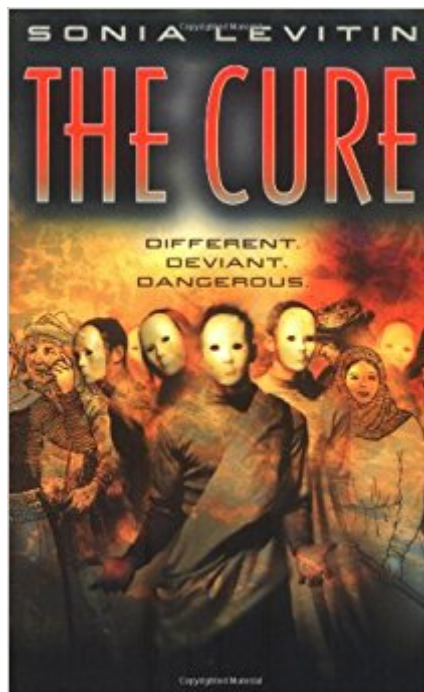


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# The Cure



## Synopsis

"You are a criminal, Gemm 16884--aggressive, hostile, nonconforming. We have noted tendencies toward diversity in your gait, in your dreams, and most especially in your repeated persistence in"--the Elder cleared his throat--"making music." Branded a deviant--and therefore a threat--to the utopian society of Conformity, Harmony, and Tranquility that exists in the year 2407, Gemm 16884 is given the choice between being recycled or undergoing a painful and mysterious cure. Gemm chooses the cure, and suddenly finds himself living the life of Johannes, a 16-year-old Jewish musician in Strasbourg, Germany, in 1348, at the onset of the Black Death. As the pestilence spreads, the townspeople begin to accuse the Jews of causing the disease. Surrounded by hatred and horror, Johannes struggles to hold on to his family and faith as well as his belief in the basic goodness of human beings. But can he return to the future and become Gemm again after having known such emotions as pain. . .and love?

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

It is the year 2407, when everyone wears a mask to emphasize conformity, and tranquility has been implemented via genetics, drugs, and therapy. It is also the year 1348, the time of the Black Death in Strasbourg, France, and 16-year-old Gemm has been sent back from the future to cure his nonconformist desire to create music. In the past he is known as Johannes, the son of a wealthy moneylender in a small Jewish community that finds comfort and strength in the daily rituals of

Judaic faith. But as the plague sweeps the land, terrified people in city after city scapegoat the Jews as the cause of their problems. Officials find it convenient to have someone to blame, and realize that they can wipe out their debts by torturing and burning the moneylenders and their families--but they play music all the while to make the horrible scene less dismal. Sonia Levitin, whose exceptional young adult novels are often based in Jewish culture and identity (*Escape from Egypt* and *The Singing Mountain*, among others), draws on historical fact for this story's powerful emotional impact. The vivid details of ghetto life in the Middle Ages--the Sabbath peace, the enforced humiliations of moneylenders, Johannes' joy at his betrothal to his love Margarite--make the final holocaust scene overwhelmingly real, with layers of meaning that apply to our own times. The futuristic framing device adds additional flavor, evocative of Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. This is a book that both fantasy fans and pragmatic young readers will devour, and one that's rich with thoughtful ideas about racism, conformity, and the lessons of history. (Ages 10 and older) --Patty Campbell --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Levitin (*The Singing Mountain*) handily combines futuristic science fiction and late-medieval Jewish history in a story reminiscent of Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. In the year 2407, societal tranquillity is maintained by ample servings of serotonin drinks to the genetically engineered population and by careful monitoring to suppress all expressions of individuality or creativity. When the boy Gemm 16884 somehow feels moved to make music, an extinguished art, he is given a choice between being "recycled" (killed) or sent into virtual reality to experience the bad old days as a cure for his deviant desires. Opting for the latter, he finds himself living as Johannes, the 16-year-old son of a Jewish moneylender in 1348 Strasbourg. In steadily more harrowing chapters, Levitin shows a thickening climate of anti-Semitism. As the bubonic plague spreads from the ports of Sicily across Europe, the Jews are accused of poisoning the water supply; whole communities of Jews are massacred. Will Gemm's experience as Johannes deaden his craving for art? That everything about the plot seems inevitable, from Johannes's dreadful martyrdom to Gemm's last-page embrace of humanism, only magnifies the tension: much of the horror of Johannes's plight, for example, comes from the audience's superior awareness of Johannes's certain doom. The author pulls off a nifty featAshe makes a low point in human history the prelude to a crescendo of idealism. Ages 10-up. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I first read this book back in middle school, and had to read it again, but couldn't find it at the local

library. For as hard as this book is to find, it is a great read. Similar in purpose to *The Giver*, but with a totally different way of applying it.

