



Oranges for Christmas

Margarita Morris

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What would you do if your family was trapped behind the Berlin Wall?

Berlin. August 1961. The Cold War rages. When the Berlin Wall suddenly divides East from West, Sabine is separated from her beloved brother, Dieter. Escape to the West is the only option if the family is to be reunited. But the Wall is guarded by soldiers operating a shoot to kill policy. To make matters worse, Sabine finds herself at the mercy of the Stasi and their brutal interrogation techniques. She must fight to escape. She must fight to survive.

Cut off from his family and motivated by his fury at the Berlin Wall, Dieter joins forces with a group of people determined to rescue their loved ones from East Berlin. They have a plan. But it's a dangerous project, beset with difficulties at every turn. The key is knowing who to trust.

The War is over, but for Sabine and Dieter the fight for freedom has only just begun.

Oranges for Christmas provides a heart-wrenching window into a terrible piece of history... Trust, betrayal, defiance and hope - this book has it all. - Amazon.co.uk Reviewer.

This book vividly portrays what happened and what should never ever happen again. - Amazon.com Reviewer.

Oranges for Christmas Details

Date : Published November 25th 2013 by Margarita Morris (first published October 26th 2013)

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From Reader Review Oranges for Christmas for online ebook

Rosalie Sambuco says

Oranges for Christmas

This was a wonderful book. I recommend it to everyone who enjoys stories of WW II and the aftermath. I was not aware of many of the cruelties against the West Germans.

Justin says

I had such hopes for this book! I was hoping for a good book for my mid-grade students about the Cold War, and this could have fit the bill. Until at the half-way mark Morris starts sprinkling F-bombs. I can't recommend a book like that. Completely unnecessary. Disappointing. The story was good enough otherwise, though I was distracted by the awkward working in of German words and phrases. Oh well. Back to the drawing board.

Steve Morris says

Sabine is 17 years old and lives in East Berlin. Her brother, Dieter works in West Berlin. During the Cold War years of the 1960s, Berlin is a city divided by two opposing ideologies – Dieter enjoys the freedom and prosperity of life in the West, while Sabine lives in an economically-failing country where freedom of speech is outlawed and the agents of the state security (Stasi) are everywhere.

When their city is physically divided by the construction of The Wall in 1961, Sabine and Dieter can no longer see each other, and their situation becomes perilous. Dieter resolves to reunite his family whatever the cost.

This book is a realistic, historically-based story of heroism and how individuals really can make a difference, even against overwhelming odds. At the same time, we are treated to humour, some delicate youthful romance, plenty of suspenseful cliff-hanger moments, and a truly satisfying ending that wraps up all loose ends.

What the book also gives the reader is an insight into just how different life can be, not a million miles away and not that long ago. The day to day difficulties of living in a failed state are painted vividly, as are the random terrors of oppression, but this is by no means a depressing story. Hope shines through, even though the book is dark at times.

While the idea of a city cut into two halves by a concrete wall and bared wire sounds like a science fiction dystopia straight out of The Hunger Games, the divided Berlin was a real place, symbolising the world's political division of the second half of the 20th century. This book delves under the surface of the two worlds, examining the motives of those who worked for the East German state and showing how their idealism somehow led them to create a country in which half a million people worked as Stasi informers and where thinking the wrong thoughts could lead to you being locked away indefinitely. This is real, gripping

history unfolding in front of us.

Oranges for Christmas would be a good read for anyone aged 13+, or a mature reader in year 7/8. Older teenagers and adults would also find the book stimulating, funny (in places), thrilling (often) and educational (but not in a boring way!) There are quite a few German words in the dialogue, but they are always translated, and add very much to the atmosphere of the story. Anyone who has enjoyed The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas, Private Peaceful, Goodnight Mister Tom or Between Shades of Grey would also enjoy this.

Essential reading for anyone too young to remember the Berlin Wall!

Marilyn says

Actually closer to 3.5*

Not sure the target audience for this book but it might have been teens according to the style of writing. Not a complaint, just an observation.

I read this for a discussion group and there is plenty to discuss, IMHO. I love it when a book has me going to the internet and the library to learn more about the time period and place in an historical novel. I was surprised to read that some of the events actually did happen. I liked the characters too and after I finished the book it still had me thinking about the families who were separated by the barbed wire, the guards and the wall.

I found the sprinkling of German words and phrases throughout the books to be annoying. And distracting. Since more and more books seem to be written lately about WWII, add this one to your list even though it takes place after the war – it is a story about what the war brought about.

