



# Life Behind the Wall: Candy Bombers, Hidden Bunkers, and Smugglers Treasure

*Robert Elmer*

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Book 1: Cousins Erich and Katarina find that survival in post-World War II Berlin isn't easy, especially when the Russians impose a 24/7 blockade around the city. But everything changes when they sneak inside an American cargo plane and meet a U.S. airman named Fred DeWitt. Though Erich has plenty of reasons to resent this man, in the end they must decide: cling to bitterness, or learn to forgive?

Book 2: In book two of this series, we fast-forward to 1961, when Cold War tensions peak and the Berlin Wall traps Sabine and her friend Willi on the wrong side of the city. Though handicapped by childhood polio, Sabine (Erich's younger half-sister) learns to trade weakness for trust when she discovers a forgotten underground bunker. In the end it could take them under the wall to freedom, or into more danger than ever.

Book 3: In the final book of this trilogy, Willi and Sabine's daughter, Liesl, is looking for a cause. It's early 1989, life is good, and the Cold War seems to be thawing ... slowly. But as Liesl works on a class project about her family, she uncovers a startling secret about her American grandfather, thanks to a boy from Wyoming. And no one expects what would ultimately happen to the wall that has separated her family for years.

## **Life Behind the Wall: Candy Bombers, Hidden Bunkers, and Smugglers Treasure** Details

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## From Reader Review Life Behind the Wall: Candy Bombers, Hidden Bunkers, and Smugglers Treasure for online ebook

### Thomas says

Wow this was a free book on my kindle. I highly recommend it because it taught me so much about the cold war and how life was for families split apart in war torn Berlin. It was thought provoking and made me think about how hard life must have been at this point in history.

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### Sherri Johnson says

I wish this book had been around when I was homeschooling. I regularly searched for "live" books based off historical events in an effort to stimulate reading pleasure in my son. I loved this book, which is actually three short books in one -- Candy Bombers, Hidden Bunkers, and Smuggler's Treasure. It is very well-written, imaginative, informative, and touching. It deals with life surrounding the Berlin Wall in Germany, from its beginning to its tearing down. The up close and personal views of the people that had to live during those times on food rations, with prejudice and learning how to recover from the war was eye-opening. The characters are thirteen in all of the stories. They are relatable and real and make you want to reach into the book to give them a hug at times. It was the first time I'd ever really given much thought to the suffering of the German people during those times. I loved the large print in this book. For a younger reader, this makes it easy to speed through the pages and to feel accomplished as a reader. This book is a win-win for homeschoolers and for middle school boys especially.

I received this book free from the publisher through the BookLook Bloggers book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

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### Amanda says

I grew up reading Robert Elmer's books, so when the *Life Behind the Wall* trilogy came up for review through Booklook, I was excited. The three books span over 40 years of Berlin's history. In *Candy Bombers*, Erich and his cousin struggle to help their mothers help makes ends meet in their war torn city. Showing the early difficulties with East and West Berlin, I thought this story was quite interesting.

In *Beelte Bunker*, Sabine finds a bunker from the war that just might help her family escape under the wall. Finally, in *Smuggler's Treasure*, Liesl lives in a more peaceful time than Berlin has seen for some time. But, when a school paper leads her to dig into family secrets, she is also caught up in protests for the wall to come down.

Written for young teens, all of the hero/heroines are 13, but this series will delight older readers too. I very much enjoyed the on going themes and all the history that is included in the books. Written in a way that will keep one reading, these books are far from dry and boring. Two thumbs up!

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## **Belindachaplin says**

"Life behind the wall" by Robert Elmer is actually 3 books in one anthology, all dealing with different generations of 13-year-olds living surrounded by the Berlin wall, but at three different times in its history.

The first novel "Candy Bombers" is set in 1948, "Hidden Bunkers" in 1961 and "Smuggler's Treasure" in 1989. Each story tackles a different aspect of living with the wall: in its beginning stages, in the middle and when it finally comes down.

