

# Stories from the World Wars

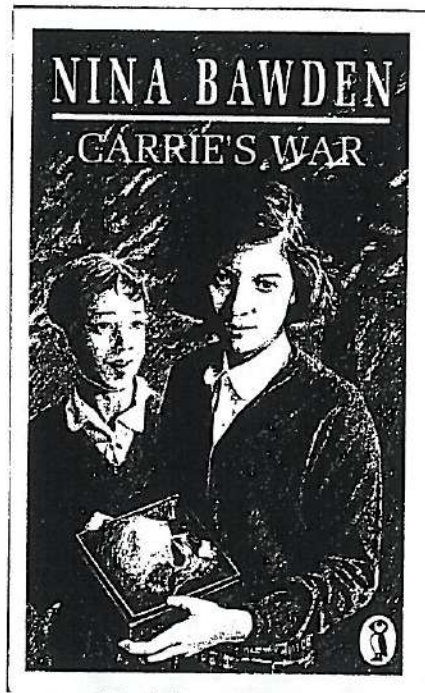
Compiled by Helen Beckinsale

May '99

The largest number of books concerning children and war are those relating to the Second World War as the children who endured this war began sharing their experiences in the late 1960s and early 1970s. More than fifty years after this war ended the stories are still coming as the authors realise their need to come to terms with the traumatic experiences of their childhood and the need to share these experiences in the hope that others will learn from them. This list presents a selection of these, both fiction and non-fiction, plus stories set in World War I. Although some of these stories are presented in picture book format, in many cases their content is not suitable for very young children. Some titles have been featured in recent lists and are listed again in this thematic list for convenience. Note: Titles which are still in print (available) are not necessarily in stock in NZ bookshops. This information is taken from NZ Books in Print 1999, and Global Books in Print. If unable to obtain them here try an Internet supplier such as Amazon. Titles which are out of print are available in public libraries.

Members of the committee who have reviewed titles are identified thus:

Helen Beckinsale (HB)  
Carol Ardern (CA)  
Betty Gilderdale (BG)  
Sally Gallagher (SG)  
Susan McIntosh (SM)  
OP - out of print titles



## World War I

**Beck, Jennifer**

*The Bantam and the Soldier*

illus. Robyn Belton.

Ashton Scholastic 1996.

A poignant story that gives an insight into the life of a young New Zealand soldier in World War I. Effective use of colour creates the setting and mood. Impeccable research means the illustrations provide interesting detail of life in the trenches. The endpapers are a montage of authentic memorabilia. Picture book format, 8-12 years. OP (CA)

**Crew, Gary**

*Memorial* ill. S.Tan

T.C. Lothian Pty. Ltd. 1999

Four generations share their recollections of a Moreton Bay fig tree that was planted as a World War I memorial but is now in danger of being cut down by the Council as it is damaging a monument. Illustrated with exquisite sensitive montages. Fascinating page layouts include collage of mementoes as well as

high impact double page illustrations. 8+ Available. (CA)

**Darke, Marjorie.**

*A Long Way to Go.*

Kestrel Books 1978, Puffin 1982.

This story focuses on Luke, a conscientious objector, who is imprisoned and eventually sent to France. He and his twin sister Bella are descendants of Midnight the slave who features in an earlier book. Emily, the young suffragette from *A Question of Courage* is also reintroduced in this book. Young adult. OP. (HB)

*A Rose from Blighty.*

Collins 1990.

The book opens with Louise, from *A Question of Courage*, being released from prison at the beginning of World War I. She and Emily are both involved in the war, Emily as a nurse and Louise as an ambulance driver and the book paints a vivid picture of the harsh conditions endured by nurses in wartime France. Young adult. OP. (HB)

**Harris, Ruth Elwyn**

*The Dividing Sea.*

Julia McRae 1989.

