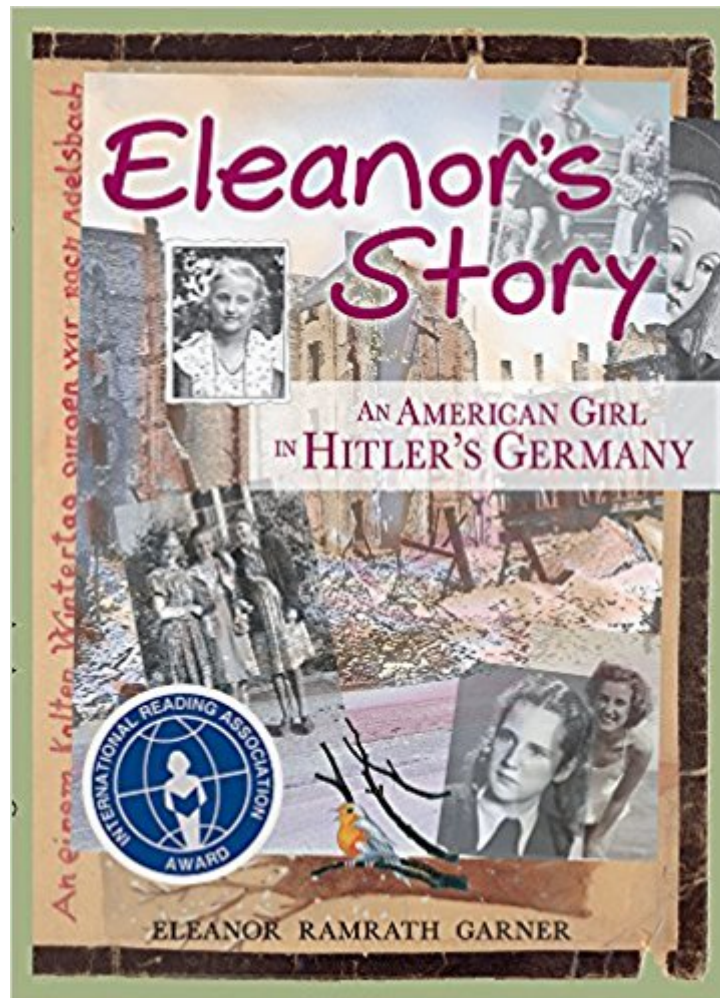




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Eleanor's Story: An American Girl In Hitler's Germany



Synopsis

A COMPELLING AND EVOCATIVE story that immerses readers in the daily struggles of surviving World War II. Eleanor's Story is the dramatic autobiography of Eleanor Ramrath Garner's youth, growing up as an American caught in World War II Berlin. It's a story of trying to maintain stability, hope, and identity in a world of terror and contrasts. During the Great Depression, when she is nine, Eleanor's family moves from her beloved America to Germany, where her father has been offered a good job. But war breaks out as her family is crossing the Atlantic, and they cannot return to the United States. Eleanor tries to maintain her American identity as she feels herself pulled into the turbulent life roiling around her. She fervently hopes for an Allied victory, yet for years she must try to survive the Allied bombs shattering her neighborhood. Her family faces separations, bombings, hunger, the final fierce battle for Berlin, the Russian invasion, and the terrors of Soviet occupancy. This compelling story immerses us in the daily struggles of surviving World War II as a civilian. It puts a very human face on the horrors of war and helps us understand that each casualty of war is a person, not a number.

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Customer Reviews

Grade 6-8-When the author was nine, her parents elected to return to their native Germany, where her father had been offered an attractive job. Though it was 1939 and Hitler had already invaded Czechoslovakia, her family saw only opportunity in their decision. While they were crossing the Atlantic, war was declared and their emigration became irrevocable. Garner was not to see America again until she was 16. The family members spent much of the war in Berlin and suffered hardships

