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Tell the Moon to Come Out

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

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We first meet Nick Torres on a dark, wet night in a French Pyrenean village. It is Spring, 1939. The Spanish Civil War has ended and somewhere beyond the wall of mountains, Nick hopes, is his father - maybe on the run, maybe wounded, maybe dead. Sebastian Torres had left his Scottish wife and son, his home and job in the Highlands, to join the fight against Franco. The novel maps Nick's risky adventures as he searches for his father throughout the length of Spain. Inevitably, in this raw and wounded country, he finds a mixed welcome, from the kindness of Republican sympathisers to the brutality of Civil Guardsmen loyal to Franco. Along the way, he falls in love with the daughter of the violent Sergeant Morales, Isabel, who leaves her abusive father to join Nick on his quest. This is a historical novel much in the tradition shaped by Geoffrey Trease - and notably developed by Joan Lingard herself; the young protagonist living by his wits, growing into manhood not least through the quiet courage of a young woman. As with Trease, the geographical and political contexts are well researched. It may be that the edge of excitement is blunted a little in that although Nick and Isabel are in some danger, the war is actually over and we do not ever really fear for their ultimate safety. To ensure young readers become familiar with a relatively little known conflict, characters are likely to explain rather frequently ('... but, as you know, the Church was supporting the Fascist Nationalists') and Lingard is at pains to be even-handed about the savagery of both sides. This is one of those 'for the right reader' novels - someone inquisitive about the past, responsive to a carefully plotted story, told without sensationalism. It will also satisfy those who have wondered just what the significance of 'Guernica' was, or what the guidebook references to a civil war were about when they've visited Barcelona or even Malaga.

Running Order:

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