This is the third book in *The Quantocks Quartet* which tells the story of four sisters each book being told by the point of view of a different sister. This book is set in France during World War I where one sister is a nurse. 12+ (BG)

**Mayo, Virginia.**

*Remembering: The Story of a Soldier* Hutchinson 1996. This a

picture book which attempts to show the meaning of war to young children. Two children walk with their grandfather to a cemetery for soldiers and later they meet a soldier who takes them to a meadow where soldiers are about to go into battle in World War I. 6-8 Available. (HB)

**Lockyer, John**

*Harry and the Anzac Poppy*

Illus. Raewyn Whaley.

Reed Children's Books 1997.

Picture book format. An old woman shares correspondence from her soldier father during World War 1 with her great grandson. The illustrations use appropriate sombre tones for the war pictures and also sensitively portray the elderly woman and the young boy. The significance of Anzac day is emphasised. 8-12 Available. (CA)

*Lotti- Gallipoli Nurse*

illus. Alan Barnett

Reed Children's Books 1998.

Sophisticated picture book. The text is written as a nurse's diary and is based on actual letters of a nurse and a soldier, and an officer's war diary. Contains explicit descriptions of the war wounded and the many horrors of Gallipoli. 12+ Available. (CA)

**McCutcheon, Elsie**

*Summer of the Zeppelin*

J.M.Dent & Sons 1983

Puffin 1984.

Elvira who badly misses her father, fighting in France, finds a ruined house in the woods which she plans to use as a sanctuary for herself and her orphan friend Clarrie only to find that it has already been discovered by a German prisoner of war. The story has an exciting conclusion with all elements of Elvie's life satisfactorily resolved. 10+ OP (HB)

**Morpurgo, Michael**

*War Horse*

Methuen 1990

Albert is heartbroken when his father sends his beloved horse to war and believes he will never see him again. The horrors of war which the young horse has to face are graphically described. OP (JS, JC)

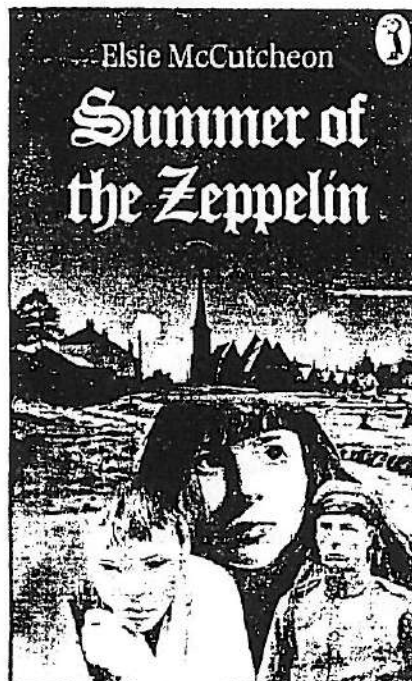
## World War II

**Alington, Gabriel**

*Evacuee*

Walker 1988

Fanny is evacuated not to the country but to America where she finds that not everyone is convinced that America should enter the war. 9-12 OP (HB)



**Ackerman, Karen**

*The Night Crossing*

Alfred A Knopf, 1994.

One of many stories on the subject of Jewish families fleeing from the Nazis but unusual in that it is suitable for newly independent readers. The story focuses on issues that seven and eight year olds would identify with, such as the loss of friends and treasured possessions and the use of the

children's dolls to smuggle the family candlesticks into Switzerland. 8-10. OP. (HB)

**Bawden, Nina**

*Carrie's War*

Puffin 1973

Carrie and her little brother are evacuated to a cheerless house in Wales but make friends with Albert who is billeted in the same area. Years later Carrie returns with her children and finds that her friends are still alive although she has always thought they died in a fire.

9-12 Available- Harper Collins. (HB)

**Bishop, Claire Huchet**

*Twenty and Ten*

Scholastic Reprint 1991. (Also published as *The Secret Cave*. Scholastic 1969).

This is based on a real incident in rural France during the Nazi occupation. A brave nun and twenty school children agree to hide ten Jewish children. Amazon features reviews from readers who remember the impact of this book from when they first read it thirty to forty years ago. 8-10. Available. (HB)

**Burton, Hester**

*In Spite of All Terror*

Oxford, 1968.