Although this set is meant for younger readers (it is marketed for 8-12 years), I really enjoyed reading it as well. It was a great way to actually get inside the history books and experience what it must have actually been like to live through those different eras. The characters are engaging, the plot keeps you thinking and all in all, this is a really good read.

I would recommend it immensely for the intended age-group, as it really is a great way for them to learn about what happened in Germany during the communist era, especially about the Wall and what it meant for the people living at that time. I would also recommend it to anyone who is looking for a good engaging and yet educational read.

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## **Kate (The Shelf Life) says**

I love historical books. They can be for adults or kids, it doesn't matter. If the story has a historical backing, it has my full attention. Now, if the book is set during a unique period on history, it is moved ahead in my TBR.

I've really gotten in to WW2 era stories lately and I've noticed (or haven't noticed) many books about the time after the war, the rebuilding, especially for Germany. Life Behind the Wall, the 3-in-1 book offered a unique glimpse into the lives of the German people after WW2 had ended and the rebuild had begun. What a depressing and dark time that was.

I will honestly tell you, I didn't know much into how the Wall came about, just that it happened sometime after WW2 and it had to do with the Cold War. Now, I'm going to giveaway my age and tell you I do remember when the wall fell. I remember Ronald Regan and his speech telling Gorbachev to tear down this wall.

Life Behind the Wall brings you into this world that doesn't seem real in away, but it is. Being a child who survived the all out upheaval of Berlin at the end of the war, then to live in a battlefield of the cold war with the Russians. What a hard time! And Robert Elmer offers such a wonderful glimpse into this time and makes it into an adventure and easy for kids to understand.

I won't go into too much detail, so not to give anything away and spoil bits of the story, but following this family of cousins, siblings, and children was an interesting journey. Each hero in the story is thirteen, the perfect age for adventure and to see and experience what is going on around them.

In Candy Bombers, the war is over and America is trying to help the German people get coal and food into the country, all while the Russians are watching their every move and keeping tabs of the German people with their watch dogs of the community. Erich and Katarina, accidentally end up in an American bomber, that is now used for food deliveries and upon their discovery start something to help give hope to the kids and adults of Germany with their Candy Drops.

In Beetle Bunker, we follow Sabine, a thirteen year old girl, who is related to Erich. We find out how Erich is doing, but our journey is now following a new generation of life behind the wall. We also see the affects of illness behind the wall and the tight grip the Russians put on the people of Berlin when the Wall starts to go up.

Finally in Smuggler's Treasure, our hero is Liesi, Sabine's thirteen year old daughter. The wall is fully in place, but by this time, the push to tear it down is at it's strongest. The Cold War is ending, but the adventures are still there for Liesi to discover.

This was such an interesting way to present a part of history and it worked so well. The characters were real. No one was perfect, but this family cared for each other wanted to help each other out. There is a strong theme for compassion and faith in these stories and the history woven through was great.

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Thank you to Booklook Bloggers, I received a copy of this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

### **Nancy says**

#### **A Family Struggles with Life Behind the Berlin Wall**

Stretching from 1948 to 1989, Life Behind the Wall, tells the story of three generations of one family caught up in the turmoil in Berlin after World War II. The book consists of three self contained stories set in different time periods.

In the first story, Candy Bomber, Erich Becker, a thirteen-year-old boy is trying to help his family, particularly his grandmother, survive. Food is scarce and Erich is willing to dare sneaking into the American compound to steal food.

The second story, Beetle Bomber, features Erich's younger sister. Sabine walks using crutches because of contracting polio. She wants a place of her own and finds a disused bunker. As the Berlin Wall goes up the thoughts of many in East Berlin turn to escape.

In the third story, Smuggler's Treasure, Sabine's thirteen-year-old daughter smuggles Bibles into East Berlin. In this story, the wall comes down, and we experience all the pent up emotion of the Berliners.

I highly recommend this book for middle grade students. The stories focus on heroic adventures appropriate for young teens. The main character in each is a boy or girl thirteen-years-old. This makes it easy for young readers to identify with the main character and vicariously live the adventure.

