



Liberty

Kirby Larson

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Fish has a knack for inventing. His annoying neighbor, Olympia, has a knack for messing things up. But when his latest invention leads Fish to Liberty, a beautiful stray dog who needs a home, he and Olympia work together to rescue her.

At the Higgins boatyard, where the boats that just might save the Allied forces during World War II are built, the wartime workforce is integrated and includes women and the disabled. However, a friendship that crosses racial lines is not the norm in 1940s New Orleans.

Fish, who suffered from polio and whose dad is away fighting in Europe, looks up to Mr. Higgins, and he's thrilled when one of his inventions helps Mr. Higgins's engineers unlock the mechanics of the landing crafts. Mr. Higgins inspires him to be bold and brave. As Fish enlists the help of unexpected friends and allies to save Liberty, he finds his perceptions of the world -- of race and war, family and friendship -- transformed.

Liberty Details

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Author : Kirby Larson

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From Reader Review Liberty for online ebook

Diane says

"Inside each piece of wood waits its true self, yearning to be revealed by the carver ... This is true of people, too. We do not know what lies within until we are prodded into action."

Michael "Fish" Elliot is a budding inventor and a polio survivor, though he still walks with a limp. He feels like he is a disappointment to his father and that he is the reason his Dad enlisted in the army. After Pop leaves, Fish and older sister Mo move to New Orleans from Seattle in order for Mo to get a job. She is employed by Andrew Jackson Higgins, owner of Higgins Industries. "Even Hitler knows about Mr. Higgins." They manufacture LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel) and PT boats. Fish is so impressed that he even wants to interview Mr. Higgins for a school assignment on "Heroes." And Fish makes an impression on Mr. Higgins, too, with a "cigar box invention" that helps his engineers solve a problem.

Next door to Fish is Olympia and her grandmother, Miss Zona. Fish is trying to invent a kind of trap to catch the rabbit that is eating the vegetables in Miss Zona's victory garden. Olympia is anxious to help out, but mostly drives Fish crazy with questions. On his way back from the store one day, a cur hound starts to follow Fish home and mean Mr. Lavache assumes the dog belongs to Fish. "If I catch her around here again, she won't be anybody's dog." Fish knows he must make sure the dog doesn't go near Mr. Lavache's again. How can he turn his rabbit trap into a dog trap?

On the other side of the world in North Africa, is Erich Berger, fighting in the German army. He is a gentle young man who worries about his family, especially his younger brother, Friedrich. When he is captured by American soldiers, he eventually finds his way to a prison camp in New Orleans.

Through determination and persistence, Fish finally devises a trap that can catch the dog and it works, though Olympia accidentally lets the dog out. But Fish continues to work and search. "The only thing I can't do is give up." And finally, he's able to catch the dog and begin to train her. But during a storm, Liberty runs away and Fish can't find her until he overhears Mr. Lavache talking about puppies. Fish is determined to save Liberty and her puppies. And who would guess that a German prisoner of war could be part of his plan?

Another solid book in the series. I like how Fish becomes stronger, physically and mentally, as he works to save the dog. I also like Mo's ambition to become an engineer. I also like how the tenuous friendship between Fish and Olympia grows to a true partnership and respect (even though they can't go to the same school.) There are a lot of great historical details of the time period.

Historical Note talks about Andrew Jackson Higgins. It was his LCVPs that were used at the D-Day landing. Eisenhower has credited Higgins' boats with winning the war for us.

<http://www.militaryfactory.com/ships/...>

Kristen says

Another cute dog/WWII book from Kirby Larson. This one takes place in New Orleans, where ships are being built and POWs are being held. I like that there are other issues addressed in the book along with the struggles of a country at war: race relations and segregation (Fish is white and his friend Olympia is black),

the treatment of the disabled (Fish has trouble walking due to a bout of polio), and what it means to be a hero.

Charlie says

Enjoyed reading this story of a dog and his friends that took place during WW11. It's about friendship that crosses the racial lines and a real passion for believing in their quest to do the right thing. Excellent story for the young and older generation (that's me).

Won this free book from Goodreads.com for an honest review.