Arrived in perfect condition, no tears or unreasonable wear or markings.

This was my book club's book. I was a bit leery about how we were going to have a sci-fi medieval history book, but she really pulled it off. Being a history buff, I really felt like I was there and seeing history through the eyes of a young Jewish man. It was very engaging. The "cure" was totally unexpected, and we disagreed on what the cure actually was. It might have been better with more detail about the future time, but overall I really liked this book. I found myself thinking about this book for weeks after finishing it.

Ty for the right book. it took me a long time to find it and I'm glad I did!

This was a good book--there are others on similiar topics that are better. What I did like it about it was that it wasn't about the holocaust but yet still managed to be about repression of Jewish people.

I found this book in the library of my old high school back in 2004. Eleven years later, the story still haunts me; as if it is engraved into my memory for all time. Books like these show make you face your own humanity. They strip away the veil people these days seem to don like a second skin and reveal the harsh truths behind it. I don't know how this book found its way into that library, but I feel as if it were fate. Books that stay with you... The words, the characters, the stories; they shape who you eventually become. Hopefully, they make you decide to dedicate your life to what is right. They make you want to be better. I especially think, at this dark turning point in the history of humanity, that every American should read this book.

The world of *The Cure* is set in a utopian society some hundreds of years into the future. While that idea is nothing very new, what compelled me to borrow this from the library is the fact that readers also get to travel back into the distant past. With the year today as point of reference, I was interested to see how the author would juxtapose two vastly different ways of human living a contrast that is separated by no less than one thousand years. This, for me, gave a unique twist to the book's premise. Not only does this allow us to see the mundane nature of Gemm's future world, but it also gives Gemm a chance to live as

Johannes, a Jewish teenager who lived in 14th century Germany at the time of the Black Death. The Elders threw Gemm's sleeping mind into the past so that he could learn more about the things that his society gave up and now forbids. To make him understand why the world he dwells in is the best option he could have. This now gives us two storylines: that of Gemm's and that of Johannes', making this book both a historical fiction and a post-apocalyptic dystopian fiction in one. For a fan of both genres, this is a big treat. The problem now lies with the execution of the premise. The first three chapters are in Gemm's time, 2407, and while we get the idea that routine, rigid structure, and conditioned courtesy is the norm, I find that there is little description of how this future society really operates. Johannes' story begins in the fourth chapter, and it would be his story for the bulk of the book. There really isn't much to point out about it because it does well in terms of writing and world-building. The book's image of 14th century life in Germany seemed pretty solid for someone unfamiliar to it like I am, and I suppose the bibliography at the end added to its overall credibility. Since I have mentioned that most of this book is in Johannes' world, I wondered how exactly could the rest of Gemm's story go without it feeling too condensed? Sadly, that's probably the best way to describe the book's final chapters. They're condensed, and maybe even trite. For the kind of story that was endorsed by the blurb, we actually get too little of the real main character, which is supposed to be Gemm. I would have wanted to see more of the United Social Alliance, mainly how scary it really is to feel even just slightly different in a place where people are only allowed to live a certain way. It would have been more gripping if the implications of deviance were painted with a much darker shade, showing most of the internal battles that it comes with those questions of why and how as well as the external battle that will come after the realization that you cannot fight who you really are in a world that tells you, or wants you to be entirely something else. This has been achieved by Johannes' storyline quite excellently; Gemm's, however, fell too short. While Gemm managed to ask things, I felt like there were more questions in his head that could have potentially made the story much clearer if he had been given the chance to ask them at various points. Post-cure, I guess I was expecting to learn how exactly Gemm would come to terms with the truest form of himself given the constraints of his society, but unfortunately we never really get to see that. I honestly do not mind the "So what now?" kind of endings, but the events prior to the

book's final page did not seem like enough foundation for me to believe that Gemm actually knows what he's doing. I think it's mainly because we didn't get to see the complex process of how he got to that point. Perhaps readers could have felt it more if the post-cure part had more pages, with Gemm feeling more confused than informed, then finding it harder to resist himself than ever before. It's basically just anything that would show us that he fought to contain his deviance but eventually decided it's best if something has to change. Even though I was disappointed with Gemm's storyline, I can say that Johannes is quite able to make up for it. The sad part is, most of what Johannes went through still happens until today, only in different forms. There is much I learned from this book, such as the kind of cruelty humans are capable of doing when prejudice rules over, as well as the compassion that still manages to surface even in the face of undeniable danger. For what it's worth, I think "The Cure" shined more in being a historical fiction novel than a sci-fi/dystopian one, and I liked how it used real events to remind us that the prevalence of ignorance and intolerance can only go down one path: that of chaos. 3.5 stars.

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