



The World Entire

A True Story of an Extraordinary
World War II Rescue

By Elizabeth Brown
Illustrated by Melissa Castrillón

About The Book

Everyone knows Oskar Schindler and his famous list, but few have heard of Aristides de Sousa Mendes—a Portuguese diplomat who saved the lives of thousands during World War II. This magnificently illustrated picture book biography tells a moving story that resonates profoundly today.

“He who saves a single life, saves the world entire.” — *The Talmud*

Here is the true and powerful story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who, against his government’s commands, helped refugees flee France to escape the Nazis by granting visas that allowed them entry into Portugal. Among those he rescued were people familiar to us today, including the artist Salvador Dalí and the creators of *Curious George*.

Over twenty-three days in 1940, Aristides de Sousa Mendes committed an incredible act of heroism, defying his government’s orders and putting his family’s lives in peril to do what he felt he must. “I could not have acted otherwise,” he is quoted as saying. He and his family paid dearly for it, but Aristides never regretted his actions, believing to the very end of his life that every life is worth saving. In the first book for children about this extraordinary individual, beautifully crafted text and vivid illustrations combine to illuminate a little-known story that deserves to be told.

About This Guide

This curriculum guide contains pre-reading engagement and background information, discussion strategies, research activities, and creative projects applicable to various curricula. *The World Entire: A True Story of an Extraordinary World War II Rescue* can be shared through reading aloud or by students reading the book independently. This picture book biography is appropriate for a range of ages, particularly children ages 8-12. The before, during, and after activities listed can be modified for this range of grade levels. The National Curriculum Standards for social studies were considered in creating this guide, particularly Themes 1, 2, 6, and 10 (<https://www.socialstudies.org/standards/national-curriculum-standards-social-studies-introduction>).



Before Reading

Geographic Location

Locate Portugal, Spain, and Bordeaux, France, on a map to assist students in understanding the geographic locations of the countries and regions during World War II. These are the areas featured in *The World Entire*. Providing the geographic relationship these countries have to each other will assist in comprehending the distance refugees had to travel to safety. The website <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/gallery/france-maps> indicates how these areas were positioned as the Nazis continued to move through Europe during the war.

Cover Reveal

Show the cover of *The World Entire: A True Story of an Extraordinary World War II Rescue*. Explain to students that the time frame for the story is June and July 1940. Discuss how many years ago World War II occurred. Then ask students the following questions:

- How does the cover illustration show a historical setting? Look at the clothing the people are wearing. Are those types of clothes worn today?
- What mood or tone do the colors evoke? What kind of story do you think this will be?
- Can you describe the four scenes depicted on the cover? Where is the setting of the story?
- Why do you think the title is written in cursive? Who do you think is holding the pen?
- Does the cover offer any clues about the story's conflict or themes? Does it make you want to know more?
- When we open the book, we see a bottle labeled "ink." What else do you see on the end pages?
- What questions do you have before we begin reading *The World Entire*?

Contextual and Principled Understanding

Aristides de Sousa Mendes was a diplomat who worked in Bordeaux, France. His role as a diplomat was to review requests of individuals who wanted to travel to Portugal. Sometimes this involved stamping a passport or issuing a visa. Describe to students how the Nazis were invading countries such as France, which forced people to become refugees by fleeing their homes and seeking a safe place, such as Portugal. Many of the refugees could be captured by the Nazis and sent to camps to be tortured and killed, especially those who were Jewish. Ask students, "What would you do if you were a diplomat and could provide a visa for refugees to enter Portugal, but your government would not allow you to do so? What kinds of risks would you be willing to take to help others?"



During Reading

Golden Lines

Author Elizabeth Brown's text offers compelling words, phrases, and passages to tell the story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes. As students hear the story read aloud or read it independently, have them identify words, sentences, phrases, or passages that evoke a response or reaction. These could:

- be very descriptive (helps you see, smell, feel, taste, or hear something in the story)
- sound poetic
- connect with your life
- remind you of another book (or movie, video, or television show)
- generate wonderings
- make you sad
- cause you to stop and think

Questioning the Author

Prompting students to pose questions while reading a text improves comprehension by critiquing the author's writing and prompting discussion and interactions. To prepare for this strategy, pre-read *The World Entire* and identify where students should stop, think, and gain a deeper understanding of the text. Ask initial questions to open the discussion (Does this make sense to you? What do you think the author is attempting to say here?). Then continue with follow-up questions to assist students in creating meaning (Why do you think the author chose to use this phrase or wording on this page? Did the author tell us why?). Students can also "question the author" by generating and answering questions, discussing them with others, and then revising their thinking based on the responses.