Based on the author's own wartime experience this tells of a year in the life of Liz, fifteen when the war began, evacuated from working class London to the household of an Oxford don. The differences in the living standards of the different classes are clearly portrayed as is Liz's growth from preoccupation with her own troubles to awareness of and concern for those around her. The book includes a vivid description of the Dunkirk evacuation. 11+. OP. (HB)

**Coerr, Eleanor.**

*Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*

G.P. Putnam's Sons 1997.

The story of Sadako who died as a result of radiation ten years after the bombing of Hiroshima has become a modern classic. 8+.OP (HB)

*Sadako*

illus Ed Young

G.P. Putnam's Sons 1993.

This a retelling of the novel using a selection of the illustrations used for the film. 7+ Available. (HB)

**De Jong, Meindert**

*The House of Sixty Fathers*

Puffin 1958, 1966

Set in China during the Japanese occupation 1937-1945. A young boy searches for his family after the Japanese destroy his village and is befriended by American airmen.

8-12. Available. (SG)

**Foreman, Michael**

*War Boy: A Country childhood*

Pavilion Books 1989.

Foreman uses a picture book format and a combination of full page and double spread watercolours, sketches, reproductions of posters, cigarette cards, government notices and posters to show the wartime world of his childhood. The book is certainly not aimed at young children with its small print size and fairly densely packed pages of print but the matter of fact style of writing and humorous recollections contain much detail that would be of interest to children 10 + and to adults. Available. (HB)

**Gee, Maurice**

*The Champion.*

Oxford 1989, Penguin.

Set in small town New Zealand in World War II the story is seen through the eyes of twelve year

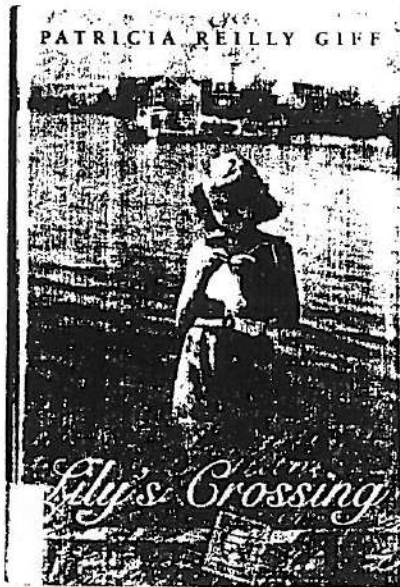
old Rex, whose mother has offered hospitality to a convalescent American soldier and whose father is into black marketing. Not only does the soldier turn out to be black, he shatters Rex's illusions by admitting to being afraid in battle. Not as popular with children as Gee's fantasies but a realistic look at wartime concerns in New Zealand. 11+ Available. (HB)

**Giff, Patricia Reilly**

*Lily's Crossing*

Delacorte Press 1997.

Set on the Atlantic coast of America in 1944 this is the story of Lily, her reaction to her father's departure to the war and her friendship with Albert, a Polish refugee whose sister has been left behind in France. There is a satisfying happy ending when Lily is reunited with both Albert and his sister the following summer. A Newbery Honor Book. 10+ Available. (HB)



**Greene, Bette**

*Summer of my German Soldier*

Penguin 1973

Patty, an unhappy Jewish girl in Arkansas, shelters a German prisoner of war who escaped from a local POW camp and must face the wrath and hatred of her family and her town for her activities. 11+ Available. (HB)

**Greenfeld, Howard**

*The Hidden Children*

Ticknor & Fields books for Young Readers, 1993.

This is a factual account of the Jewish children who survived the Holocaust by going into hiding. The words of the children's own memories as adults stand out from the rest of the text in italics and photographs which survived the war, along with the children, help to emphasis to the reader that these were real people who were deprived of the basic needs of children- to love and be loved and to belong. 10+ Available. (HB)

**Hautzig, Esther**

*The Endless Steppe.*

Hamish Hamilton 1968

Puffin 1981.

The true story of how Esther's Polish Jewish family were arrested by the Russians and transported to Siberia. 12+ Available. (HB)

**Heyes, Eileen**

*Children of the Swastika: The Hitler Youth*

Millbrook Press, 1993.