The stories are historically accurate and are an excellent way to introduce young readers to an important era in world history. Although the stories have a religious undertone, it is not preachy, but more an expression of

the characters' way of life.

I reviewed this book for BookLook Bloggers.

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### **Kendra says**

The story begins in Candy Bombers with cousins Erich and Katarina as they struggle to survive in post-World War II Berlin. Starvation is a real threat, and their lives are changed forever when they sneak inside a U.S. Air Force base. The historically accurate details touch on the true story of the Chocolate Bombers, Air Force pilots who dropped candy to starving children behind the Berlin Wall. Book 2: Fast-forward to 1961 for book two, Beetle Bunker, when Cold War tensions peak and the Berlin Wall traps Sabine and her friend Willi on the wrong side of the city. Though handicapped by childhood polio, Sabine (Erich's younger half-sister) learns to trade weakness for trust when she discovers a forgotten underground bunker. In the end it could take them under the wall to freedom, or into more danger than ever. Book 3: No one expects what would ultimately happen to the wall that separated this family for three generations. In book three, Smuggler's Treasure, the time is 1989, the Cold War is thawing, and Liesl, daughter of Sabine and Willi, discovers a family secret that may prove more exciting than anything imagined in this excellent and important conclusion.

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### **Jessica says**

This is a collection of three short youth books about the Berlin wall. Aimed at youth, they follow a family as the city is first divided, then in the middle of the years of conflict, and again when the wall comes down. They don't give a lot of historical/political information. The books briefly talk about how the Russians have control of one side of Berlin and Germany, and the Americans are helping to protect the opposite side. The books focus more on what it was like for the characters as they deal with life behind the wall. I enjoyed these books, there was enough action to keep you going, and I enjoyed the characters and the way the same family and storylines were continued through out the books. As an adult, I'm glad I had the opportunity to read all three at once, it really gives the young reader the full feel of each of the three time periods. The third book brought tears to my eyes as there was more of the family history revealed. I would recommend this to young readers, probably as early as upper elementary for advanced readers, but definitely for middle grades and high school. I enjoyed them as an adult and they have whet my appetite for more historical fiction about the Berlin wall and the Cold War. I enjoy historical fiction but have tended to read mostly about World War 2 and for some reason, really have not had a lot of exposure to the Cold War through Literature, so I'll be looking for more!

I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Hallie Szott says**

I absolutely loved the stories of Robert Elmer's Life Behind the Wall. Elmer engages a period in history that I have not seen portrayed a lot in literature (but I could just be picking up the wrong books...) and engrossed me in the experience of it all. Each of his stories, filled with fast-paced danger, suspense and adventure,

vividly depicts life within Cold War Berlin. I think Elmer successfully makes this history accessible and real for young readers, but crafts stories for a reader of any age to enjoy. I certainly enjoyed them and would recommend *Life Behind the Wall* to any fan of historical fiction. (My only complaint is, as Elmer connects the three stories, a few details are mismatched and do not fit quite right...) Thank you, BookLook Bloggers, for providing me with a copy of these stories and the opportunity to honestly review them. I was not required to write a positive review, and all the opinions I have expressed are my own. (I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.")

<http://pagebypagebookbybook.blogspot....>

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### **Allison B says**

#### **Couldn't Put Down**

This book is about a family who lived in Berlin during the Cold War. Starting during the Airlift and ending when the wall came down, this book leads u through every major event during that time period. This book is so accurate on what happened that it feels like your really there. Loved it and would recommend it to anyone wiling to learn a thing or two.

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### **Blessedmomfxs says**

*Life Behind the Wall* is really a trilogy of books. Book one is Candy Bombers, book two is Beetle Bunker and book three is Smuggler's Treasure. The trilogy traces a German family's story from just after WWII in 1948 to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The books are fictional but recount actual historic events. They are written from the perspective of a family which is separated by the Berlin Wall. It shows what life was like during the time that Germany was divided into two opposing political systems.

