



Willow Run

Patricia Reilly Giff

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Meggie Dillon's life has been turned upside down by World War II. Meggie's father has announced that they must help the war effort and move to Willow Run, Michigan, where he'll work nights in a factory building important war planes that will help fight the enemy in Europe. Willow Run will be the greatest adventure ever, Meggie thinks. There she meets Patches and Harlan, other kids like her from far-off places whose parents have come here to do their part in the war. And there she faces questions about courage, and what it takes to go into battle, like Eddie, and to keep hope alive on the home front.

Willow Run Details

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Author : Patricia Reilly Giff

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From Reader Review Willow Run for online ebook

Sophia Cha says

i thought it was brave of meggie to deal with all her problems during ww2. she had already gone through so much an i liked the way she handled everything also how she dealt with leaving her best friend and grandpa.

Lorelei says

i love this book and it was very insprational

Theresa says

We owe our freedom to people like Meggie!

Kathy says

I enjoyed this book. and I think you should read it. My favorite part was probably when they go to Willow Run and Meggie makes new friends there. But you should read the book Lily's Crossing first by the same author. I really like this book ?I think you should read it.?? --Whitney

Elizabeth says

not very good

Kate says

Patricia Reilly Giff is one of my favorite middle grade authors. She is able to bring the past alive with engaging characters and fascinating stories. I find her very engaging and I thoroughly enjoy all her books.

Melenia says

decent

S.K. ~ IntrovertedSea says

If it were an option, I would rate Willow Run 3.5 instead. A sweet and easy read that kids will enjoy, but as a "grown-up" there were areas it fell short for me.

I grew up with a used, and further well-loved paperback of Lily's Crossing. Anytime I ran out of new books from the library, I came back to it because it felt like home. I had no idea there was a companion novel until I stumbled upon Willow Run a few weeks ago and was overjoyed. But even as a now 21 year old, having not read Lily's Crossing for some time, I easily noticed that Willow Run does not link up properly. The first and most evident being that Margaret states that she hates to be called "Margaret" by her Grandfather, and that everyone else calls her "Meggie." And yet, throughout Lily's Crossing, Lily always refers to her as Margaret.

But as a stand alone, there are not enough descriptions of the characters to feel you know them, the story line doesn't heighten much, and the ending leaves many loose ends and few conclusions. As a companion and not a sequel, I should have expected I still would not learn the fate of certain characters.

Overall, if you enjoy Patricia Reilly Giff as I do, or you're a middle grade reader, this is a perfect book to spend time with. But if you are choosing your first Giff book to read, I highly suggest her Newbery Honor-Winning titles over Willow Run.

Becky says

Alright, I've found another book I want for my class-set room! Now, if I can only convince others to jump into this book too. I don't know if I loved it because I love Giff, if I loved the story, or if it's because I watched that Canadian show Bomb Girls on Netflix.

It's a petite book that lightly shows how children's lives were interrupted during WWII, but doesn't trivialize what they are going through. It leaves plenty of room for discussions. I'd say perfect to do with a 3rd or 4th grade.

Bill says

I live just a few miles from the real-life Willow Run Plant, so this book has special meaning for me just for that. Add to that the fact that while I was reading it, I learned that the plant had just been scheduled for demolition. So this book has very special meaning to me even before reading it.

But the book would be empty for me without depth and meaning. I am a lover of great children's and young adult novels, and a little after starting the book, I asked myself, "How deep and meaningful can a children's book about World War II be, if it's 'only' written from a civilian child's point of view?" Well, I was answered in a very good way.

I listened to the unabridged audiobook narrated by Staci Snell. Three times. Patricia Reilly Giff makes the everyday life come alive through Meggie's eyes and thoughts, and there are very brave things, very frightening things, and very new things about the world and life, that she goes through.

Thanks to the Internet I was able to look up the culture points (songs, radio shows, maps, and even the photographs, both aerial and everyday) of Willow Run and America in the 1940s.

This book was instrumental in me becoming a part of the present (as of this review) effort to raise money to preserve the final bay and bay doors where the B-24s rolled out of the Willow Run Plant and onto the airfield. If successful the final bay will become the new home of the Yankee Air Museum, which is presently on the opposite side of the airfield.

Also if the effort is successful, the Smithsonian will arrange for the delivery of the last surviving Willow Run B-24 on American soil from its present museum to the Yankee Air Museum.

As part of this effort and increasing local awareness, I have bought dozens of copies of this book to leave at the local public libraries for children and adults to take one free.

Shari says

A middle-reader that takes place in 1944 and deals with childhood during WWII. For me there was much that was nostalgic about the childhood and much that was remembrance of American family life during the war.

Meggie's grandfather immigrated in the early part of the century, became a citizen, fought in the Great War and won honors, but he was a German to too many thoughtless Americans and Meggie tries to protect him. Her father takes a job as a foreman in Willow Run, Michigan in a new Henry Ford factory that is building B-24s. They must move from Rockaway, New Jersey to an ugly, quickly erected housing warren near the new factory where the plumbing is unpredictable, the walls are paper thin, there is no green to be seen anywhere nearby, and private life is hard to keep within one's own space.

