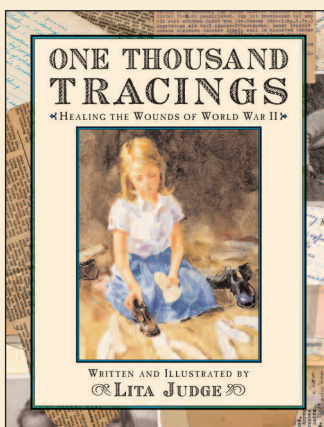


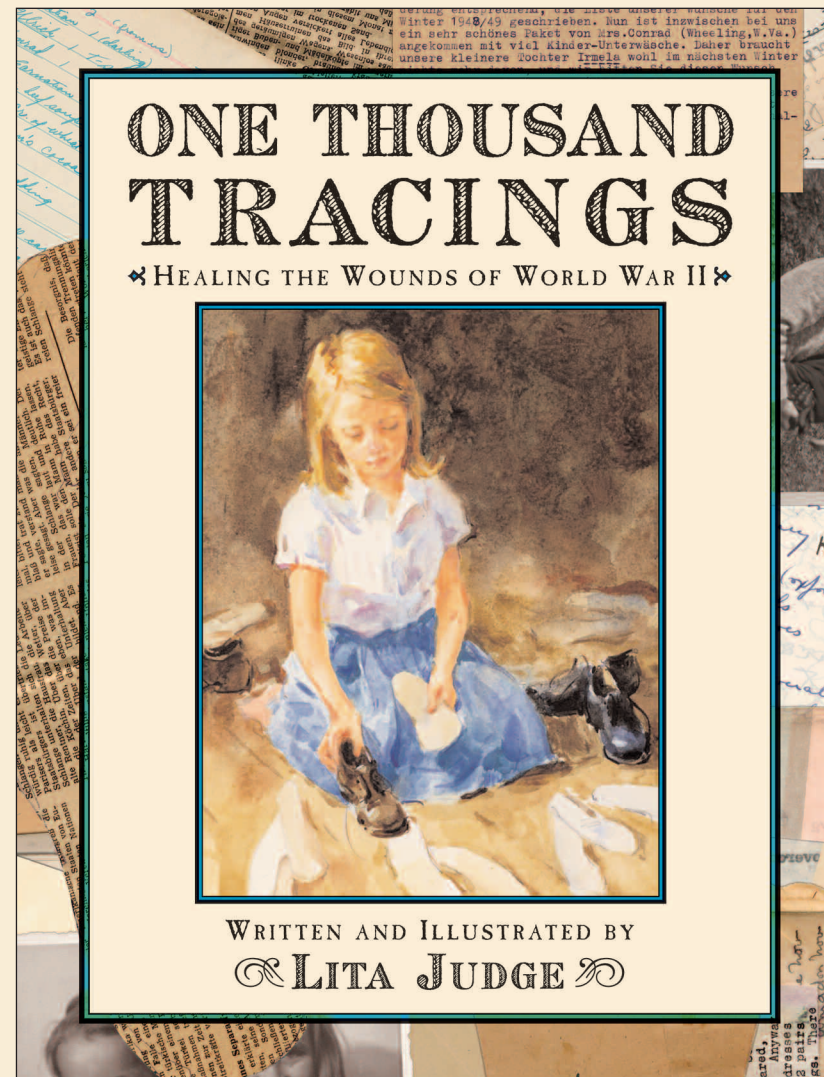
This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and author of *Reaching for Sun*. Visit her Web site at [www.tracievaughnzimmer.com](http://www.tracievaughnzimmer.com) to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.



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## HYPERION BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

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## DISCUSSION GUIDE

HYPERION BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

## ABOUT THE BOOK

When author-illustrator Lita Judge discovered hundreds of tracings of feet in her grandparents' attic, she was intrigued. Once she learned the story behind them, she was inspired to share it.