Pam says

I listened to an electronic version of this book.

In the 1940s, Fish (who is working on strengthening his leg after having polio) and his older sister Mo get along just great, but Mo has a new beau. Fish loves inventing things, to the delight of his Neighbor Olympia. Fish invents a device to trap a stray dog, because a neighbor thinks the dog is getting into his chickens. Fish names the dog Liberty, and begins to train the dog.

Mo works for the local ship builder. One of Fish's inventions gains the attention of the warship designers, who use it as an inspiration for a new design for a problem they have. Fish and Mo's dad is off fighting the war, and readers see that Fish never felt that his accepted him.

The neighbor traps Liberty to get her puppies. Fish has to rescue Liberty and the puppies, with the help of a POW, while the telegraph boy comes to the house.

This book touches on a lot of issues: race (Olympia is African American), war, loving your dog and family, accepting change, disabilities.

Sharie says

Blends many historical details seamlessly

- WWII
- POW
- FDR
- battle ships
- racism
- soda/snacks of '40s
- polio
- etc.

Margie says

Without authors and illustrators willing to research our historical past, many windows into these time periods remain closed. Their efforts deepen and broaden our views beyond textbooks. When their focus is on people and places in realities other than our own, their books are like a time machine we can hold in our hands.

In her series Dogs of World War II author Kirby Larson takes specific aspects of the war enlightening and captivating readers. She begins with Duke (Scholastic Press, August 27, 2013) acquainting us with the Dogs for Defense program where family pets are trained to assist soldiers. In Dash we become a silent member of the Kashino family as they are sent to Japanese incarceration camps. In both books children have to relinquish their best friends, their dogs. Her third companion title, Liberty (Scholastic Press, October 11, 2016) takes us south to the city of New Orleans in the year 1944.

My full recommendation: <http://librariansquest.blogspot.com/2016/10/liberty-by-kirby-larson.html>...

Cara Cahill says

I am a sucker for dog stories, so of course I was excited to read this one. I fell in love with Fish And Olympia-both are characters that my students could easily relate to. I think this book is a great way to help kids move into different genres. I love how Larson intertwines the stories of the characters so flawlessly.

Jan says

Another great addition to Kirby Larson's Dogs of World War II series. I'm really hoping she writes at least a few more of these as I really do love them. Kids who love to read about dogs will enjoy this heartfelt story and also learn some interesting, but probably little known facts about some things that were happening here in the states (specifically New Orleans where this story takes place) during the war. I say that because I didn't know about a lot of the things I read about in this book. Like for instance that there was a huge plant in New Orleans (the Higgins Plant where Fish's sister Mo works) that was turning out hundreds of LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle Personnel, also known as the Higgins boat) each week. I actually didn't have any idea what a LCVP was, and was glad when the author finally explained a few pages later what the acronym meant. Then I realized I knew what they were; the boats that carried the soldiers who landed on the beach in Normandy on D-day. Also news to me was that hundreds of German POWs were housed in camps around New Orleans and were able to leave the camp to do day labor around the city. I did a google search and found out that The Port of New Orleans was the first stop in the U.S. for the majority of the 400,000 prisoners held in the country. More than 40,000 axis soldiers were housed in Louisiana POW camps from late 1943 through 1946. But what I loved best about the book was of course the dog that Fish rescues and names Liberty, and the sweet and funny relationships that Fish has with his sister Mo and neighbor Olympia. It was truly a joy to be a part of their world for a while.

Mary Sanchez says

While their dad is fighting overseas in WWII, Fish Elliot and his older sister Mo have moved to New Orleans where she works for Higgins Institute. They manufacture Landing Craft Vehicles for the military.

Fish is a tinkerer, perhaps because he's got a bum leg due to polio, and even gives Mo's boss an idea for the vehicles. Then Fish designs a trap to catch rabbits who are eating the Victory Garden of his next door

neighbor, Olympia and her grandmother. Fish and Olympia then work together to use the trap to catch a stray dog, which Fish names Liberty.