A child's mind during a war is beset with realities that directly impact the child and its family. Confusion abounds and yet the ability of children to recognize the hard things and try to bring them to a place where they can be dealt with is impressive. This is a tale about just such a young lady who is nurtured by her German grandfather in the best and most understanding ways. It is a story that doesn't try to soften the hard and harsh realities of war, of fear, and of loss.

I am constantly astounded by the high caliber of books for younger readers. They are not Disney tales. They deal with the hard things and they deal with the truth. They are not watered down so that they prevent young readers from learning what they need to learn. They are not forced to read material that will frighten, but they are made to think and consider what so many of the problems of life mean and how they affect us all.

This is one of those good books.

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

It is the summer of 1944 in Rockaway, New York and twelve year old Meggie Dillon's older brother Eddie is in the army and fighting somewhere in Europe. Meggie spends much of her time doing things with her German-born Grandpa, even though he sometimes annoys with her by always calling her Margaret, not

Meggie and when he always gets the letters V and W mixed up when he speaks, plus he always talks during a movie.

So when her parents tell Meggie they will be temporarily moving ("for the duration") to a place called Willow Run, far from Rockaway, so her father can build B-24's for the war effort, she is somewhat relieved to find out that Grandpa won't be coming along. She had just caught two boys painting a red swastika on Grandpa's window, calling him a Nazi spy and telling Meggie that if he lived anywhere else but Rockaway something terrible would probably happen to him. Worried, she rubbed the swastika off with a rag and turpentine so her Grandpa wouldn't see it.

No sooner does the Dillon family arrive in Willow Run, Michigan than Meggie begins to miss home - tending the garden with Grandpa, her best friend Lily, the sound and smell of the ocean right outside her door. But Meggie soon makes friends with Patches from Tennessee, Harlan from Detroit and Arnold, the ice cream guy who Harlan thinks is a German spy and from whom the kids figure out how to steal ice cream when he locks up his truck.

But then comes the news that Eddie is missing in action after the Normandy invasion and the Dillon's world seems to collapse. In the midst of all their sorrow, Meggie receives a package from Grandpa containing his most cherished possession - his Victory medal from World War I. As Meggie begins to learn the truth about Patches' life before Willow Run and Arnold's demons, and witnesses her parents grief over Eddie as well as her own, she begins to understand what is most important in the world and hatches a plan to help herself and her parents.

Patricia Reilly Giff continues the story of Meggie and Lilly in Willow Run that she began in Lilly's Crossing, which I probably should have read first, but didn't. Yet, somehow I don't think that will really matter in the long run, however since Lilly plays a very minor role in Willow Run, which is definitely a stand alone novel.

Meggie is an engaging down-to-earth narrator in this quiet coming of age novel. When Eddie had joined the army, he told Meggie now she was an only child, no longer the baby. And when she left Rockaway, she was indeed still quite immature. But it is her experiences in Willow Run and having to deal with such different new realities and events that turn Eddie's word into truth.

The reality of war was a part of home front life for many kids during WWII and in Willow Run, Giff has given us a different version of that life by taking Meggie out of her familiar circumstances and placing her in a place created specifically for the war, where she can meet other people from circumstances very different from her own. It is a situation where people become friends quickly and help each other out, understanding that they are all in the same boat with shared fears, hopes and dreams.

And Giff has captured some wonderful bits of home front life, like the rag curlers worn by a neighbor, the contests for things like Hot-O-Soup that Meggie and Grandpa are constantly entering, Meggie's vow to never eat Spam again after the war (my mom made the same vow and never did eat it again). All serve to give this well-written, thoughtful work of historical fiction a sense of authenticity.

This book is recommended for readers age 9+

This book was purchased for my personal library

Willow Run, Michigan was an actual place, a village and plant for making B-24 bombers, built by Henry Ford during the war. The housing was slapped together quickly and was exactly as Meggie describes:

A kindergarten kid could have drawn it: a long low box that stretched from one end of the paper to the other, no paint, no color. And if you divided the box into tiny sections, each family would have one to live in. Worst of all, there was no grass, nothing growing, only tree stumps... (pg33)
You can see photos of and find out more about Willow Run in WW@ at Willow Run Village

This review was originally posted at The Children's War

Jamie says

Meggie and her family move to Willow Run, MI from Rockaway Beach where her parents work in a bomber factory. Her brother, Eddie joined up and is M.I.A. after Normandy. She makes new friends, and realizes that while this is a worse situation for her, it's a better situation for others. This is really more of a mood piece than a "story" although it for sure has a plot. A good war story for young girls.

Patsy says

Another sweet story with well-defined characters from Patricia Reilly Giff. I particularly enjoy historical fiction, and this book, set during World War II, was very satisfying.

Molly says

(3.5) Sweet, but too brief. This felt as if it were a bit of a sprawling short story to me; it was missing some dynamics and flesh of a novel. From other reviews, I understand it's a companion book to Lily's Crossing, so I suppose my reading list has now gotten bigger. I do get the sense that this is part of something bigger, that perhaps this could be in a sequence, that there needs to be a book this size on either end to round things out.
