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Stepping On The Cracks



Synopsis

In 1944, when her brother is overseas fighting in World War II, eleven-year-old Margaret changes her mind about the school bully, Gordy, after she discovers he is hiding his own brother, a deserter.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Most WW II homefront novels are unambiguous in their approach to patriots and traitors, allies and enemies. Hahn's subtle, thought-provoking work, however, proposes the legitimacy of a variety of ethical responses to critical situations. Margaret's brother Jimmy is overseas fighting, and Margaret and her parents avidly follow news of Allied advances. She and best friend Elizabeth, united in their dislike of Gordy the bully, slowly uncover several ominous secrets: Gordy is helping his older brother Stuart, an Army deserter, hide in a weatherworn shack in the woods; and Gordy's father batters his mother, his siblings and Gordy himself. At first Margaret and Elizabeth see their discovery of Stuart's shack as a way to "blackmail" Gordy into treating them decently, but when Stuart falls dangerously ill, the girls feel obliged to help care for him. Soon they begin to reexamine the standard propaganda about the war. While some of her characters seem anachronistic and certain developments are unlikely, Hahn succeeds in raising questions as valuable as they are vexing. Ages 9-12. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 5-8-- The complex arguments for and against pacifism are woven into this involving story of a girl's experiences on the home front during World War II. Margaret, 11, and her boisterous friend Elizabeth hate the school bully, Gordy. They discover that a man living in the woods whom they had

thought of as crazy is actually Gordy's gentle brother, who has deserted a war he feels he cannot morally fight. When Stuart nearly dies of pneumonia, the girls join forces with Gordy to get help and they gain insight into Gordy's difficult life with his alcoholic, abusive father. Well-drawn characters and a satisfying plot keep this from deteriorating into a message novel. The issues raised are presented from diverse points of view, and no easy answers are given. Margaret struggles with her feelings about her brother fighting (and ultimately dying) in a war that Stuart has deserted. She realizes, however, that Stuart's conscientious objection is not the black-and-white, coward vs. patriot matter her parents believe it to be. Although clearly set in the '40s with characters that are true to their time, their problems and feelings are not dated and should interest today's readers. There is plenty of action and page-turning suspense to please those who want a quick read, but there is much to ponder and reflect on as well. --Louise L. Sherman, Anna C. Scott School, Leonia, NJ
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College Hill, hometown U.S.A., is the home of 6th graders Margaret and Elizabeth during WWII. Both girls' brothers are overseas, as are many of the town's sons and young husbands. Margaret is the main character. All of the families are worried about their loved ones and live letter to letter about the far away soldiers. Margaret & Elizabeth love to jump on the cracks in the sidewalk and yell "step on the cracks and break Hitler's back" hoping that will help bring their brothers home safely. We also see other hometown characters: Gordy, the bully, along with his two toadies. And then there is Barbara, a young soldier's widow and their baby. All of this might seem very mundane until you throw in an abusive father, someone who will not be coming home, and a soldier gone AWOL. All of these characters become closely inter-twined and . . . well, you'll see.

This book about a young American girl and her family during WWII is well worth reading. "Stepping on the Cracks" gives insight into the time and place in United States history that many of us have not known. My personal example is the term "Gold Star Mother" - I'd never heard the term and now I know. I have much deeper respect for the people "at home" as well as those who sacrificed so much for our freedom. This is a children's book, but can be enjoyed by adults. I highly recommend "Stepping on the Cracks" by Mary Downing Hahn.

This book was so amazing I had to read it for class turns out I really enjoyed it! Thanks !!!!!

I couldn't put the book down!!! My favorite character was probably Gordy or Elizabeth. Elizabeth is a

lot like me. Dare-devil :) always looking for trouble and then Gordy was mean at first and I thought "whoa...better stay clear of him" but he might end up being my favorite he found his soft side. LOVED the book!! EVERYONE MUST READ STEPPING ON THE CRACKS!!!

It was an amazing book!!!!!! I love it!!! I recommend it to everyone In the world!!! Best book Ever!!! Yay

Written from the point of view of a girl who grew up in the time frame as I did and about what was going on in the US during WWII helped me to identify with the characters. The plot was well stated and the fact that times were different then was nostalgic. Written originally for younger adults I found it quite enjoyable. Bullying and abuse has always been around these actions were presented in a thought-provoking manner.

I enjoyed Stepping on the Cracks by Mary Downing Hahn. The story takes place during WWII when times were simpler yet scary because of the war. I enjoyed reading about the friendship between Elizabeth and Margaret and their complicated relationship with Gordy. It's difficult to find a good book without bad language, but this is a good one.

I bought a couple of copies for my kiddos to read during the summer. They loved this book. It made them really think. I would recommend.

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