Heyes presents a history of the Hitler Youth Movement which attempts to explain to today's adolescents how a whole generation became drawn into all aspects of the Nazi regime. Interviews with former members of Hitler Youth are included and many of these emphasise the values and discipline of the organisation as positive influences. The author balances these by pointing out to the reader the danger of giving up the right to independent thought. 12+ Available. (HB)

**Hoestlandt, Jo**

*Star of Fear, Star of Hope*

Originally published Paris, 1993.

Trans. Mark Polizzotti.

Walker Publishing 1995.

The story of a Jewish child who disappears with her family is told

in the context of a child's birthday party where one child does not understand the danger the other child faces and reacts with anger when her birthday treat of having her friend to stay the night is spoiled. The reader needs to be able to understand that the child in the story is the old lady telling the story and regretting her actions. 1994 Graphics Prize- Bologna Book Fair. 7+ Available. (HB)

**Holliday, Laurel. Ed.**

*Children in the Holocaust and World War II: their secret diaries.* Pocket Books (Simon & Schuster Inc.) 1995.

Published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war this is an anthology of diaries written by children in Nazi-occupied Europe and England. The twenty three diary extracts are by children from ten to eighteen years old and provide a record of their various experiences- in hiding, in the ghettos and concentration camps, in Resistance movements and during the Blitz. To those who might wish to censor such distressing reading the editor suggests that the diaries are testimony to the fact that telling the truth about violence is not harmful. 12+ Available. (HB)

**Innocenti, Roberto (illustrator)**  
Text- Ian McEwan.

*Rose Blanche*

Jonathan Cape 1985.

Sophisticated picture book set in wartime Germany. A village child befriends children in a prison camp with tragic results. The artist, who was a small child during the war, wanted to illustrate "how a child experiences war without really understanding it." The full page illustrations are detailed and relevant to the text, showing the despairing faces of the children in the concentration camp and the bewilderment on the face of the child who discovers them. Available. (CA, HB)

**Kerr, Judith**

*When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*

Nine year old Anna is heedless of Hitler's rise to power until her father, an outspoken writer, goes into hiding and her family flees Berlin in secret. Anna is forced to learn the skills needed to survive as a refugee and copes with new friends, new schools and new languages as the family moves to Switzerland, then France and finally England.

9-12 Available- Collins Modern Classics. (HB)

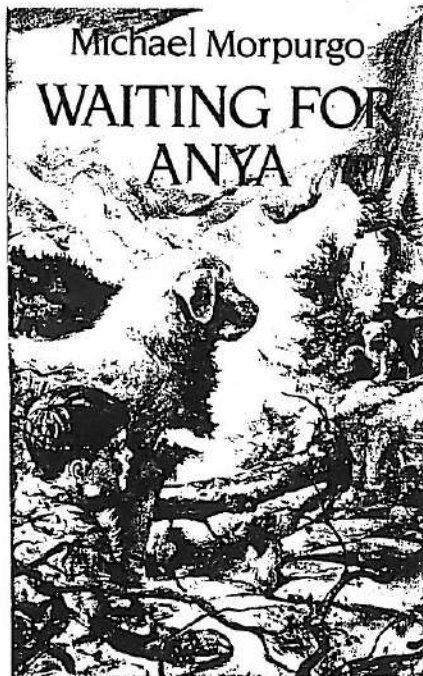
**Koehn, Ilse**

*Mischling, Second Degree:*

*My Childhood in Nazi Germany.*

Hamish Hamilton 1978, Puffin 1981.

An autobiographical account of life in wartime Germany where the author, as a member of Hitler Youth, is sent to evacuation camps where the local populace are hostile to Germans and attends a military training camp. Although it was forbidden for the Hitler Youth to rejoin their families she returns to Berlin towards the end of the war to find that she is as much at risk from the liberating Russian army as she has been from the bombing. 12+ Available. (HB)



**Klaussner, Wolf.**

*Survive the Storm.* Originally published as *Juppa und der Zigeuner.* Verlag Sauerlander, Frankfurt, 1979. Trans. From German- Stella & Vernon Humphries. Methuen 1984.