The poor dog is skittish around thunderstorms and keeps running away. It is captured by Mr. La Vasche, who chains Liberty up to see if her soon-to-be-born pups will be worth selling. A German POW, Erich, sees the situation with Fish, the dog, and the new born pups destined for drowning; and helps Fish in a rescue attempt, even if it means postponing his own escape attempt.

Fish is satisfied with saving Liberty and her puppies, but has another surprise when Mo invites her brother to meet a special guest who is touring the Higgins Institute plant.

I loved learning the fact that a company in New Orleans was instrumental in helping the war effort, especially because my uncle may very well have ridden one of its vehicles on the beaches of Normandy. All the historical facts were well woven into the story.

Kudos to Larson for including a realistic friendship between a white boy and black girl in the south during that time period.

Jana says

I am really happy that I had the opportunity to read *Liberty* by Kirby Larson because I think it is going to be a terrific book for middle grade readers. This is a historical fiction novel that I'm really looking forward to sharing with students. It has characters and situations that kids will recognize from their own lives and from other middle grade novels that they're likely to have read. It also will allow kids to step back in time to the 1940s and learn more about World War II and what it must have felt like to grow up during this time. Readers of all ages will appreciate the important lessons and messages of this story that will leave them feeling hopeful and uplifted.

Fish is a boy who loves to spend time tinkering with contraptions and inventing new things. When he falls in love with a stray dog in his New Orleans neighborhood, he and his next door neighbor, Olympia, find a way to trap the dog and turn her into a pet. While learning how to take care of Liberty, Fish also is finding ways to overcome his mobility issues brought on by polio in his earlier childhood. The author does an awesome job of dealing with issues of race relations in the Jim Crow South, having loved ones fighting in a war far away from home, and rising above difficult circumstances to accomplish great things.

For my complete review, please visit: <http://janatheteacher.blogspot.com/20...>

Pam Page says

A new historical fiction by Kirby Larson, set in New Orleans during WWII. Fish is a young boy with a leg damaged by polio and his best friend is his neighbor, Olympia. Fish lives with his sister, Mo because their father is fighting in the war and their mother died giving birth to Fish. A dog enters Fish's life and this creates complications but also joy for him. Another story with a German soldier, Erich, is a part of this book and I could not wait to see how these stories would come together. Full of time period memories (Necco

wafers, Orange Nehi, Higgins boats, B.B. Bats taffy, etc.), characters all affected by the war, and a fast-paced, exciting conclusion, this book is sure to be a winner with children! (Full review to come at pageandstorey.blogspot.com)

Anne says

A sweet but predictable story about a boy named Fish who likes to invent things, his nosy and irritating neighbor Olympia, and a dog named Liberty. There are lots of things to like about this historical fiction novel set in WWII New Orleans where there is room for women and disabled people to work in the big factory, but a friendship between a white boy and a black girl is cause for alarm. Another draw is the precious dog named Liberty who is rescued through patience and then needs to be rescued again but through determination this time.

As always, Larson's book is meticulously researched.

Barbara says

Watching how Kirby Larson pulls together the different threads of a story is fascinating no matter what she writes, but it is particularly interesting here in this book set in 1940s New Orleans. Fish Elliot has survived polio with only a bit of a limp to slow him down, and he and his older sister Mo do all right for themselves while his father is fighting in WWII. She nurtures his interest in building and inventing and allows him to roam the streets as long as he comes back by dark. When Fish sees a stray dog that he names Liberty, he receives help from the most unlikely places in saving her from a cruel farmer interested only in her breeding capacity. To his dismay, he gets help in his efforts--from his annoying African-American neighbor, Olympia, and from a German prisoner of war. The author packs a lot of history and change in such a slim book, even noting the changing roles of women in the work force, some hints about integration, and the importance of the Higgins landing boats being built right in New Orleans. In the end, it's clear that Liberty has all the right folks on her side, making this a satisfying story for intermediate readers who will be caught up quickly in all the suspense as they follow one boy's determination to make a difference in the life of one dog and by doing so, possibly prove something to himself and others.

Mary Lee says

This is the best of the Dogs of WWII series, in my opinion. The way Larson wove the story lines is impeccable. I knew what was going to happen, but I had no idea how she was going to get there! There were surprises around every corner.

