



Exiles from the War: The War Guest Diary of Charlotte Mary Twiss, Guelph, Ontario, 1940

Jean Little

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When a frightened girl and boy arrive on the Twiss family's doorstep, to escape the Blitz, Charlotte wonders how she will keep her war guests from missing their parents back home, or from cowering every time a plane flies overhead. Though the war is being waged across the Atlantic, Charlotte begins to feel its danger, as her brother George defies their parents and enlists in the Navy. After months of receiving letters from overseas, suddenly there is no word from him — has the unthinkable happened and George's ship been sunk by a German submarine?

Charlotte Twiss's diary shows her innermost feelings about her life on the Canadian homefront, as she helps her war guests "settle in" and wonders whether her brother is safe from harm.

Exiles from the War: The War Guest Diary of Charlotte Mary Twiss, Guelph, Ontario, 1940 Details

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From Reader Review Exiles from the War: The War Guest Diary of Charlotte Mary Twiss, Guelph, Ontario, 1940 for online ebook

Rebecca says

World War II has just started and Charlotte Twiss' parents have decided to open their home to British war children. During that time thousands of British children came across the ocean to escape the German bombing. It wasn't long until Jane Browning came into their home. Across the street her brother Sam stayed with good friends of Charlotte. Charlotte's diary is a recount of the first year with the Brownings; the ups as well as the downs. Watching these exiles struggle with a new land and new ways, she comes to eventually see them as family.

While this book was a real eye-opener (I knew about children in England being sent into the country, my own grandmother was sent to a Welsh family to leave Dover during the war), but I hadn't realised as many as thousands came to Canada.

As an immigrant myself, I know how hard it would have been for those little boys and girls. It would be even harder for those children as they were in homes with complete strangers.

My only reason for giving it 4 stars instead of 5 is that I found the author didn't explain a lot of the information she gave. If she wasn't going to explain the important historical details- don't put them. The exception was Dunkirk. She did a wonderful job with that.

Overall, lovely little book for little girls. Or 27 year-old women who can't get enough of the Dear Canada books.

Sophie says

Book review

"I can hardly write this , It is by far the worst thing yet." This book has tension, surprises, sadness, and more. Just a twelve year old girl with a book and pen writes her own story, and her own life in the middle of a war zone.

This story's point of view is in first person, it is from a woman's perspective, i think that first person narrative that the author chose was the best choice because it really helps explain in detail more her thoughts and her feelings on the war more deeply.

I like this book so far, I am enjoying reading it so far because it really makes me think about how this world was a long time ago, and i find that interesting. Knowing that a twelve year old wrote this on the true story. It gives the book more intimacy and makes it more catching to the eye.

Do you want to find out if you will like this book? If you like history, or if you like learning about what happened before you're time, about war, and hearing true stories from the people who were there, you will enjoy this book. If you're not into that type of genre or topic, i would recommend trying something different.

Nicola Mansfield says

Reason for Reading: I am in the process of reading the whole series. I am particularly fond of WWII stories and this one takes place near where I grew up, Fergus, ON and we went to Guelph many, many times.

Comments: As per all books in the Dear Canada series, this is written as a series of diary entries that cover the span of one year. Charlotte receives the diary for her twelfth birthday and the book finishes a few days after her thirteenth birthday. The book focuses on a family and their close neighbour who both receive War Guests from England. A brother and sister who have been evacuated from London and sent to live in Canada for the duration of the War. When the family picks them up from Toronto they are sent off by two other children they sailed over with a little 5yo girl and a much older teen boy.

Through Charlotte's eyes we experience life on the homefront for a family who has a son in the army and a Jewish family who worries about what is happening to their relatives in Europe. Many horrible things are reported in the papers and on the radio that terrify Charlotte but some things she cannot comprehend and her father explains many things to her but when it comes to her questions about the Jews he is unable to give her answer telling she must wait till she is older, his reason being that he himself is unable to explain the inhumanity of the Nazi's hate.

Through Charlotte's eyes we see the adjustments the children from England must make in their new homes. The terror and shock they have experience from the bombings and air raid alarms, their worry for their parents and the gradual settling in with a new family who has foreign ways but treats them lovingly and as a member of their own family. We also get to see the flip side of other War Guest children when they meet the little five year old girl in town and see she is being neglected (by her own aunt at that) and how the boy receives regular letters from the older boy he met on ship telling him how much he hates the family he is with, how he wants to runaway, go home and please may he come to visit him.

In this modest appearing book Jean Little manages to capture so many experiences from differing peoples that one gets a very diverse view of life both on the homefront and the life of a War Guest. She even manages to mention recurringly about the treatment of a German shopkeeper in town. I found the book to have covered all the issues I could think of and they came with the naivete of a child's point of view and the innocence with which a child can blurt out the simple truths. The story is highly entertaining and informative. Things are not all war, war, war either; there are plenty of happy times and a wonderful first-hand glimpse into 1940s wartime life for children and in general is portrayed. Since I've lived in the area it was fun to hear mention of places I knew: my own Fergus a couple of times, the quarry and Belwood Lake to name a few dear to my heart.

