



The Girl with the White Flag: A Spellbinding Account of Love and Courage in Wartime Okinawa

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New York Newsday called this memoir of a warhood childhood in Japan "one of the saddest and yet most uplifting books about childhood you will ever encounter."

Separated from her family in the confusion and horror of World War II, seven-year-old Tomiko Higa struggles to survive on the battlefield of Okinawa, Japan. There, as some of the fiercest fighting of the war rages around her, she must live alone, with nothing to fall back on but her own wits and daring. Fleeing from encroaching enemy forces, searching desperately for her lost sisters, taking scraps of food from the knapsacks of dead soldiers, risking death at every turn, Tomiko somehow finds the strength and courage to survive.

Many years later she decided to tell this story. Originally intended for juvenile readers, it is sure to move adults as well, because it is such a vivid portrait of the unintended civilian casualties of any war.

The Girl with the White Flag: A Spellbinding Account of Love and Courage in Wartime Okinawa Details

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Amy Shrek says

This was an amazing book that absolutely hooked me. It was sad but at the same time happy. It had some graphic depictions of death but was still a very good book. It was something I would not usually read, but I am glad I read it. My teacher read it to me as a read aloud book.

Damien Goodwin says

I really like this book because it talks about war and I like war. This book was written from a 7 year old's perspective and how she made the journey all the way up until now. I think this might be on my top ten favorite books. It isn't even that she is 7 it's the way they make it look like she is a full grown adult that has years of training in the "wild" or in war, and war is harder to survive than the wild, so this book is just literally amazing.

Katie says

I listened to this book in a class I co-teach, and at first, it was quite depressing and, at times, graphic. The story is an amazing one detailing survival during WWII in Japan, even more so because the subject is a mere 6/7 year old. The atrocities that she witnessed as a child are things most adults have never witnessed and probably won't in their lifetime.

Candise says

When I bought this at Goodwill, there was a note inside it that read,

Kristy 2000,

Remember how you felt when you first read this book? Read it again.

-Kristy 1997

That single-handedly made me want to read this. The writing itself isn't that amazing (that could also be due to its translation), but the narrative is. An autobiography by a Japanese native, this is her account of how she survived one of the deadliest bombing sprees in occupied-Japan during WWII. Separated from her parents (and eventually her siblings), she is left to wander around the country side, avoiding bombs and searching for food and shelter.

Holy shit, I cried so much. Yeah, it's hard to read about the atrocities of war, especially how it affects children, but sometimes we have to force ourselves to get outside of our comfort zones and listen to other people's lived histories if we want to become smarter, more compassionate people.

Annie says

Most of my students read this book, so I thought it was worth the read. It was written for adults, but a great war account for young readers. It is very simply written and lacks creative flare, which is why I gave it only 4 stars, but after living in Okinawa for three years it is a MUST read for anyone stationed here. It was the first civilian account of the Battle of Okinawa that I read. Even though it's non-fiction so many of the characters were touching and endearing as if they were fiction. I have since gone caving in the southern parts of the island in search for....well, you'll find out if you read the book. I don't want to give the story away. Truly a courageous girl whose entire life was ripped apart by warfare!

Himari Amakata says

I had always been interested in the Battle of Okinawa because I have seen so many pictures and heard so many stories living/growing up here; which is why I chose to read this book. The Girl with the White flag is an amazing book, especially because the author experienced this personally and wrote this book herself. And as a child who surrendered, or raised the white flag at the time, her memories are clear but her thoughts on countries being "good" or "bad" weren't clear at all (only the fear and trauma)- which makes it better because her stories aren't so biased like any other WWII stories out there.

Although some parts of the book were really descriptive and grotesque at times, I think that's what it really looked like, or worse.. and as children who have not experienced war at all, the descriptions are very important and stories like this are worth just as much or even more than, facts on textbooks. I also liked her going to the states to meet the photographer that took her picture. Having been in a past where they were on different sides that killed each other, I felt like this event made the book/story even more open towards both Japanese and Americans.

The author, Tomiko Higa was meant to write this book. She was just so so lucky to be able to live through the war, including living when Nini died, living on her own after being separated from her sisters, meeting the old couple, etc. I am so glad she wrote this book, and ant everybody, especially for people living on Okinawa to read this.

