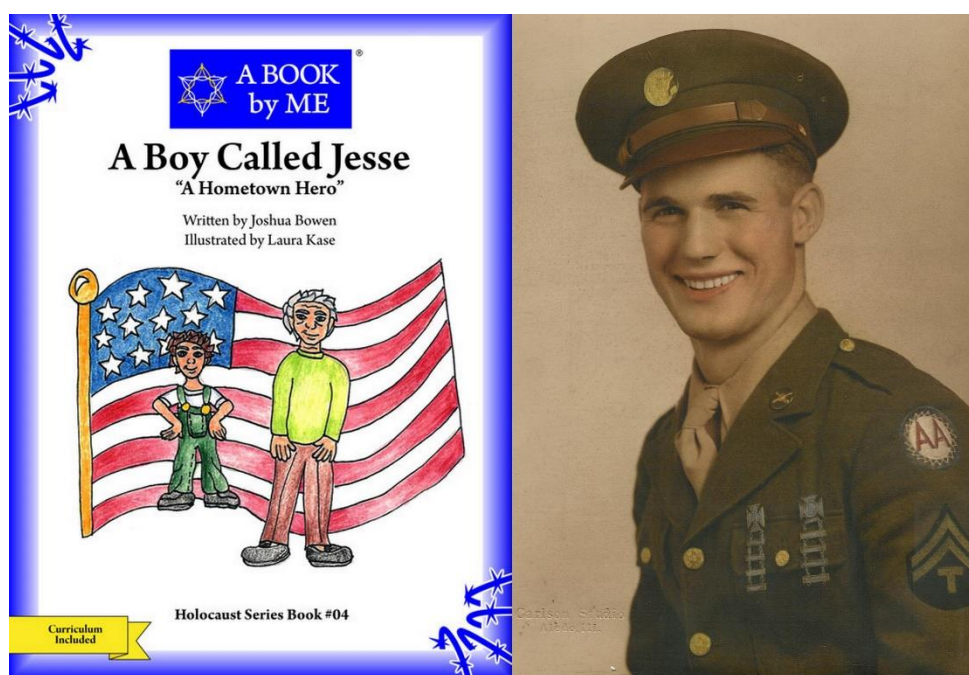




A Boy Called Jesse Readers Theater

Based on the book by Joshua Bowen and Laura Kase

This book is included in the Valiant Veterans book set of 10 different A BOOK by ME titles. It can be purchased individually or as part of the set on our website at understandingworks.org



#hometownhero

Jesse Crawford was a small-town boy who went to war after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was a tank mechanic who saw the horrors of a Nazi work camp. There, he learned the only crime the prisoners committed was being Jewish. After the war, an act of kindness for a European child gave Jesse a sense of normalcy. He gave her parents a piece of leather to make shoes so she could play outside.

Cast:

Narrator 1

Teacher

Narrator 2

Jesse Crawford

Narrator 3

Bob Hope

Earl Crawford

Author Josh Bowen

Elizabeth Crawford



Jesse Crawford with author Josh Bowen

Scene 1

Aledo, Illinois

Narrator 1: Earl "Jesse" Crawford was born on June 10, 1924 in Aledo, Illinois. This is a small farm community in the western part of the state. Our hero was named after his father Earl. There's a very cute story about how young Earl got the nickname Jesse.

Teacher: I taught the children of Aledo in a one room schoolhouse. When young Earl came to school with a bandana over his face pretending to be Jesse James, a famous bank robber, I gave him the nickname Jesse. It stuck and everyone in Aledo knew him as Jesse from that day forward.

Elizabeth Crawford: Our youngest son Jesse was born in a time called the "roaring twenties." World War I ended in 1918 and after that our country was prospering or roaring. Businesses were doing well and hiring people. Spirits across America were very high because things were going so well.

Earl Crawford: The Great Depression started in 1929 when the stock market crashed. Money was scarce and things became hard for families across the country. It was easier for farm families because they could grow their own food. People who lived in cities had much harder lives. After Pearl Harbor was attacked and America went to war, I was very proud when our two sons went off to fight the Nazis in WWII.

Scene 2

European Theater

Jesse Crawford: I was a scared teenage boy when I left the comforts of our home in Aledo. Next thing I knew I was on a ship sailing to France, a foreign country I had only read about. From there we were taken to Germany by train on boxcars called 40 and 8s because they held either 40 men or 8 horses.

Narrator 2: Jesse was assigned to be a tank mechanic. It was an important job since tanks were very important in this war. If the tank broke down, it had to be rescued and repaired. As Jesse worked on the tanks, he would talk to other servicemen about the numbers of men dying on the front lines. It was sad to think about the parents getting word of their son's death. One day they heard an entertainer from Hollywood was coming to perform for them so they could have a break from the war.

Bob Hope: The troops knew my name Bob Hope because they had been listening to me on the radio for years. I wanted to help my country and I brought friends from Hollywood too. My goal was to make the boys who were fighting for America laugh and forget about the war for a while. Their days in the trenches were very long and fear was their constant companion. Some people say laughter is good medicine and I brought hope to them. I think Jesse and the other troops appreciated the break.

Narrator 3: The Americans had the Nazis on the run and we won the war. Jesse's unit received an order to help people in a concentration camp. They learned that the Jewish prisoners had done nothing wrong. Hitler hated Jews and wanted them dead. When Jesse saw how starved the survivors were, he thought it was a miracle they were still alive. He was physically ill to think how badly they were treated.

Narrator 1: Jesse helped set up a Displaced Persons camp and moved the Jews out of the horrible camps into a place where workers could treat them kindly and feed them healthy foods. Our French Allies came and helped the prisoners start their lives over and Jesse's unit moved throughout Germany helping people in need.

Narrator 2: In Austria he befriended a family with young children. He asked why their children weren't outside playing. He learned they had no leather for shoes. As luck would have it, Jesse had a strap of leather on his repair truck so shoes could be made. It made him feel very good to know that his gift meant those children could have a normal life again. He was yearning to get back to his own normal life in America.

Scene 3 **Aledo, Illinois**

Earl Crawford: Finally, it was time for Jesse to come home. Jesse was ordered not to take any pictures of the concentration camp home but he felt he must so he shoved them down in the toe of his boot. He didn't dream that one day people would deny the Holocaust but they do. Jesse was proud he had pictures to prove it happened.

Elizabeth Crawford: Jesse came home from the war and wanted to surprise us. He hitchhiked home and arrived in the middle of the night. Not every mother in Aledo was so lucky to have her son come back home alive and well. I was thankful when Jesse married a wonderful girl named Pat and they gave us a grandson named Michael.

Jesse Crawford: Afterward, it was too hard to remember the things I saw in the war. So, I didn't talk about what happened for many years. My wife Pat was the only one who knew what I had experienced. I kept many of those memories stored away until when I was in my 80's a boy named Josh asked if he could write my story to teach children. I knew I had to tell him what I had seen with my own eyeballs.

Josh Bowen: My name is Josh Bowen and I was in the 5th grade when I met Jesse and wrote his story. If someone tries to tell you the Holocaust is made up, don't believe them. I heard Jesse's voice crack and saw his hand shake when he talked about what happened to the Jews. I also saw the gruesome pictures he brought home of the Jewish people he helped in the concentration camp. They looked more like skeletons than humans. I'm glad I met Jesse Crawford and wrote his story so you can read it and understand that freedom isn't free.