I really enjoy the Dear Canada series, but of course the quality of each depends on the author and when Jean Little's name is spied on the title page you just know you've got a winner in your hands. As usual the book ends with a chapter telling us what happened to the characters in the future, then an historical note that tells the real history behind the story and is finally followed by a section of related photographs. This book would make a great introduction to reading about the War as many feelings are dealt with but war details are not graphic. Highly recommended.

Abigail says

I thought this book was good....
some things i did not really like.
I would not say it is the best.....i have read better book's.....but over all it was a good read.

Graili says

This was a pretty good installment of the Dear Canada series. As always for this series a historical fiction series, the books were well researched and interesting. The entire book series is written in form of diary. The main character, Charlotte, in this particular volume was a twelve year old girl whose family host two war guests. Charlotte experiences and adjusts to the war in her own way. Though she is an ocean away from the actual fighting she is still very much exposed to it. Her character was well-written, as were many of the others.

The problems in this book were often solved speedily and by her parents.
This was a nice read and can be read by people of all ages.

Note: This book is incredibly similar to a book written by Kit Pearson (another Canadian author) in 1989. This book is called 'The Sky is Falling' and is truly excellent. To be perfectly honest I'd recommend this one over 'Exiles from the War'. They are both excellent novels and you would not make a mistake by picking them up and reading either one.

Madison says

Exiles From the War definitely wasn't my favourite Dear Canada book, but was good, well written, and interesting. It was about WG's (War Guests) who come from London to stay with families in Canada. The two children who stay with Charlotte and her family are Sam and Jane, both very nice kids.

Brooke says

Charlotte wasn't just a great host to the War Guests. She was also hilarious company. Unfortunately, my love for this book faded halfway through. Fortunately, I can find other Dear Canada books by Jean Little.

Westcoast_girl says

This book is another excellent Dear Canada book.
Written from the perspective of a girl from Guelph, this book is about her 12th year. During the year, (1941), her family takes in war guests. Her brother also goes off to war as a sailor.
At first, I found this book too similar to Kit Pearson's Guests of War trilogy. (same songs, same place, same concepts). Later, however, I realized these similarities are historical similarities that most war guests faced.
The book is well paced. It is filled with facts without being dull. It teaches the reader a lot about what being a

Canadian was like during WWII. It touches on the issues of German and Jewish discrimination. It also shows the struggles that the British children faced as they tried to fit into Canada.

As always, I did not like the epilogue. For some reason, the Dear Canada books believe that they should end the epilogue with the protagonist's death. I find this unnecessary and detrimental to the story.

Overall, though, this book was a good read. A great piece of historical fiction.

Shanelle says

"Exiles from the War" is another great read from the Dear Canada series, one full of history. I really enjoyed this insight into the War Guests' journeys to Canada and the trials and triumphs that they faced during their time away from home.

The author, Jean Little, is one of my favourites and this book lives up to my expectations of her. She is always able to provide such detail into her books and find a way to leave her characters with you even after the story ends.

Carlene says

Extremely disappointed. Not what I remember the Dear Canada books being. There wasn't much of a plot and the narrator didn't have a personality (which she admits openly) apart from being somewhat jealous of her war guests but is way too sweet and good to be realistic. If you want an excellent book/series about Canada's war guests, leave this on the shelf and pick up *The Sky is Falling* by Kit Pearson. And if you want a really awesome Dear Canada book, I would suggest *A Ribbon of Shining Steel* or *With Nothing but Our Courage*.

Arlene says

When a frightened girl and boy arrive on the Twiss family's doorstep to escape the Blitz, Charlotte wonders how she will keep her war guests from missing their parents back home, or from cowering every time a plane flies overhead. Though the war is being waged across the Atlantic, Charlotte begins to feel its danger, as her brother George defies their parents and enlists in the Navy.

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Twyla says

In this book Charlotte is excited to have a war guest coming to live at their house until the war is over. She is hoping to have a girl her age come. When she is surprised with a younger girl and her brother, she is

disappointed. Then Jane gets very sad when her brother is sent to live with their neighbours, and also because of the news about the war. Charlotte tries to cheer her up, along with Pixie, Jane's friend from the ship ride. I learned that things can end up good even if they seem that they can only end badly. Auryn 12 years old, 2016

Nicole says

My favourite thing about this book was that it was told from the perspective of the host, not the war guests themselves. It made for an interesting read because it's more common to see the entire situation from the kids who were being sent away from home, not the ones who were opening their homes to those kids. Also, showing the varying degrees these kids were treated and how different their reactions could be made the book even better- it truly showed the extent of how unideal an answer it was.

Sara says

Good but deducting stars because I thought that it was a War Child coming to Canada instead of them coming here, because the family didn't seem overly affected by the war (not enough sacrifice in my mind) and because Eleanor didn't end up with Bernie and Charlotte didn't end up with Sam. :(

Khadijah says

This is a book about a 12 year old girl and her diary. She writes her experiences with 2 kids who have escaped German bombs in London in WWII.