Question	My Thoughts with Evidence from the Text	Others' Thoughts with Evidence from the Text	Revised Thinking

Powerful Quote

"He who saves a single life, saves the world entire" is a quote that is included at the end of *The World Entire*. This is a well-known saying from the Talmud that emphasizes the profound value of each individual life and the far-reaching impact that saving a life can have. Discuss with students what this quote means to them. Ask, "Why do you think the author chose to use a portion of the quote in the title of the book?"



After Reading

Artistic Expression

The illustrations for *The World Entire: The True Story of an Extraordinary World War II Rescue* were rendered in pencil, then digitally colored. Illustrator Melissa Castrillón effectively uses color to transport readers to another time in history, create emotional connections, and promote an understanding of the events that occurred during the war. Additionally, the art element of line guides the reader's eye across the page and illustrates the arduous journey of the refugees. The use of perspective highlights story elements in the foreground and background, while a bird's-eye view allows Sousa Mendes to gain an understanding of the number of refugees seeking a visa. After reading this powerful biography, have students revisit the story and conduct an illustration walk to discuss:

- As the pages of the book are turned, ask students to observe the use of color. What colors are used to depict Aristides de Sousa Mendes's family at home? At what point in the story do the colors change? What are the colors now? Why did the illustrator use different colors at the beginning, middle, and end of the book?
- Color is used consistently for each of the characters. Examine the different colors the characters are wearing. Is it possible to identify the characters in the illustrations by the colors of their clothing? How do color and lines assist in understanding the mood of the characters?
- Stroll through the book again to explore how line is used in the illustrations. Are the lines consistent throughout the story? What shapes do you see? How do the lines create movement?
- Return to the end pages at the front of the book and compare them to the end pages at the back. What is different between the two illustrations?
- Identify how perspective is used as a storytelling device. What viewpoint does perspective offer to the characters and to the reader?

Story Map

After reading *The World Entire: A True Story of an Extraordinary World War II Rescue*, have students respond to the book using a story map to demonstrate their understanding of the story elements of setting, character, problem/conflict (plot), significant events in the story, and the solution.



Story Map

Setting

WHERE:

WHEN:

Characters

Problem/Conflict

Event 1

Event 2

Event 3

Solution



Devise an Action Plan

In *The World Entire*, Aristides de Sousa Mendes took action when there was a problem and a need to help others. Empowering students to create an action plan to address conflicts is a way to foster valuable life skills such as problem-solving, communication, and social-emotional learning. Here are the steps in creating an action plan:

1. Identify the problem or conflict. Why do they think it is a problem? (Problems could include bullying, not being kind to others, or even environmental issues.)
2. Discuss why this problem is occurring. Help students understand that they should consider perspectives other than their own.
3. Brainstorm possible solutions. What could be the outcome of each solution?
4. Generate action steps. How can the problem be resolved? Will students work independently or in small groups? How will communication be a part of the plan?
5. Implement the plan.
6. Evaluate and refine the plan. What worked? Were there challenges in implementing the plan? What's next?

Heroes of the Holocaust One Pager

Aristides de Sousa Mendes was truly a hero who placed his and his family's lives in peril. There were a number of heroes who helped people escape the Nazis during World War II. Some individuals, like Sousa Mendes, issued visas while others helped to hide children and put their lives in jeopardy for others. Research a hero of the Holocaust to complete the one-pager, including facts about the hero, a quote, and their heroic actions. A few heroes featured in picture books include Chiune Sugihara, Gino Bartali, Nicholas Winton, Irena Sendler, and Janusz Korczak.



Where did you find your information?

Where did the person live?

Name of the Hero

What did the person do to make them a hero?

Quote by the person:

One interesting fact:

Another interesting fact:

Four words to describe the person and his/her actions:

One thing that surprised you about the person:



Additional Website and Resources:

The Sousa Mendes Foundation website offers a free PowerPoint and curricular unit for teachers:

<https://sousamendesfoundation.org/attention-teachers/>

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“He who saves a single life,
saves the world entire.”

—*The Tasmud*

