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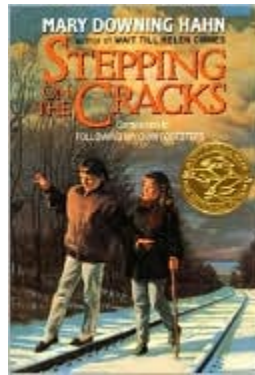
Teacher Name

8<sup>th</sup> Grade English

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## *Stepping on the Cracks*

Mary Downing Hahn



As World War II rages across the ocean in Europe, two sixth grade friends, Elizabeth and Margaret, have their own battles to face at home in America. First, there is the school bully, Gordy, who seems to live to make life miserable for the girls. Then, there's the sorrow both friends feel as they are separated from their brothers who are fighting in the war against Hitler. While patriotic, the girls still long for the "normal" life before the war when fear was not a daily reality.

Despite their differences, Elizabeth and Margaret are best friends. Elizabeth is the braver of the two, always willing to take on a dare. Margaret is quite the opposite. They both, however, share the same enemies: Hitler and Gordy. While their brothers are away fighting the evil overseas, the girls face their own enemy at home. Gordy is the mean boy who also has brothers away fighting in the war. While dealing with an abusive father and absent brothers, he dreams of one day shooting down Nazi planes. After Gordy steals part of the girls' tree house, Elizabeth and Margaret decide to secretly follow him to his forbidden clubhouse. What they discover there both shocks and angers them. The girls now have knowledge that would allow them to finally get even with Gordy. Should they use this new-found information against him?

*Stepping on the Cracks*, winner of the 1994 South Carolina Junior Book Award, is an excellent historical fiction novel. Its perspective is quite different from many of the other World War II books since the primary focus of the story is not on the soldiers but on the families left behind. Those at home had to deal not only with food and gas shortages, but also with the constant fear of losing loved ones. This is the background in which the author weaves the story of two girls who face their own enemy and who learn that not everything is as it appears on the surface. Read this book for a different type of historical fiction and be ready for a great story with a surprise ending.