In the aftermath of World War II, many Europeans were homeless and starving. This is the story of one American family's triumphant effort to relieve their suffering. They sent packages of food, clothing, and shoes to their friends in Germany and offered to help others. Soon, shoe tracings from all over the continent started pouring in to the modest Midwest farm. With so many in need, the family enlisted the help of American friends. Ultimately, thousands of people on both sides of the Atlantic were touched by this remarkable process.

Illustrated with a combination of paintings and collages of original photographs and foot tracings, this moving story is a granddaughter's tender tribute to her grandparents, who organized this relief effort. By sending hope and kindness, they began healing the wounds of war. This book is a powerful reminder of the importance of humanitarianism during wartime.

## ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide includes discussion questions intended to provoke thought and insight into the themes of the book, which include hope, helping others, sacrifice, and cooperation.

## PRE-READING

Have you ever heard of a relief effort? If not, can you imagine? What types of relief efforts have you seen sponsored by family, friends, or a place of worship? How do people get involved? How could you?



## DISCUSSION GUIDE

- 1 What were the tracings? Why do you think Lita's grandparents used tracings instead of sizes to communicate what they needed?
- 2 Why were people in Europe still suffering even though the war had ended? How did the war change many people's lives?
- 3 What else, besides shoes, did the family send? Why? Have you ever sent anything to someone who needed it? What was it?
- 4 Why did Mama work so late, even at night? What could she do to help? How can you help others?
- 5 How did people in America who couldn't afford to send money still manage to help? Why do you think it is often true that people who have the least to give are the most generous?
- 6 Why was Eliza's mother concerned about her? What did the narrator in the story do to make Eliza feel better? How was this gift more meaningful than just a doll? How can people receive hope from small acts of kindness?
- 7 What everyday item excited Eliza's family? Were you surprised by how excited they were about a little bar of soap? How does this reveal the level of difficulty in their lives?
- 8 Over time, fewer and fewer tracings arrived from Europe. Why? What did this mean? Was this good or bad news?
- 9 One day Eliza wrote about the most exciting news since the war. What did she share? How did they celebrate in America? Why was it fitting that Mama got red shoes for Christmas?
- 10 Which illustration is your favorite? Why? Why do you think Lita Judge decided to use the palette of colors that she did? How do those colors add to the meaning?

# PROJECTS

## LANGUAGE ARTS

### BE SAFE ON THE INTERNET:

- You *must* get permission from a parent before participating in any of the pen pal Web sites.
- Never put your phone number, address, or the name of your school in an e-mail.
- Use your first name or a nickname only. Do not give your last name.
- Never agree to meet anyone in person. Tell an adult if someone asks for this information.
- You can stop e-mailing at any time.

Here are some great Web sites that offer kids the chance to write letters to someone from another country:

- [www.agirlsworld.com](http://www.agirlsworld.com)  
*A Girl's World*—Letters can be exchanged here without revealing an e-mail address, (membership fee required).
- [www.angelfire.com/pq/caitiskingdom/kate/](http://www.angelfire.com/pq/caitiskingdom/kate/)  
*KATE* (stands for Kids Around the Earth)—This is a free CyberPal site for kids five to sixteen.
- [www.kidsmc.com/penpal/](http://www.kidsmc.com/penpal/)  
*Kid's Media Club* offers pen pals from 180 countries.

Helping others:

- [www.onewarmcoat.org](http://www.onewarmcoat.org)  
Here you can work together to provide coats for people who need them.
- [www.freethechildren.org](http://www.freethechildren.org)  
This organization reaches out to children across the world and encourages young people to bring about positive social change.
- [www.Heifer.org](http://www.Heifer.org)  
Organize an effort to help children in need right now by changing their families' finances permanently with your gifts of livestock.

## HISTORY

Create a timeline of the story that intersects with the timeline of the twentieth century. Have children add their birth dates and those of family members (perhaps going back as far as great-grandparents) to see the connection of this time period to their lives.