and privations and lived in fear. Yet, it is to Garner's credit that she does not make them out to be more heroic than they were. They escaped bombs, bullets, conscription, malnutrition, and molestation. Every member of her immediate family survived the war. This required considerable resourcefulness, occasional bravery, and an extraordinary amount of luck. It is curious that when the author was 13, she stumbled upon the concentration camp at Waldenburg, but didn't mention it to her mother. She says that she wondered, "What is this place? -A prison camp? Who are these people? Are they the ones who work in the factory?" Even as an adult writing this memoir, she doesn't confront the truth that this was a concentration camp. The writing is pedestrian and somewhat dry and the characters are memorable only for their ordinariness and pettiness. Still, this is a unique survival story that libraries may want to own. Miriam Lang Budin, Chappaqua Public Library, NY Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One of Garner's haunting childhood memories is the sound of knocking coming from the rubble of newly bombed buildings in Berlin, where she and her family spent the war years. She feared the sound was from doomed victims signaling for help, which could not get to them in time. In this stunning memoir, Garner tells the survival story of civilians in Hitler's Germany, desperately hoping to avoid the wrath of the Gestapo during the war, then facing the cruelty of the postwar Russian occupation. On the eve of World War II, Garner's German-born parents went against the advice of family members and emigrated from New Jersey to Berlin with their two school-age children to enable Mr. Ramrath to take a tantalizing, two-year job offer. Readers follow Eleanor's difficult adjustment to German classrooms, her close and supportive relationship with her slightly older brother, Frank, and her loving but often strained relationship with her parents. As the political scene worsens, the family is plunged into horror, and two years stretches to seven. Not being supporters of Hitler or the Nazi Party, the Ramraths and non-Jewish citizens like them had to be constantly on guard against suspicions of disloyalty. They are dimly aware of the larger Holocaust unfolding around them. This powerful coming-of-age tale is told with intensity and also the freshness of teenage years remembered: there are repeated brutal bombings and countless brushes with death; there are also friends, holiday celebrations, and two babies born to the family during the war, who engage Eleanor's love and protection. There's also a much anticipated return to the U.S. It all coalesces into a must-have memoir about an aspect of wartime survival not often written about in children's literature. Anne O'Malley --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I must have read by now hundreds of books on WWII, the Holocaust, survivor stories, resistance stories, historical fiction and more. This is the first time learning what it was actually like during that time within Germany itself, and from Americans trapped there besides. Impressive was the strength of Eleanor's mother who resisted the urge to collapse during relentless air raids, threatening Gestapo, endless relocations, dangerous journeys, and then later, facing starvation, foraging, scavenging bravely to keep her family alive. Then later to be occupied in their own home by frightening Russian soldiers. This family never gave up. Eleanor herself, a typical American child soon became along with her brother another adult in the family quickly needed to help raise her small siblings and through her courage and resourcefulness helped get them through from day to day never taking her eyes off the goal of returning to America. No child should ever have to endure what Eleanor did but during that time millions of German and other European children did as the Third Reich stole from them their food, their fuel, their homes, their dignity, their freedom, their innocence, their childhoods, their lives.

Terrific book. I had lived in Berlin several times, starting as a 12 year old in 1954. There was still damage from WWII, especially in East Berlin where I used to ride my bike since there was no wall yet. After graduating from West Point, my first assignment was Berlin, and I guarded the last 3 Nazis in Spandau Prison in 1966. Speer and Von Schriac were released several months later, leaving Hess, who committed suicide in the mid-80's. Very well written, fascinating account of life under Hitler. I especially enjoyed reading how backward most Russian soldiers were, unaccustomed to bathrooms, running water or lights. Look forward to meeting the author Thursday at PLNU.

Last year my favorite book was ME and MRS. KENNEDY written by Secret Service Agent Clint Hill. Well so far this year my favorite by far is ELEANOR'S STORY. I finished reading this in 2 days which is a record for me but I simply could not put it down. This pretty innocent American young girl experienced quite an adventure in the beginning when she moved to Nazi Germany just at the very moment WW 2 began and remained until after the war was over. The author wrote this in such a manner that it was very easy to follow and you could truly understand the emotions this girl was feeling. Starting in a new school is always a little scary but just imagine doing that in a foreign country like NAZI GERMANY which has all kind of rules and intolerance of free thinking people. I was surprised there was such a harsh and demanding educational system in place and more surprised that somehow Eleanor was able to pass! All teenagers go through that rebellious stage but

being in a foreign country that is at war with America made this especially interesting. Hers indeed was a tough life with some very strict parents but it was very touching to see the loving and close relationship she developed with her older teen brother whom she idolized. Despite the war there were some very humorous moments she described in vivid detail and then on the very next page the author would painstakingly describe the horror of listening to her neighbors screaming and dying in their cellar before the authorities could arrive and rescue them from their bombed out house. The author and her brother went on numerous and risky excursions for just the sheer thrill of it but most often to find food and locate other relatives. The author's mother gave birth to another boy and girl in Germany while WW 2 raged around them. It is nothing short of a miracle that this entire family survived such a brutal war. The hardships this family endured is almost unbelievable. I don't think I could have handled it. The only criticism I have of the book is there was only one paragraph that mentioned anything about the horrible treatment of the Jews. I would have liked to see at least a couple of pages about what she saw and heard and felt as the Jewish citizens of Germany began to "disappear." This is a book that should be in every high school library!

This is a unique and impressive story of a young American girl of German ancestry caught up in the horrors of life in Berlin during WW II. It's a perspective on the war I hadn't seen. I was fortunate to see the author's granddaughter perform a one woman show based on the memoir that was also excellent.

Excellent account of a horrific time in history. One could feel the pain and suffering as the author walked you through this horrible war day by day. So happy the family made it through such rough times and finally "Came Home" to America. As a special note, I had the pleasure of meeting Eleanor, Frank and his wife on a recent riverboat cruise in France.

captivating story that's hard to put down ~

Eleanor was a grade above me in the Gertraudenschule in Berlin-Dahlem/ Germany. Reading her book put me back in time. She writes it like it was. She writes about our hardships during World War II: living in fear, bomb attacks and malnutrition. Seen through a child's eye this autobiographical account is especially heart wrenching. The reader suffers with her. But this book is not just about the horrors of war and how they affect the civilian population, it is also a deeply inspiring and spiritual rendition of the events of those years. The invisibles, as Eleanor calls her guardian angels,

are always hovering close-by, and when towards the end of the war amidst devastation and total destruction despair overcomes her, a single red-breasted robin, sent by the invisibles, I'm sure, brings new hope. It represents rebirth. Eleanor's story, in many aspects, is also my story. I couldn't put the book down.

fantastic read

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