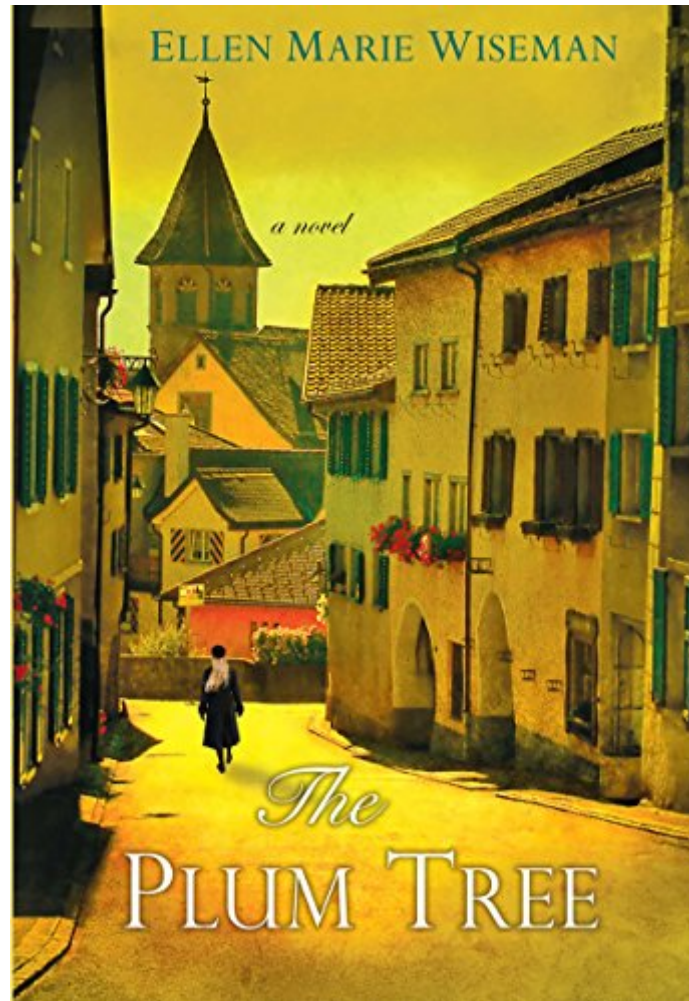




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The Plum Tree



Synopsis

A deeply moving and masterfully written story of human resilience and enduring love, *The Plum Tree* follows a young German woman through the chaos of World War II and its aftermath. "Bloom where you're planted," is the advice Christine Bärlitz receives from her beloved Oma. But seventeen-year-old domestic Christine knows there is a whole world waiting beyond her small German village. It's a world she's begun to glimpse through music, books--and through Isaac Bauerman, the cultured son of the wealthy Jewish family she works for. Yet the future she and Isaac dream of sharing faces greater challenges than their difference in stations. In the fall of 1938, Germany is changing rapidly under Hitler's regime. Anti-Jewish posters are everywhere, dissenting talk is silenced, and a new law forbids Christine from returning to her job--and from having any relationship with Isaac. In the months and years that follow, Christine will confront the Gestapo's wrath and the horrors of Dachau, desperate to be with the man she loves, to survive--and finally, to speak out. Set against the backdrop of the German homefront, this is an unforgettable novel of courage and resolve, of the inhumanity of war, and the heartbreak and hope left in its wake.

Advance Praise For Ellen Marie Wiseman's *The Plum Tree* "The Plum Tree is a touching story of heroism and loss, a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the power of love to transcend the most unthinkable circumstances. Deft storytelling and rich characters make this a highly memorable read and a worthy addition to the narratives of the Holocaust and Second World War." --Pam Jenoff, author of *The Ambassador's Daughter* "A haunting and beautiful debut novel." --Anna Jean Mayhew, author of *The Dry Grass of August* "In *The Plum Tree*, Ellen Marie Wiseman boldly explores the complexities of the Holocaust. This novel is at times painful, but it is also a satisfying love story set against the backdrop of one of the most difficult times in human history." --T. Greenwood, author of *Two Rivers*