## MATH

Solve these *One Thousand Tracings* word problems:

- If fifty tracings come in—one for each person—how many pairs of shoes must Mama find?
- If Mama has found fifteen pairs of shoes but only three pairs fit in a box, then how many boxes must Mama find in order to ship them?
- Mrs. Greenberg has figured out that for every ten jars of beans from her garden she can afford to ship six pairs of shoes. How many beans must she sell to ship a dozen shoes? Two dozen?



## AUTHOR INTERVIEW

### 1 You grew up in pretty remote landscapes in Alaska and the West. How has this influenced your work?

I grew up a long way from town, so it was difficult to have friends visit. Instead, I explored the woods and watched wildlife, read a lot, and even created imaginary friends to play with. And I often helped my grandparents with their research. They were ornithologists, and we worked in the marsh, banding hawks and owls.

These experiences taught me to appreciate the beauty of the natural world. I recorded my observations by drawing, painting, and writing. Long, quiet hours spent watching birds from a cold, cramped hiding place gave me the discipline to work hard. Being alone in nature fueled my curiosity and creativity.

### 2 When you found the box of tracings did you know you'd found a book, too?

The moment I uncovered the box of tracings, I wanted to write about it. I knew each foot tracing represented a real person who had been helped by my grandparents. There were also letters of gratitude from Europeans. Some of the letters included pictures of children, and I was overwhelmed by their faces smiling back at me. I wanted to write about it, because I wanted to find out more, to uncover details about how my grandparents had accomplished this huge effort. My grandparents were gone, I could no longer ask them about the relief effort. I wanted to know them better by uncovering the truth.

I decided to write it as a picture book later, after I had learned more about the relief effort; I wanted to share this story with children. It was remarkable how my grandparents banded together with friends and neighbors to help so many more people than they could have helped on their own. It was also remarkable that the thank-you letters expressed how the packages gave the Europeans hope after the despair of war. The kindness and friendship that came with each package was as important to them as the much-needed food and clothing.



### 3 Is it easier for you to translate your ideas into picture or words? Why?

The pictures always come easier to me than the words. I've been drawing ever since I can remember, but because I'm dyslexic, writing came later for me. My ideas for stories usually come to me when a picture pops into my imagination. Then I have to set about capturing the idea in words. I work on the storyboard for a picture book alongside the writing, and must make an effort to not let the drawings get ahead of the words. I want to leave illustration ideas open long enough for the strength of the words to develop.

I think the pictures are easier for me because I have a strong visual memory. I remember things in pictures more than words. I loved drawing animals and birds when I was young. We moved and traveled a lot when I was a child, and I think my love for the beauty of the places I saw developed this visual memory.

### 4 Which authors and illustrators have most influenced your work?

The author that influenced my work the most was my grandmother, Fran Hamerstrom. Not because of her writing style, but because I loved watching her write when I was a child. I loved being a part of her work, reading the manuscript and offering my thoughts. Though I didn't get a chance to share my writing with her, she made me want to be a writer. Gary Paulson, Karen Hesse, and Mary Oliver are my favorite authors now. The beauty of their words is a constant inspiration to me.

Beatrix Potter is my favorite illustrator. As a child I disappeared into the stories she created through her pictures. I also love other English illustrators from the turn of the century, like Arthur Rackham, and Harry Roundtree, because they drew so beautifully. Classical Russian painters like Repin and Serov have been a great influence. I went to Russia for several weeks to study their art in museums, making sketches and copies of their work to learn how they created such beautiful paintings.

### 5 What advice do you have for young writers and artists?

Write and draw every day. It takes years of practice to learn to see and to eventually paint and write in your own unique way. Read, read, read, and look at beautiful art. Experiment and try new things with your writing and painting. Have hobbies and interests that fill you with interesting experiences. Your skills as a writer and artist will grow out of the activities you love doing.