Hailey says

I loved this book. It was so interesting, and I couldn't take my attention off of it. But it was also really depressing. But, usually, depressing book's are interesting. I'm sorry but it's true.

In this book we learned not only about what the war was like, but also a lot about the culture in Okinawa. I would like to point out how hard core Tomiko's father was. He definitely took discipline to another level. I didn't think anyone would do something like that over a bunch of beans. I mean I get it, you can't grow the plants anymore, but did you really have to leave her up there for so long? Yes it was an effective method, but was it necessary? Not trying to be disrespectful though.

Kayako Cusumano says

The Girl with the White Flag. This was a great book and I would recommend it to anyone who loves history or Non-fiction. This book was definitely a tear-jerker, it ALMOST got me. It was very interesting seeing the war from a seven-year-old child's perspective. I was actually very surprised at how well she held up through that hard time. I know that if I were in her shoes I probably wouldn't have made it. She went lost so much and still pushed through. It was especially interesting for me because I live where this happened and I have family who lives in the same village as the main character, Tomiko Higa, and I've been to the beach that her brother was killed. I couldn't imagine what she went through and how she felt but I think that the book really does well to convey her experience from the cruelty of the Japanese soldiers to the kindness of the old couple she helped and stayed with for a while. When Tomiko had to leave was, in my opinion, one of the most emotional parts of the book. I was really surprised when she went to the states to find the man who photographed her and I was very happy when she finally found him. You could tell she was feeling a wave of emotions. I'm really glad that I read this book because I would be missing out if I hadn't. I think that this book is also good for those looking for a generally quick read. It's not a thousand pages long and if you want you could read it in a day. I think the book gives good background and has really good transitions. I'd like to read more books like this one. We may not ever live through what they had to but we can learn about it and I think it's a real blessing for us and very generous of the people who had to go through it because I'm sure it was difficult and painful to pull those memories back out.

Ashtonr says

It was an ok book. At times I was like why do we have to stop reading, then there were other times where I didn't want to read it at all because parts got kinda boring at times but then there were the exciting parts which I enjoyed. There was a lot of deaths in the book which is kind of sad but it just makes the book a whole lot better.

Sharon says

I'm writing this for Julie. I noticed she just added this to her "To Read" list.

Julie. Prepare for tears. I read this back when I was commuting to and from Manhattan every day. I read it in one train ride. I finished it right at my stop. I prayed no one would see the tears streaming down my face as I exited the train. Oh, it was an UGLY cry.

I'm tearing up just thinking about this beautiful, pure, unbelievably sad, innocent, remarkable book.

My grandmother grew up in wartime Okinawa. Her brothers and sisters also hid in the mountains. This certainly played a part in my love for the book, but the story—of the resiliency of the human spirit, especially that of a young child—spans all ages, races, people with pulses.

I. LOVED. THIS. BOOK!

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Becky says

A MUST read if you live in Okinawa!!!

Kylie says

We choose this book in class and I didn't really know what to expect. The start of the book wasn't that interesting but once the book starting going on it got more interesting. It is filled with details that make you grossed out, happy, sad and it just has fascinating things in general. Overall this was a pretty good book.

This book is a real story about a young girl during the battle of Okinawa during World War II, then she got separated from her family and had to try to live on her own. She couldn't trust much people, because she wasn't sure if they were good or bad. For being such a young girl she was very smart and remembered some of what her father said to help her survive, but she also finds some people that she can trust that might of helped her to live.

Mackenzie H says

My class read The Girl with the White Flag as a read aloud. It started off okay, not the most uplifting book I have ever read, but it got more solemn as the book went on. Then the story transitioned into the more depressing part. Tomiko tells the story of what it was like to actually live through the second world war. She had to take every day one step at a time to try and survive. She experienced the loss of her loved ones along with the feeling of complete and utter fear of death day in and day out. She also struggled with the fluxuation of hope throughout all of it.

This is an absolutely stunning story. The emotional roller coaster of how she felt and what she went through is absolutely inspirational. I will warn you that there are some graphic part that will leave you speechless. It is also a very deep and heavy story. But, that doesn't mean that it shouldn't be read. I highly recommend this book to anyone and everyone.

Uminaka16 says

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