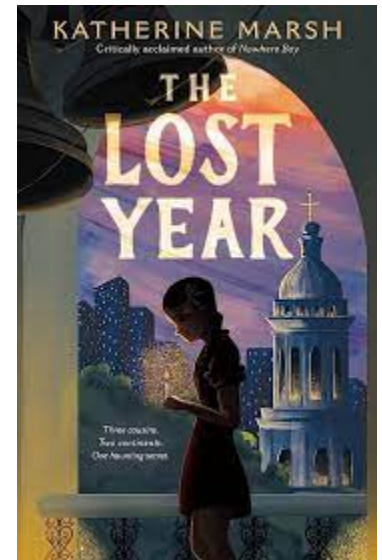


The Lost Year

By Katherine Marsh

The setting takes place in two different years, 2020 and 1932 in three different towns and a city. In Kyiv, Ukraine lives Mila. At that time in 1932, it was not a large city, just a big town that struggled during the Ukrainian famine. Then in the same year in Brooklyn NY lives Helen who she and her family live during the Great Depression. Now, in 2020, Matthew lives with his mom and GG while his father is in Paris doing a news report on COVID 19. The social setting is limited in Mila and Matthew's living area since Mila is in the USSR and Matthew is cooped up inside during a pandemic. Helen's social setting is more open since she goes to in person school and has little, but a few friends. The entire story does take place in the past although Mila and Helen's stories are far more in the past than Matthew's.



The three main characters of the story are Mila, Helen, and Matthew. All of them are dynamic characters since their views change throughout the story. Matthew at first doesn't believe his great grandmother had anything interesting about her past. But when his mom punished him in the form of having him help her unpack her boxes of stuff, he discovers a photo of her past that she tells him about and his views on history change entirely. For Mila, it is the fact that she lived in Ukraine in the USSR in 1933 and there was a rebel group called the Kulaks and her and her father along with most of the people hate them. But she found out one of them was her long lost cousin and she along with the Kulaks and the rest of Ukraine were starving. She now wants to help them and her cousin against her father's will. For Helen, she first believed that despite the depression in America at the same time period of 1933 that the rest of the world is fine. But then her father received a letter from Ukraine. It is their other family members and they are starving. American reporters have taken trips there and they say nothing is wrong but Helen does some research to find out that they were lying and people are really starving. That is how the main characters' views change throughout the story.

The main problem of the story is that people in Ukraine are being starved by the soviet government. The main Characters Helen and Mila tried to help the starving people by sending money and sheltering them. As Matthew tries to uncover what happened and who his great grandmother really is. It was not easy to solve this problem. It took time

and Mila was betrayed by her caretaker Dasha resulting in her dad being sent away to a prison camp and her and Nadiya in an orphanage. The solution to this problem was that Mila was infected with typhus in the orphanage and Nadiya took care of her. But one day she awoke in the hospital and Nadiya had caught the disease from her. Nadiya died and in order to survive, Mila pretended to be her since they both looked alike. Helen's father had come to save Nadiya from America and to escape Mila pretended to be Nadiya and left with him and lived to be one hundred years old. Matthew thought his great grandmother's name was Nadiya but she was actually Mila.

The theme of the lost year is about survival in tough situations and acceptance. For example, When Mila pretended to be Nadiya she had to accept she would never see her father again. She did this to survive instead of dying in the orphanage . Matthew GG was actually Mila not Nadiya as even her granddaughter, (Matthews mom) thought.

Some things I like about the book are that it always keeps you on your toes since there are three characters. Whenever there was a cliffhanger in one of their stories you would have to read about the other characters before finding out what happened. I wasn't that big of a fan of all the storylines. It was kind of hard to follow like when something happened with one character it somehow tied into the other which was sometimes confusing. The book was actually believable but never predictable and anything could happen. There were always twists and turns. I also enjoyed the ending. It fit well with Matthew finding out the secret that his grandmother kept. My favorite part specifically was when Matthew found out his great grandmother wasn't Nadiya but actually Mila who pretended to be her to escape prison. I didn't make any connections to real life but the Ukrainian famine did happen and it is based on a true story. Overall, I give this 4.5 out of 5 stars. It was good but kind of confusing.