So many things to love about this book -- the main character overcoming his body image (polio), the interracial friendship, the girl power (main character's sister who aspires to be an engineer), the great quotes:

"Don't let others set the bar for you."

"We do not know what lies within until we are prodded into action."

"Men are not prisoners of their fates, but only prisoners of their own minds."

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

t's 1944 and Fish Elliot and his sister Mo have moved to New Orleans from Seattle while their dad is overseas fighting in the war. Now, Mo is working for Higgins Industries, manufacturer of LCVPs (or Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel), and spending time with her new boyfriend, Roy.

Fish, who had contracted polio when he was younger that left him with a weakened leg, loves to tinker and invent things. While working on a trap to catch whatever is eating up his neighbor Miss Zona's Victory Garden, with unwelcome help from her granddaughter Olympia, Fish finds a mangy stray dog. After a mean neighbor, Mr. LaVasche, threatens to shoot the dog for bothering his chickens, Fish decides to keep it, naming the dog Liberty in his head. But Liberty is a skittish dog and keeps running off.

Life in New Orleans settles into a daily routine for Fish. School, chores, inventing, visits from Olympia and looking for Liberty fill his days, as does trying to build his weak leg up again using one of his own inventions and riding a bike, despite the pain and difficulty. Fish is convinced that his father is disappointed in him because of the polio and just wants to be strong for him when he returns from the war.

One day, Fish comes home and finds a badly wounded Liberty under their oak tree, waiting for him. He tends to the gash on her side with help from Olympia and Miss Zona, and actually manages to convince his sister to let him keep Liberty, outside only though. Unfortunately, it turns out that Liberty is deathly afraid of thunderstorms and runs away again when one begins. When he finally finds her weeks later, she is pregnant and being held captive in a very small cage, and Fish soon learns that Liberty's life may once more be in jeopardy thanks to Mr. LaVasche.

Sandwiched in between what is happening in Fish's life is the story of a young German soldier named Erich Berger, 17, who has a younger brother back in Germany who also has had to deal with polio. When a bomb hits his camp, Erich is captured by the Americans and becomes a prison of war. It doesn't take long for him to realize that life as a POW is better under the Americans than as a German soldier. Eventually, Erich makes his way to a POW camp in New Orleans. When he sees Fish trying to release the now caged Liberty, he is reminded of his own brother and decides to help, even if it means putting himself in jeopardy.

Liberty is the third book in Kirby Larson's Dogs of War series. The first one was Duke, the story of a boy who gives up his dog to the Dogs for Defense program; the second book was Dash, about a young Japanese America girl who must give up her dog when her family is sent to an internment camp.

Like the first two books, the main story is focused on life on the home front during WWII. One of the things I really like about reading a book by Kirby Larson is that the reader gets such a clear picture of what life was like at the time in which the story is set. It is all done in such a natural way that the reader finishes reading with a lot more information plus a really good story. For instance, I know what an LCVP is, but had never heard of Higgins Industries and its owner, Andrew Jackson Higgins. Larson gives enough information about this important wartime company, but inspired me to look it up anyway.

Fish is a great character. Somewhat naive, he is also strong, imaginative, inventive and kind. Polio was a common disease back then (see my review of Blue by Joyce Moyer Hostetter for another protagonist who contracts polio), and he works hard to overcome his disability.

For all Fish's complaining about Olympia annoying him, he really does like her. Olympia is African American and Fish seems to not really know or understand about Jim Crow laws, treating her like he would anyone else. But when he (and the reader) witnesses some of the treatment she and her friends are forced to deal with, Fish begins to understand life in the south a little better, but he still doesn't let that prejudice influence his friendship with her and her grandmother.

Kirby Larson is a master at writing historical fiction and *Liberty* is no exception. I highly recommend this and the other two books in the Dogs of War series. All three focus on important themes of bravery, courage, friendship, tolerance and prejudice, and kindness under difficult circumstances. Plus they are engaging and well written.

Liberty will be available October 11, 2016.

This book is recommended for readers age 9+

This book was sent to me by the publisher, Scholastic Press

This review was originally posted on Randomly Reading