The author was called up, at the age of fifteen, in the final year of the war and has a particular interest in how the war affected teenagers and how they learn about it today. Set in Germany towards the end of the war this book provides a different point of view for adolescents from the countries which won the war with its portrayal of liberating U.S. troops which were as guilty of atrocities as the Nazis. It also gives a picture of life after the war when those with Jewish blood were still victims of persecution and discrimination when they returned home. 12+ OP. (HB)

**Lasenby, Jack.**

*The Mangrove Summer.*

Oxford University Press 1988.

This is the story of a New Zealand family whose father is a prisoner of war in Germany. The children become convinced that a Japanese invasion is imminent and that the adults will not take evasive action so they hide out in the bush with tragic results. In a way it is the classic situation found in many children's adventure stories, where children fend for themselves without adults, but in a true historical setting. The atmosphere of wartime New Zealand is portrayed as one of determination to carry on as usual and of intolerance for any deviation from the expected course of action such as conscientious objection.

Esther Glen Award 1989. 11+ OP. (HB)

**Lowry, Lois**

*Number the Stars*

Collins 1989

This is a fictional account of the true story of the evacuation of

Jews from Nazi-held Denmark. The story is told through the eyes of a 10 year old girl who shelters her best friend on the eve of the roundup and helps to smuggle her family out of the country. Newbery Medal 1990. 10+ Available. (HB)

**Lutzeier, Elizabeth.**

*No Shelter*

Blackie 1984.

This story of two small children fending for themselves in wartime Germany was the second recipient of the Kathleen Fidler award established to encourage new writers to write for the 8-12 age group. The children endure some very distressing events including the loss of their mother and I have reservations about its suitability for 8 year olds. There is a happy ending in that the children are reunited with their father. 10-12 Available - Collins Willow. (HB)

**Magorian, Michelle**

*Goodnight Mr Tom*

Puffin 1983

This moving story tells of the torments and triumphs of Willie, evacuated from London at the beginning of the war and placed with an old man in the countryside. The story has a tragic twist, when Willie is called back to London and his mother at the height of the bombing, but a very satisfying conclusion. 11+ OP (CA)

**Maguire, Gregory.**

*The Good Liar*

University of Queensland Press, 1996.

The youngest of three brothers in a small French village in occupied France tells the story of their wartime experiences to a group of American children who have written to him as an adult, asking for help with a school project on World War II. Two of the brothers form a secret friendship with a German soldier, not realising that

they are jeopardising the lives of family and friends. Selected as one of the 100 best books of 1996 by the Young Book Trust, England. 9-12 Available. (HB)

**Morpurgo, Michael**

*Waiting for Anya*

Viking Penguin 1990

A young country boy discovers that a local farmhouse is being used as a collection point for young Jewish refugees who are then being smuggled over the mountains from France into Spain. 10-14 Available. (SG)

**Morimoto, Junko.**

*My Hiroshima.*

Coloured illustrations and photographs.

Viking Children's Books 1987.

The story of the bombing of Hiroshima is simply told by Morimoto who was a high school student when the bomb was dropped. She sets the scene by describing and drawing her childhood, the games she played and her special memories- things that all young children would be able to identify with, before illustrating the devastation caused by the bomb. The book ends with a letter to parents and teachers emphasising the responsibility of adults "to teach our children... to care for and value all life on earth." 8+ Available. (HB)

**Pratchett, Terry**

*Johnny and the Bomb.*

Doubleday 1996.

Johnny has the ability to time travel and he and his friends are transported to their own town in 1941. They know that a bomb will fall that night. Can they alter events and save the people? Good for budding historians and physicists- the contrast between 1941 and today makes interesting reading. 11+ Available. (BG)

**Rees, David.**

*The Exeter Blitz*

Elsevier/Nelson Books 1978.