The characters were very likable and relatable. The protagonist in each story is a 13-year-old, so the book is a great choice for advanced elementary school and middle school readers. Even as an adult, I enjoyed the book and the story line woven throughout. Historical fiction is a great stepping-off point into the study of history, personalizing the conflicts, hardships and victories experienced in a time other than our own.

I enjoyed the book and will read it with my son, along with studying the REAL "Candy Bomber," Gail "Hal" Halverson. Hal's story is one of hope and charity in the midst of strife and I highly recommend that students look into his remarkable life story.

*Life Behind the Wall* is a compelling story of 4 generations affected by the aftermath of WWII and their sacrifices and struggles as well as their triumphs. The Christian message in the book is very subtle and not at all preachy, and there are discussion questions at the end of each of the books to stimulate application of such principles as honesty, courage and freedom.

\*\*\*I received a complementary copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Sharon says**

The book for review is “Life Behind The Wall” by Robert Elmer. It falls in the genre of juvenile fiction.

This novel includes three sections that all interconnect. The first one is entitled “Candy Bomber, the second is “Beetle Bunker” and the last is “Smuggler’s Treasure.” The premise of the book is based on a family, that stretches three generations, living in Germany before and after the wall is built

It starts off with Erich, a young man living with his mother and sister in Berlin. The small family is trying to survive the aftermath of WW2. The devastation of the city is present in every where they go from the buildings, the rumbles and shortage of supplies across the city. This portion of the book dives into their lives bringing us the reader into what it was like during this time in our history and when the occupants had to deal with Russian control.

Second section brings us to the wall being built. Sabine, our main character and half-sister of Erich, discovers a bunker. One that could be used to dig a tunnel underneath the wall. It doesn’t take long before a group of young men and women try to do so, being careful to not let the Russian authority know their activities. There is discontent between the people as many who protest are arrested.

The last section we meet Lisel, the niece of Erich. The year is 1989. She is working on a project for school on the history of the wall. Lisel doesn’t want to do just any report that everyone else will be writing, which is just the facts. She wants to do more. But the more she digs, the more information comes to light about her family around her and ones she didn’t know existed.

I really enjoyed this book. While it is geared for juveniles, all ages could easily enjoy it. One could identify with the characters and the scene being played out before us. I read the book within days, a true page turner.

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## **Violet says**

*Life Behind the Wall* is a collection of three novella-length stories for the YA crowd. Each is set in part of Berlin in a different time period between 1948 and 1989.

Book One, *Candy Bomber*, begins in the summer of 1948. Erich Becker, a 13-year-old Berlin resident, hates the Americans whose bombs wrecked his city and killed his father. He regularly prowls Berlin’s Tempelhof Airport, sneaking into U.S. cargo planes in search of food for his hungry mother and grandmother. He meets U.S. soldier DeWitt who is a journalist, befriends Erich, and writes a story about the hungry children of Berlin. He comes around to Erich’s house with bags of treats like canned peaches and takes Erich and his cousin Katarina up in his plane to do some candy drops over Berlin neighborhoods.

Soon it becomes clear that DeWitt’s interest is in more than Erich. He wants to marry Erich’s mother and move the family to the States. Will Erich be able to forgive the Americans for what he holds against them?

Book Two, *Beetle Bunker*, begins in 1961. Its main character, 13-year-old Sabine, is a polio survivor who hobbles around on crutches. She lives with her mother, grandmother (Oma Poldi Becker), older brother Erich

(from book one), Onkel Heinz and Tante Gertrud in Oma's crowded flat in East Berlin.

In this book we see the Berlin wall erected and are part of a daring tunneling attempt to escape from the East to West sectors of the city.

Book Three, *Smuggler's Treasure*, begins in 1989. Liesl, the 13-year-old daughter of Sabine and Willi (from book two), lives in West Berlin. She tries to act cool the day she and mother are stopped at the checkpoint and thoroughly questioned on their way to visit Uncle Erich who still lives in the Communist side of the city. Mother and Uncle Erich are most upset when they find she has stuffed her stockings and clothes with slim Bibles. She gets into more trouble when she digs into the family history while researching for a school project and still more when she joins some older kids in a protest at the wall.

