

*A conversation with author*  
**Angela Cerrito**



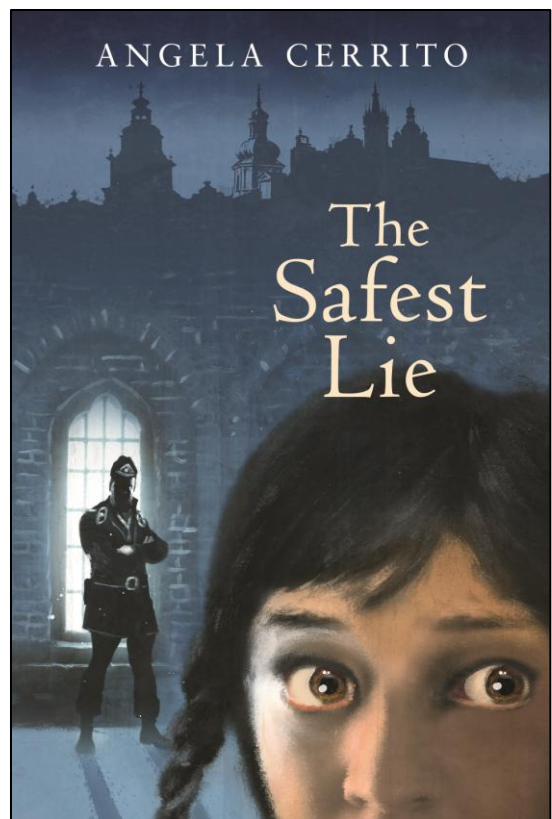
*Angela Cerrito's second novel for young readers, THE SAFEST LIE, tells the story of a young girl who is smuggled out of a Warsaw ghetto and struggles to both hide and hold on to her Jewish identity. Cerrito discusses her process of writing the novel, including meeting the book's inspiration, real-life WWII hero Irena Sendler.*

**Angela, please tell us about your new book, THE SAFEST LIE.**

THE SAFEST LIE follows nine-year-old Anna Bauman's escape from the Warsaw ghetto during WWII. For three years, Anna struggles to portray her new identity to others. At the same time, she is determined to remember her past and hold on to her true self.

**THE SAFEST LIE was inspired by the true story of WWII hero Irena Sendler. How did you first learn about Irena, and when did you know you wanted to write a novel based on her story?**

I read about Irena Sendler in a magazine in 2004 and knew immediately I wanted to write about her and the children she helped rescue. I wasn't certain at first that the project I was working on would become a novel. In the end, I learned that a fictional account from the point of view of a child Irena helped save was the most honest way to tell this story.



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**You had the opportunity to interview Irena Sendler in Poland. Tell us about that.**

Imagine interviewing your hero, someone you weren't sure you'd ever be able to meet. It was an honor to speak with Irena. We discussed the child rescues but also spoke about her family, life and current events. At 95, Irena was strong, forceful and as determined as ever.

**You also did research at the Jewish Institute in Warsaw. During your research, what was the most surprising or interesting thing you learned?**

Most of my time at the Institute was spent pouring over testimonies of children taken at the end of the war with the help of translator Ewa Prokop. We were both surprised to hear the horrors of war through the voices of the children. In telling us of their own survival, each child told of so many others—parents, sisters, brothers, friends and neighbor—who were killed (sometimes right before the eyes of the children relating the events) or sent to the death camps where they perished.

**What do you hope young readers will take away from this book?**

There may be times when circumstances or other people try to define or change who you are; even in the most difficult situations, stay true to yourself.



While doing research for the book, author Angela Cerrito and her daughter (right) met Irena Sendler (left) in 2005.

**If you could give any advice to young authors, what would it be?**

Write for yourself. Write the story you want to tell. If you want to write comedy, be sure the words you put on the page make you laugh. If you want to write a thriller, write until your heart pumps furiously and you find yourself holding your breath. If you want to write a tear-jerker, write so your own tears dot the paper beneath your pen or drip into the keys of your keyboard.

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