This is the story of the various members of one family during the night of the Exeter Blitz, one of several attacks on historic English cities. Much of the story is told from the viewpoint of Colin, a teenage boy, who views the bombing from the tower of Exeter Cathedral. Carnegie Medal 1984. 12+ Available. (HB)

**Reiss, Joanna.**

*The Upstairs Room*

Oxford University Press 1973, Harper Collins 1987

This is the true story of two Jewish sisters who spent the war years in Holland hidden in an upstairs room. 10+ Available. (HB)

**Serrailier, Ian**

*The Silver Sword*

Jonathan Cape 1956, Puffin 1996.

This classic book describes how a group of young children have to find their way across war-torn Europe from Poland to Switzerland. 11+ Available. (BG)

**Stevenson, James**

*Don't You Know There's a War On?*

Greenwillow Books 1992

The abstract water colour illustrations and simple text tell the story of war from the point of view of a ten year old American boy- the blackout, food rationing and missing his father when he goes away to join the army. All children would be able to identify with the situations which Stevenson recounts. OP (HB)

**Vos, Ida, trans. Teresa Edelstein and Inez Smidt.**

*Dancing on the Bridge of Avignon*

Houghton Mifflin 1995.

As her life becomes more restricted by Nazi edicts against Jews, in occupied Holland, 10 year

old Rose de Jong finds refuge in daydreams of 'normal life', and in music. A novel based on reality, which may be too much for some sensitive children as the atmosphere of tension and fear comes across very strongly, and although Rose herself survives, there is no happy ending. Available. (SM)

**Walsh, Jill Paton**

*The Dolphin Crossing.*

Macmillan 1967.

The story of two boys from very different backgrounds who took a boat to help with the Dunkirk rescue. 11+ Available- Puffin Modern Classics. (HB)

**Westall, Robert**

*Blitz*

Lions, Harper Collins 1995

Four short stories covering different aspects of wartime life in England from a child's point of view. 8-11.

*Blitzcat*

Macmillan 1989

A cat wanders through England in search of its master, witnessing the shooting down of a German Stuka, the destruction of the city of Coventry, bringing new hope to a despairing war widow and accompanying a bomber crew on their missions over Germany. 12 + (HB) Available- Scholastic.

*The Machine Gunners*

Macmillan 1975, Puffin 1977

Inspired by Westall's own wartime childhood in Tyneside this book vividly portrays English working class life and values. War is initially seen as a great adventure to the children but the acquisition of a machine gun off a crashed German fighter and the need for secrecy leads to a situation where the children are at war with the adults. Carnegie Medal 1975. 11+ Available. (HB)

*Fathom Five*

Macmillan 1979, Puffin 1982,1986  
Chas McGill of *The Machine Gunners* is convinced that a spy is passing information to the Germans about Allied ships. His investigation, initially a pleasant diversion, ends up being conducted in deadly earnest. 12+ Available (HB)

**Wild, Margaret**

*Let the Celebrations Begin*

illus. Julie Vivas.

Omnibus 1991

The story is told by an older child in a concentration camp, secretly helping the women to make toys for the younger children in anticipation of the end of the war. The exuberance of the pictures where Miriam recalls her life before the war, with her own toys and plenty of food, contrast sharply with the hunched, ragged, shaven headed inhabitants of the camp. The importance of one's own room, toys and nice food is something that young children reading this book would understand but adult guidance would be needed in explaining why some children lack these things. Available (HB)

**Wolff, Virginia Euwer and Laydon, Joseph.**

*Bat 6*

Scholastic 1998

Set in Oregon just after the war the action centres on Shazam, whose father was killed at Pearl Harbour, and who consequently hates the Japanese, and Aki, a Japanese American who has recently returned home after spending the war in an internment camp. The two girls meet on opposing teams in a softball game where Shazam attacks Aki. The story is told in brief first person accounts from all 21 girls on both teams. Available. (HB)

**Yolen, Jane**

*Briar Rose*

Tom Doherty Associates 1992.

If you can imagine the castle as a concentration camp and the hedge of thorns as rolls of barbed wire you will feel the power of this contemporary retelling of the classic fairy tale. This is the story of one woman's survival, told to her granddaughters in the form of the tale Briar Rose. (SG)

