Kat's grades plummet, and her relationships with friends take a turn for the worst. Together her family, Ian, a Cawthra classmate and a Goth, are the only ones to support Kat through this horrendous episode in her life. As the story develops, through flash backs, readers learn of Danylo's experiences as an auxiliary police officer for the Germans between 1941 and 1943. Readers are witnesses to life as it changes drastically for Kat and her family as they continue to practice their Ukrainian religion and customs through Danylo's subsequent trial and its ensuing verdict. Although the plaintiff doesn't produce a single person who witnessed atrocities allegedly committed by Danylo, and no eyewitnesses are presented to the alleged atrocities carried out by Ukrainian auxiliary police, and, in fact, one might wonder how Danylo was targeted with this accusation in the first place, all of the foregoing notwithstanding, the verdict is shocking to Kat and to her family. Life as known by the occupants of that white wooden house ceases to be as it had been. And, Danylo's life is changed forever, too. Following the novel is a two-page Author's Note which states that as of April 12, 2001, three Canadians are set to be deported and stripped of their Canadian citizenship. In all three cases, just as in the historical fiction, they are accused of Nazi war crimes notwithstanding the fact

that no evidence was presented--only this time, the occurrence is true. There is no appeal. The cases are those of Odynsky, Katriuk, and Oberlander. In a separate case, that of Kisluk, accusations were made and testimony was presented, but following the trial, when Kisluk was stripped of his citizenship, the witnesses who testified against him admitted that they had lied under oath since their testimony had been taken under the threat of torture by the former KGB. Mr. Kisluk died on May 21, 2001 maintaining his innocence. Please see the comment following this review for further information. A two-page Resource List in the back divides them into three categories: Web resources, Books, and Film. Stated is that the infoukes web site is the most reliable and comprehensive Internet resource for all things Ukrainian. Please see my comment following this review for further information. Acknowledgements span two pages and list the many people who introduced author Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch to primary documents dealing with Ukraine during World War II; the people who allowed her to interview them about their personal experiences; the people who shared with her their family stories of slave labor, terror, and everyday life under both Soviet and Nazi oppression; the people who gave her insight into specific aspects of the novel; the people who read through various drafts of her novel and helped her improve it; the people who loaned from their private collections photos which were used in *Hope's War*; the support of the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko for their support; and, her agent and her editor for their encouragement and support. Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch (member, Canadian Society of Children's Authors, Illustrators and Performers) has been a keynote speaker; a panelist; a Writer in Residence at St. John's Kilmarnock School, 2004-5; taught at the Maritime Writers' Workshop in July 2003; and, has been nominated for numerous awards, including: in 2007, CLA Canadian Children's Book of the Year Award finalist and nominee for the 2007 Silver Birch Express Award, *Aram's Choice*; in 2006, BC Stellar Award nomination for *Nobody's Child*; in 2004, was nominated for the Alberta Rocky Mountain Book Award, the Manitoba Young Readers' Choice Award, the Snow Willow Award, and CBC's Canada Reads People's Choice book) for *Hope's War*; in 2002, Nominated for the W.O. Mitchell Literary Prize for her body of work and mentorship of other writers; in 2001, recipient of Resource Links 'Best of the Best 2001' in picture book category for 'Enough'; and, her first young adult novel, *The Hunger*, was released to critical acclaim in 1999. In 2006, Ms. Forchuk Skrypuch was named Canadian Ukrainian Woman of Influence by the World Congress of Ukrainian Women's Organizations. Additionally, Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch is editor of an anthology called "Kobzar's Children: A Century of Untold Ukrainian Stories ('Kobzar's Children')" and contributor of two of its stories. Please see my review of that book, as well as my reviews of Ms. Forchuk-Skrypuch's other fine children's books, *Enough* and *Silver Threads*, which are picture

books. An additional picture book is entitled, *The Best Gifts*. Moreover, earlier novels include *The Hunger* and *Nobody's Child* (nominated for the Red Maple Award, the Alberta Rocky Mountain Book Award, and the B.C. Stellar Award). *Hope's War* received the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. Financial support was received from the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program, The Association for the Export of Canadian Books, and the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Book Publishers Tax Credit program. Heartily recommended for all with five stars plus--not just for young adults and not just for Canadians--*Hope's War* is a sensitively told story written in an enthralling, engrossing style sure to shed light on the war criminal issues in Canada; it's a fine addition to every library.

Addendum: Children may enjoy other books on Ukrainian topics, which I've reviewed--many of them have images taken by me in Ukraine. There are currently over twenty books listed on my Listmania list entitled, "Children's Corner--for the Young and the Young at Heart..." Sometimes, there are several editions of one book, so be sure to find the ones with a review by Mandrivnyk. To learn more about things Ukrainian, visit the Encyclopedia of Ukraine. Readers, you're also invited to visit each of my reviews--most of them have photos (with notes) that I took in Ukraine (over 600)--you'll learn lots about Ukraine and Ukrainians. The image gallery shows smaller photos, which are out of sequence. The preferable way is to see each review through my profile page since photos that are germane to that particular book/VHS/DVD are posted there with notes and are in sequential order. To visit my reviews: click on my pseudonym, Mandrivnyk, to get to my profile page; click on the tab called review; scroll to the bottom of the section, and click on see all reviews; click on each title, and on the left-hand side, click on see all images. The thumbnail images at the top of the page show whether photos have notes; roll your mouse over the image to find notes posted. Also, you're invited to visit my Listmania lists, which have materials sorted by subject. Additionally, both kids and adults will find it to be enjoyable and educational to learn the names and locations of the regions/oblasts of Ukraine and test their knowledge by solving the Interactive Puzzle map. Please see my comment below this review for further information. Moreover, to view excellent slideshows of the 25 regions (24 oblasts and one autonomous republic) of Ukraine (you may even set the length of the slideshow), please see my comment below this review.

Hope's War is a fantastic novel based on a grade 10 student, Kat Baliuk. Kat is a Ukrainian Orthodox child whose family immigrated to Canada. She lives in her home with Genya her sister, Walt her father, and her mother Orysia. Her grandfather Danylo Feschuk spends most of his time at Kat's house. His wife Nadiya died just this recent year. (In Ukrainian Nadiya means hope- *Hope's*

War) Kat attends the Cawthra School for the Arts. After getting home one day from school she finds her grandfather at home talking to two RCMP officers. They started interviewing him about his life during World War II. It brought back horrible memories, but she didn't hear them during the interview. Danylo felt pain as he answered questions for hours and the officers recorded the conversation. Once Kat saw them, she waved them away, and told them to leave her family alone. This isn't over, they answered. The government has decided to search Canada for suspects of which have something wrong with their immigration forms, and are trying to prove many Canadians who have worked with the Nazis or done something wrong during the war. People are sending junk mail and rude pictures to his house, and under the doormat Kat found a slip of paper that said murderer. On Ukrainian Christmas Eve they are startled by a protester who says Nazis live here. On Christmas day the newspapers are flooded with stories about Danylo, and a campaign has been started against him. A hearing is called, and even though Danylo is innocent without any real proof on either side, what will be the final decision in court? Read this great, realistic fiction to find out! ...

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