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An Elephant In The Garden: Inspired By A True Story



Synopsis

Lizzie and Karl's mother is a zoo keeper; the family has become attached to an orphaned elephant named Marlene, who will be destroyed as a precautionary measure so she and the other animals don't run wild should the zoo be hit by bombs. The family persuades the zoo director to let Marlene stay in their garden instead. When the city is bombed, the family flees with thousands of others, but how can they walk the same route when they have an elephant in tow, and keep themselves safe? Along the way, they meet Peter, a Canadian navigator who risks his own capture to save the family. As Michael Morpurgo writes in an author's note, *An Elephant in the Garden* is inspired by historical truths, and by his admiration for elephants, "the noblest and wisest and most sensitive of all creatures." Here is a story that brings together an unlikely group of survivors whose faith in kindness and love proves the best weapon of all.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Square Fish; Reprint edition (October 8, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1250034140

ISBN-13: 978-1250034144

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 16.4 x 196.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 106 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #50,852 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #32 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Europe](#) #58 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Military & Wars](#) #59 in [Books > Children's Books > Animals > Elephants](#)

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

Customer Reviews

“Young Lizzie's story (differentiated from the framing tale by typeface change) is quick-paced and moving, and her teenage viewpoint is believable.”

“Morpurgo crafts a thought-provoking and perilous encounter with an enemy combatant who joins their party and eventually forges a believable romance with Lizzie.”

“Readers . . . can't help but be drawn into the tale of survival

told in *An Elephant in the Garden*, which is loosely based on a real event from World War II. *BookPage* “The calm, steady tone is engaging, appropriate, and will appeal to a wide range of readers. *VOYA* “The occasional interruptions to the story build suspense and add a layer of resonance to Morpurgo’s poignant and thoughtful exploration of the terrible impact of war on both sides of the fighting. *Booklist* “This well-paced, heartwarming narrative by a master storyteller will appeal to readers on several levels *School Library Journal* “Morpurgo’s (*Kensuke’s Kingdom*) suspenseful, ultimately tragic novel opens as 18-year-old Tommo Peaceful stays up all night ‘to try to remember everything.’ ... This is a moving depiction of a loving relationship between two brothers, their lives so linked that readers may wonder until the end whose fate lies in the balance. All in all, a powerful story about war’s costs, and who pays the price. *Publishers Weekly*, starred review of *Private Peaceful* “This searing World War I novel reveals the unspeakable slaughter of soldiers on all sides fighting against people who are just like them...the viewpoint brings close the fury of the thundering guns, the confusion, and the kindness of enemies who come together in No Man’s Land to save the wounded horse.... and the terse details speak eloquently about peace. *Booklist for War Horse*

Sir Michael Morpurgo, Order of the British Empire, is one of the world’s most acclaimed authors for children. His middle grade novel, *War Horse*, debuted on Broadway in 2011 and is being adapted for film by Stephen Spielberg.

My fifth graders love it! It is a beautifully written book and they have kept it checked out continually. For a book to hold a 10 year old’s attention without benefit of battles or vampires is so refreshing in today’s market. My class highly recommends it!

I bought this book because I love both the city of Dresden and the book *Water for Elephants*. Not much of Dresden is in the setting, and the plot is not as complex as *Water for Elephants*. Still, the book is an excellent read-aloud for upper elementary students because of the elephant’s appealing character and the suspense of the family’s wartime journey to Heidelberg. I also noticed a connection to the von Stauffenberg plot to assassinate Hitler. The Countess’s castle is in about the right place on the journey, but it is a parallel rather than a reference because Von Stauffenberg’s wife was arrested after her husband was executed. The compass is an important symbol in the book, and there is a lot of opportunity for students to debate ethical choices.

I tried to stop reading six different times! Finally it became apparent that I could not stop. So, here I am at 1:24 AM writing this review. My advice? Start reading it with your coffee at breakfast.

I was told about this author from a friend and read one of his books this is the second one I have read and I could not put it down a lovey story which any age would enjoy .

Super book. My middle schooler that loves animals and WWII stories dug into it and enjoyed the story. As a teacher I valued it as well.

It's a book, not used, not broken, got it fast and it was all good.

My children love Michael's books and loved this one too. As someone who loved the African bush and its amazing wildlife, and elephants in particular, I was drawn into reading this too. He magically was able to stitch together the horror of wartime experience and survival with the richness and joy of a relationship between a family and a majestic mammal. A lovely book for young and old.

A very well told story. I love it.

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