

## **After the Train**

**Gloria Whelan**

**Reviewed by: Rachel Johnson, 41**

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After the Train is set in Rolfen, Germany 10 years after World War II. It's the last day of school and Peter who is a 13-year old German boy can't wait for summer vacation. He's become bored with his teacher who continues to lecture about Nazis and how Jewish people were treated during the war and how they continue to be treated. As Peter and his two friends start their summer vacation, the boys look forward to enjoying the three months with no classes. Peter's father is an architect, he's working on a church that was bombed during the war. He gives Peter a job helping the bricklayers at the church and he becomes close to Herr Schafer who he finds out is Jewish. Peter's father was in the war and Peter has questions, he feels his father is keeping a secret from him so one day he goes through his parent's things.

He reads letters they wrote to each other during the war and he discovers a secret about himself that makes him question who he is. When he finally gets his parents to tell him the truth he learns that his birth mother was Jewish. His mother and father tell him a story of how his mother was being sent to a concentration camp during the war. While his birth mother was being escorted to a train the guards were distracted and she handed Peter to his current mother. While this was very dangerous and could have meant his current mother's life she hid him and raised him as her own child. This information makes Peter even more curious and he wants to learn more about the Jewish culture and faith, with the help of his friend the bricklayer he gets that opportunity.

After the Train is a story of learning self-acceptance while also accepting others. The author has incorporated lessons about the holocaust and antisemitism in the form of stories told to Peter by different characters throughout the story. My favorite aspect of the story is that it shows that heroes come in all forms. It gives a glimpse into how people felt and the type of things they were dealing with after World War II in Germany. I don't feel the book had a wow factor, the story was slow and lacked adventure or excitement. It's a good read for anyone interested in history. I recommend the book to ages 10-13. I wouldn't buy this book but if you find it in the library check it out.

### **Recommended Titles**

Number the Stars, by Lois Lowry

Journey to the Pale Bear, by Susan Fletcher

Lifeboat 12, by Susan Hood