Eddi says

Interesting novel based on life in east and West Berlin when the wall was first erected. It was told from teenagers' points of view, which made it unique. Although we see the insidious oppression of the Communists, and the conflicted, despairing people, we also see the vitality of hope and determination. Worth reading!

Carol says

I have never read a book about the creation of the Berlin Wall and its effects on East and West Berlin before. I am old enough to remember watching on the nightly news coverage of people trying to escape. I had forgotten that it started with coils of barbed wire in 1961. I will never forget the many attempts to escape to the West, especially of a young man named Peter shot as he was trying to climb over. This book brought all the emotions back plus it gave me more insight as to what was going on in East Berlin. It was an easy conclusion that if people are willing to risk their lives to escape then there must be something very evil and malignant on the other side. Now I know.

Margarita Morris's book is written for young adults but the audience should be much broader than that. I think this well written and well researched book should be read by older adults, those who remember and

those who were born too late for that evil period of history.

The main characters are Sabina, Brigitta in East Berlin and their brother Dieter who was living and working in West Berlin. The young girls had planned a picnic with their brother. They were allowed many times to go see him before. Their train stops, there is an announcement that everyone must leave the train because the border has been closed. Besides forbidding family members to see each other, the West lost workers from the East and the East lost foods that had become rare from their diet. Now the East was protecting its people from the contamination of the West. It became forbidden to listen to Western radio stations.

The Stasi interrogated and tortured people trying to escape or protest. They groomed an army of informers making it hard to trust your friends and neighbors. Having read about them in this book, I grew curious about the Stasi and learned that they were even more evil than in this book. I hope that another book will be written about the whole of their activities.

This book vividly portrays what happened and what should never ever happen again. The characters are well developed and make you hope for their survival. This book is heartbreaking and will cause you to be angry. I highly recommend and encourage young adults to seniors to read this book.

I received this book from FirstReads but that in no way influenced my thoughts and feelings in this review.

Dipika Bangera says

An extremely beautiful book.

The story of the great Berlin divide into East and West Berlin. I could actually put myself in place of the main protagonists. It is a personal story about family members being separated by a wall which cropped overnight and the disastrous effects on their lives.

Though it is fictitious the emotions are quite genuine. In reality, the wall took 28 years to finally be broken down and reunite families but till then a lot of emotional damage occurred.

Well written Margarita! Looking forward to reading more of your books

Edyta Ku?ma says

Amazing! Possibly the best book I have read in a very long time. A moving story about a family torn between the East and the West, includes some very raw details about how the Stasi treated people. Very detailed and correct in terms of history. I don't know what to do with myself now that I have finished!!

Aamil Syed says

This story is about the hard, gray lives of the people in East Germany. Despite painting a realistically grim picture, the story itself is far from a sad one. Nobody wants to read a miserable story, and Margarita makes sure that hers is far from one. She writes about characters that are full of optimism and vigor. These

characters don't surrender to the circumstances, but they are also not overzealous. They strike a fine balance and do only what is practical and sensible for them.

In different parts of the book, the characters display courage, confusion, fear, nervousness, defiance, anger, dejection and cunning. Sabine's little sister is especially delightful. And Sabine herself is quite the teenager. Dieter doesn't shy away from using cuss words (unlike other YA books I have read) and there is a sweet love story in the book as also a tragic one.

Margarita must have done some painstaking research, because the descriptions of East Berlin are quite vivid, making someone like me, who's never been there, to be able to imagine it in full color. To add that little taste of Germany, she has sprinkled the book with many German phrases like 'Mein gott!' (My god!), 'Guten abend!' (Good evening), 'Scheisse!' (Shit!) and 'Verdammt!' (Damn!). These phrases are followed with a quick English equivalent so that the reader doesn't lose the plot as they search for their meaning.

The story is narrated from the dual point of view of Dieter, the brother and Sabine, the sister. The transitions between them are really smooth and well done. There is also a really good element of mystery that unravels as the story unfolds. Margarita has several twists in store too, and she makes sure that you're guessing right till the end.

This book is a great introduction to Europe after WWII and does quite well in raising some really good questions about the abuse of the socialist ideology by those in power. While the story essentially postures East Germany as the bad guys, I don't think it dwells on that fact or exaggerates it. It also doesn't paint the Western powers as heroes. The heroes in the story are the individual characters who decide to risk it all for freedom.

This book is a really fulfilling read and from reading it, I learned a lot about life in communist Germany. But other than a lesson in contemporary history, this is also a beautifully poignant story about a young girl and her brother who set out to claim their freedom.

