



## The Disappeared

*Gloria Whelan*

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## **The Disappeared** Gloria Whelan

A riveting tale about love and sacrifice by a National Book Award winner.

The Disappeared. Los desaparecidos. This is the name given to those who opposed Argentina's dictatorial government and were kidnapped to ensure their silence. With her hometown of Buenos Aires ensconced in the political nightmare, Silvia devises a plan to save her missing brother. She'll make Norberto, son of the general who arrests dissenters, fall in love with her?and he'll have his father set Eduardo free.

Told in alternating chapters, this powerful and poetic story follows Silvia as she spirals into Norberto's world, and Eduardo as he struggles to endure physical and emotional torture. Will Silvia's scheme reunite her family? Or will the pursuit of freedom cost these devoted siblings their lives?

## **The Disappeared Details**

Date : Published June 12th 2008 by Dial Books

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Author : Gloria Whelan

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Fiction, War

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## From Reader Review The Disappeared for online ebook

### Lesley says

this story is about the bond between siblings, political violence and war in Argentina and life in prison. I like the books by this author!

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### Leona says

Interesting premise, but the story needed more depth.

Though the story of two siblings connecting through letters was powerful, the progression and characterization could have been stronger. The book did educate me on the military rule of Argentina and the unfortunate outcome of the many men and women who were brutally captured, tortured, and ultimately disappeared.

Given this is a YA adult book, the author was limited to certain boundaries, yet she successfully educated and accurately captured the utter despair of the situation.

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### Cassidy says

This book is something I would recommend because it is such an interesting read on two perspectives of the same event. But overall I loved it even seeing the amazing text describing everything in such detail. Just hearing what the brother, sister bond Silvia and Eduardo had was just breathe taking considering she was willing to do anything to help him out of this horrible situation.

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### Clare Cannon says

This is a powerful short story told with eloquent simplicity. Its subject matter is serious: the political persecution and violation of human rights by Argentina's government in the 1970s, focusing on the student protesters who 'disappeared', taken as prisoners in a kind of witch-hunt for those who were thought to oppose the government.

While showing that the student protesters fought for a just cause, Whelan helps the reader to think deeply about whether some forms of rash rebellion could be half-fed by a reckless pride in wanting to appear rebellious without considering the most effective way to fix a situation.

She is also wise in showing the naivete of a young woman who believes she can make a dangerous boy love her enough to do her a great favour, helping her to learn the unpleasant reality that there is no real love there, he only wishes to use her.

But excellent storyteller that she is, Whelan shows that though flawed, these heroic young people are brave

and humble enough to learn from their mistakes, and through their patiently endured suffering their rebellion truly becomes heroic.

While the storyline is serious, Whelan's narrative is refined and not gratuitously graphic, there are very few brief descriptions of torture and the romance is halted before going too far. Things are implied without being spelt out in detail, though what is implied would probably still be too much for younger readers. And for older readers it is a book that should be thought about and talked about. Mature readers 13 and up.

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### **K. says**

3.5 stars.

This book is really more of a novella, not even hitting the 150 page mark. It's set in Argentina during the 1970s and is told in the form of letters between a brother and sister following his abduction by the secret police. Silvia devises a plan to save her brother by attracting the attention of Norberto, son of a powerful general. Meanwhile, her brother Eduardo, is telling us his side of the story from prison - the events that brought him to the attention of the military in the first place, and what he's experiencing in prison.

This was the first time I'd heard of Los Desaparecidos - those who were taken by the secret police and the military in Argentina during military rule in the second half of the twentieth century. So this is an important book, if it makes people aware of Argentina's history. But at the same time, it was so short that it felt like it barely skimmed the surface of the story. And there's so much more here that could have been fleshed out and expanded and developed to make it a harder hitting story. Add in the fact that the ending felt a little too neat and tidy, and it was a quick and decent read, but probably not one that will stay with me.

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### **Maestra Mendez says**

An amazing story that will hopefully help others learn and remember about the Dirty War and its atrocities. I love how the story is unfolded in mental letters between Silvia and her brother Norberto.

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### **Jack says**

A real mixed bag. On the one hand, this story sheds light on the terrifying subject of political violence through imprisonment and torture. It takes place in Argentina in the 1970's as Silvia's brother Eduardo becomes one of *los Desaparecidos* after protesting against the repressive military dictatorship. The book brings discusses the importance of political speech and the right to protest. It's also a moving story of the bond between siblings, as it is told through unwritten letters between Silvia and Eduardo during his imprisonment. It's emotional, compelling, and short.

