

Book review, summer of my german soldier

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The book, *Summer of My German Soldier*, is an example of historical fiction, set in Arkansas, America during World War 2. It tells the story of 12 year old Patty, a Jewish girl, who shelters a young German soldier who escapes from the camp for German prisoners in her hometown. The story opens with the arrival of the German prisoners of war at the train station. From the first chapters we find out about the daily routine of Patty and her family.

The reader learns important information about the setting and the characters which explains their behaviour throughout the novel. We learn of the lack of warmth and love from Patty's parents and also of the contrasting loving relationships with Ruth, her nanny, and her grandparents. In addition, we see evidence of the father's brutality when he beats her savagely because she breaks a window. Her isolation, feelings of failure and of not being good enough for her parents are also shown. These chapters also highlight racism, discrimination and prejudices in the community which make people feel like outcasts.

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The people in the community are also quite frightened by what the German prisoners might do to them. In chapter 3, Patty meets Anton for the first time when the POWs come into Patty's father shop to buy hats. Her feelings for him develop from this moment. In chapter 7, the build-up to the climax begins when Anton escapes from his prison camp and Patty decides to shelter him in her hide-out. In the following chapters we learn more about Anton's life with his English mother and German father.

He comes from Gottingen in German and he used to study history at university. A few chapters later, Anton has to leave Patty because he is being hunted by the FBI. Before leaving, he gives her a 24 carat gold ring, his most valuable possession. In chapter 14, there is a change of setting, Patty goes back to school, and her adventure with Anton is finished. Patty's need for attention eventually lands her in trouble when she talks about the ring. Her father doubts her story about being given it by an old man whom she helped and he beats her in the middle of the store.

An FBI agent questions Patty about the old man and the ring and shows her a photo of Anton. Patty denies knowing the person in the photo but unfortunately for her, the FBI agent has the shirt that she had given to her father for Father's Day, and then given to Anton. Patty is horrified and grief stricken when she sees the bloodstained shirt and learns that Anton has been shot and killed. Unable to deny the facts, Patty is considered a traitor by her family and community and becomes even more of an outcast.

I think that the moral of this story is to not judge people by their colour, religion or nationality but to consider each person as an individual. If Patty was not Jewish, people would have been less harsh in their judgement. Had people judged Anton by his character, instead of his nationality, they would have realised that he was no different to any young man growing up in America at that time. Overall, I enjoyed reading this novel, it was interesting and a bit unusual to read a WW2 novel set in America. I found the characters realistic and not stereotypical, particularly Anton and Patty.

As a teenager, I can identify with Patty's character and I would have acted in the same way as her. The reader sees Patty develop from a timid, unloved

child into a confident and strong individual. Although I enjoyed the novel, I found some weaknesses. There is very little action in the first six chapters, they are mostly concerned with setting the scene and giving background information. In addition I would have liked more details about Anton after he left Patty, it would have made the story more exciting. I would recommend this book to teenagers and young adults.