Thirty-eighth book reviewed as part of the 130 Challenge | [Read on my blog](#)

Adam Bradbury says

This is not a book that I would have chosen to read if left to my own devices....I am a fifty year old man who loves his sci fi and Margarita Morris describes herself as a writer of historical fiction for a YA audience. My partner and I sometimes buy each other books that are wild cards and for my 50th she got me 'Oranges'. It's the story of a brother and sister who find themselves on opposite sides of the Berlin Wall.

Why I loved it.....

It's a fantastic story that's really well told.

I am always nervous about reading self published authors as there is a risk that you'll end up with a book that's badly written, a story that's poorly told and pages and pages of typos. This was not a problem with Oranges. It was obvious within a couple of pages that the author knew what she was doing. From the get-go I was able to relax and enjoy the ride. It is really well written.

The story is told from the POV of the sister and her brother, with more or less alternating scenes in the first person from each. So first we meet Sabine who wakes up to find her city of Berlin cut in half with barbed wire and armed troops and then her brother Dieter who is living on what had become 'the west'. The use of the first person from each POV is very well done and serves to highlight the feeling of separation felt by the siblings. It also allows Morris to build the tension as the plot unfolds as each MC is isolated from the other (no spoilers here).

I guess the other point to note is that this is a treatment of a really important and relevant piece of European history and the author has obviously gone to great lengths in her research.

I really enjoyed this page-turner and recommend it as a great read for YAs and the rest of us.

Holly Mowery says

A beautiful story told through such a tragic time in our history. While a fiction story, much research was obviously done to visually place the reader in East and West Berlin in the 1960's. The story was also engaging as the author threw in many German phrases yet didn't leave the reader lost, but translated as if you were there in the experience. I think this would be a wonderful read for history classes to grasp this particular time period in our history.

Ninaminacat says

Experience Cold War Berlin in this excellent historical read for young and old

This is a YA novel and doesn't have quite the depth of some works intended for more general consumption. However, like "Code Name Verity" it does not shy away from the atrocities committed by the officials of the ruling party, in this case the Stasi. As a result, the reader is presented with a clear picture of life in East Berlin in 1961 as the Wall was being built - food shortages, the agony of families divided by the Wall, a regime in which stamped out even the first signs of protest, the temptation to become an informer to save one's self, the longing for freedom of movement, speech and expression.

Margarita Morris populates this world with credible characters who may be brave, fearful, resourceful, misguided, foolish or naive but are, above all, human, so that the reader feels for them. The realism is sufficiently strong that there are failures, some of which are fatal, even for leading characters.

The protagonist on the East Berlin side is ostensibly Sabine, but look out for her little sister, Brigitte, who, denied a proper childhood by the place and time of her birth, sometimes steals the show with a wisdom and an emotional intelligence beyond her years.

A worthwhile read for adults whether young or not.

Chandru CS says

The only way you could ever get

“Astrid, tell me the truth. What did you tell the Stasi about me?” “Nothing, I mean...” “Why was I arrested a second time? You told them about the tunnel didn’t you?”

Al says

Although *Oranges for Christmas* has a seventeen-year-old protagonist and a story that's a good fit for the YA audience, that label might be limiting in a way it doesn't deserve. It's also undeniably historical (taking place in the early 60s), which prompted my major takeaways from the story.

At least some of the history of the Berlin Wall I'd learned and largely remembered. Things like it going up overnight (initially the “wall” was just coils of barbed wire which isolated East Berlin from West Berlin, with an actual wall constructed shortly after). I knew that extended families were shut off from each other (children from parents and grandparents or, as in this story, a grown child trapped on one side and unable to see his mother and siblings on the other). But I'd forgotten the timing. In my mind this happened in the immediate aftermath of World War II, not around 16 years later. That this happened in my lifetime, although young enough for these events to not be something I was aware of at the time, drove home for me how our perception of history is colored by what we “experienced” in some way ourselves with everything else being “ancient.” My grandkids will (and probably already do) consider 9/11 and the war in Iraq the same way.

I also thought the author did an excellent job integrating the actual historical events including many details that those of us who aren't history buffs wouldn't be aware of into the story. It made for a compelling read with a bit of painless education thrown in.

**Originally written for "Books and Pals" book blog. May have received a free review copy. **

Judy Hodges says

A moving story about a tragic time in history. In 1969, I went through Checkpoint Charlie with a group of college students. It was an experience I shall never forget. The author described East Berlin and the fear, despair, and hopelessness well. Thankfully, Berlin is a united city once again.