On the other hand, the book is a bit too pat to really offer much in the way of commentary. None of the characters are terribly intelligent, and the actions that they take to try to reach each other are outlandish and irresponsible. The siblings' story ends up diminishing the impact of the subject, and the tidy ending blunts the gravity of the situation the characters -- and the entire country -- are in.

The book also pulls too many punches when it comes to dealing with Eduardo's torture. I don't say that to advocate violence in teen lit, but I think that when dealing with something this important (and sadly relevant), it's the author's responsibility to reveal the truth of what torture is and what its consequences are. Whelan just doesn't seem up to the challenge.

It's a noble effort, and it's decently written. The characters are sympathetic even if their not always believable (or very bright). The book offers an introduction to some of these issues, but falls short of saying all that it should.

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### **Amy says**

it's a fast read of a historical fiction story of two siblings during the 70s in Argentina and the time of the Disappeared. Didn't take long at all to read and I learned quite a bit.

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### **Casey Eccles says**

Good historical fiction. Finished in two sittings.

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### **Kaitlyn Hill says**

It is very sad about what all had happened to them. It is a great book.

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### **Erin Reilly-Sanders says**

Meh. I love Gloria Whelan, but this one just didn't do much of anything for me. I felt dragged into the story too early with a pretty obvious exposé of the time and setting, which was a little abrupt, okay, way too abrupt. This made it feel too "un-subtle?" While the gender roles are played with a little bit as Silvia steps up and tries to act to free her brother, action is still seen as typical for boys- Eduardo and the dad- but requires the removal and threat to one of the female's kin to inspire action. But this book isn't even really worth an investigation into gender roles even with the caveats of being historical fiction anyway. My biggest concern is that the ending seems incredibly unrealistic. While children's literature is supposed to be hopeful, I don't find Whelan's resolution of the conflict satisfactorily plausible. Because the beginning was so abrupt to get this short little novel started, I didn't end up caring much about either of the main characters. In any case, I think there are so many books out there that this one isn't worth one's time.

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### **Sovotchka says**

This book, told as letters from two siblings to each other, takes the reader deep into the Argentina suffering under the rule of General Videla.

Gloria Whelan manages to tell the deeply moving story of Eduardo disappearing, and Silvia going down a dangerous path to find him, in very simple words, without complications and unnecessary pathos. There is anger, and violence, and people are hurt, but there is also humanity and hope.

This book is short, but make no mistake, for it will capture you from the first page, and will not let you go until the end.

I will leave you with a few quotes, so you can see for yourself the impact that this story can have:

"I look about in my memories to make a book to read, for I have come to realize that our lives are but books to read and reread. We cross out and add and finally we come up with happy endings. I am desperate for a happy ending." (p.49)

"we are not alone in our sorrow over your arrest. The more we reach out to find you, the more we find others who are also suffering. There are so many, we wonder if our arms can embrace them all."(p.34)

"The Phoenix [...] was a bird of the greatest possible beauty. Every five hundred years the bird was consumed by the burning rays of the sun, only to rise once again. The magnificent bird could not be destroyed. That is our country of Argentina" (p.6)

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### **Rachel says**

I have mixed feelings with this book. This book is about Argentina in the late 70s and how the country was ran under dictatorship. Story was written as a brother and sister's point of view, alternating back and forth, in letter format. Given the setting of the story, it was necessary for this format, not what I prefer. The characters seem very monotone. There were feelings involved, but I didn't seem to reflect as the reader. This is a short read that definitely teaches about a period of world history that I personally was unaware of. For that, 3 stars.

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### **Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says**

This novel, told in alternating chapters from the points of view of a brother and sister, takes place in Argentina in 1977 during the time of the Disappeared, when the military, who were in control of the government, were kidnapping, torturing, and killing anyone whom they suspected opposed them. Eduardo is taken by the military, so his sister Silvia sets out to try to get him released. She is a naive character, and makes some bad though well-meaning decisions. The story was very suspenseful, as I kept thinking that it could not end well. The ending came as a surprise to me, and was very satisfying. Years ago I read John Simpson's *The Disappeared and the Mothers of the Plaza*, so I had some background on the events of this period. Whelan's novel, however, really brought it to life. This would make a great YA book discussion, as it's a quick read and is filled with much to talk about. Recommended!

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**Tara says**

I found this book very interesting. I learned things about Argentina and their government. It was a odd book but overall I liked it.

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