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Customer Reviews

I'll be honest, I had mixed feelings about reading *The Plum Tree*. As the wife of a Jew and the mother of a teenager who would have been considered impure by the Nazis, I struggle with anything that circles the Holocaust. However, as a Brit, I grew up on firsthand stories of hardship during the Second World War. It was always the stories of everyday actions--some heroic, some not--that resonated with me. And this is what I loved most about *The Plum Tree*--the level of detail that allows readers to experience the lives of ordinary Germans during a moment in history that was anything but ordinary. And yet *The Plum Tree* is much more than just a glimpse into rural family life during the evils of the Nazi regime. It's also a thumping good read--a hopeful story of survival, courage, and resilience. Christine is a fabulous heroine, and once I hit the half-way mark, you could not have wrestled her from me with a crowbar. I hate spoilers, so I'll only say this: The novel is not over once the Allies liberate Germany. The plot twists and the shades of grey layered into Christine's story kept me engrossed until the last page. As her father says, "War makes victims all." I highly recommend this wonderful debut novel.

It was interesting to read about the German civilians who had to live through Hitler's reign. We don't often hear about the allied bombings of German towns or about the civilians who were struggling under Hitler. But other than that it was a flimsy story that seemed to be written more for adolescents than adults - but that's not a bad thing if young people actually read it. I thought the main character, Christine, was quite naive and unbelievable. The romance was silly. Christine's friend Kate was ridiculous - but someone like her was needed for the story. As others have said, the ending seemed to be hastily thrown together. I didn't find any of the characters likeable and felt that Christine WAS responsible for many of the things that happened to the people around her. And why didn't she try to

learn English? Her time in Dachau seemed too easy, especially because she was there for helping Isaac to escape. It would be a good book for teens or young adults - especially as there are those who believe that none of this ever happened.

I read for relaxation and historical fiction is a favorite genre of mine. THE PLUM TREE is superb historical fiction, but so realistic and told as though everything was happening before my eyes, that it was totally unsettling. Had I not had faith in the writer to bring Christine and Isaac together in the end, I would not have kept on reading. (My faith was rewarded—and along the way I learned much more about the holocaust than I wanted to know.) I marvel at this author's ability to include so much detail in her novel and still create a page turner that keeps one reading long after he should have closed the book and gone to bed. She knows how to dig out the facts, absorb the settings and their unique characteristics and then create a riveting tale. As I read THE PLUM TREE, often with my heart beating as though it wanted to pound its way out of my chest, I flagged a number of passages that I especially enjoyed so I could go back and re-read them. For example: "As the women washed the dishes, the roar of the growing flames absorbed the weighted silence of the kitchen." Or "When she heard the name Dachau, a black dagger of horror plunged deep into her chest, where it lodged and throbbed, causing shock waves of fire and ice to shoot through her veins." And finally, "The train stopped outside the building, pistons pounding, like the giant, beating heart of a mammoth black creature fighting its way through the very walls of the building, so it could eat them alive." Readers who enjoy being swept into a story where the characters are true-to-life with futures in jeopardy from people and situations out of their control will appreciate this story as well as the author's later novels, WHAT SHE LEFT BEHIND and COAL RIVER. _Hope Irvin Marston, author of AGAINST THE TIDE: THE VALOR OF MARGARET WILSON

This is a rich telling of a sometimes tragic love story set in WWII Germany. It is the third book I've read in as many months with this setting (the others being Motherland and The Aftermath). This is as unique as the other two, if not my favorite. It is ultimately a love story (not a romance), between Christine, a young Christian and the educated and more worldly Isaac, son of the Jewish family she works for as a domestic. It is 1938, the war is beginning, WWII and the war against all Jews by the third reich. a lot happens in this sleepy Bavarian town including a visit from Hitler himself. At times there seems to be a little too much happening in too short a time, but if you suspend that disbelief and remember how extraordinary the times were, you will be caught up in the breadth and scope of

this novel. Christine, who ironically is the physical picture of the ideal Aryan girl, is caught hiding Isaac in her family's attic putting them all in danger. She pays the ultimate price of internment in a concentration camp. Will Christine's profound love of her home and family and her deeper love of young Isaac survive all of this turmoil? Will Christine herself survive? This is a beautiful account of small town Germany as well as a stark one of the Nazi's reign of horror and the deprivations of WWII Europe.

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