This part of the story sees the Berlin Wall come down and also reveals the mysteries surrounding Sabine's father (Liesl's grandfather).

These stories offer a great experience of another time in history. They show firsthand the poverty, bravery, resilience, and resourcefulness of the people of East and West Berlin during the Cold War era. They are also an example of how the divided city affected families.

The setting seems realistic with its atmosphere of suspicion and secrecy. Characters must be careful not to be seen with the wrong people or overheard saying the wrong things because they don't know who to trust and who might be snitching on them to the authorities. Chapter numbers in German and lots of other German words and expressions sprinkled throughout also give a feeling of authenticity to these stories.

None of the main character kids in these books are content to sit around. The stories are fast-paced and filled with adventure and danger. The age of each of the heroes (13) tells us that these books will appeal to tweens and early teens.

The end of Book One has a "How It Really Happened" section that explains which events in that story actually happened. All the books conclude with a set of Questions for Further Study designed to deepen and broaden the reading experience for individuals or groups.

As well as giving YA readers three interesting and fun stories, this book would be excellent supplementary reading for home schoolers and Christian school classes doing a study of the Cold War period (all three books are written from a Christian point-of-view).

I received *Life Behind The Wall* as a gift from the publisher (Zondervan-Zonderkidz) for the purpose of writing a review.

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### **Kirsten says**

<http://kiribeth.blogspot.com/2014/06/...>

When I first picked up this book, I expected three tales, relatively the same, about life behind the wall -- the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall. And while it was all I expected historically (and more besides, I might add), everything in *Life Behind the Wall* exceeded my every hope. For one thing, it's not three separate tales.

Well, technically it is, but it encompasses the story of one family, in three parts. Each one is cleverly connected to the others, and I finished the book feeling very satisfied, as if I'd just read a full novel rather than three simple tales. Exciting, dangerous, fun, and rich -- this is one book you're not going to want to miss.

Candy Bombers starts things out with thirteen-year-old Erich Becker who is eager to help his starving family in any way he can. And that includes sneaking onto an American air base and bringing home a chocolate candy bar. One successful mission encourages him to do more, but his second attempt turns around in a manner that he never expected. Erich is a wonderful hero, and I really enjoyed his story. I sympathized with his struggles, and I was really glad to see that he was a more-or-less prominent character in the other two stories.

Beetle Bunker picks up the story with Erich's half sister, Sabine, a young girl with polio. She can get around with crutches well enough, but her whole world changes when the Berlin Wall appears almost overnight... separating their home directly in half. The bunker she finds later on seems at first to be a safe haven, somewhere she could read Black Beauty in peace without having to worry about someone becoming offended for her reading an inappropriate book. She befriends a young boy who shares her dislike of the Wall, but what can two teenagers do against the cold hearts of their government? Sabine knows life on the wrong side of the wall is getting harder, and it's only a matter of time before danger envelopes everyone she loves.

Smuggler's Treasure tells the last part of the tale, starring Sabine's daughter, Liesl. There is nothing more that Liesl wants in the world than to understand the past. Her mother and her grandmother won't speak of the days gone by, and even her beloved Onkle Erich doesn't really want to tell her what she yearns to know. When a school paper presents her with the opportunity to do a little research, Liesl dives right in. Finding out her family's greatest secret (or perhaps the greatest secret kept from her family) might take Liesl into strange places... even on the wrong side of the Wall where the Communist rule contradicts everything she believes.

Advisory: Some violence; characters get into fights, get arrested and jailed, etc. but nothing graphic.

\*Please note: I received a copy of this book from BookLook Bloggers in exchange for my honest review.\*

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### **Jennifer says**

I only read the first book (Candy Bombers), as other books came ready for me at the library and I wanted to get to them.

The first part was good. The kids (just the girls?) read all the books, and enjoyed them.

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