



[Home](#) > Traitor

Traitor

Books Reviewed:

[Traitor](#) [1]

Issue:

[150](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Olivia Dickinson](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

It's 1945 and Anna lives with her mother, grandmother and younger brother in a German village very near the Czech-German border. Gradually the Russians are coming nearer and Germany is obviously losing the war. Anna though helps a Russian prisoner of war to hide in a disused bunker. She provides food and warmth for him right up until the Russians are marching into their village even while hoping he will escape over the border and to his comrades. Pausewang has written a sensitive and honest novel about how those last few months of the war affect Anna as she learns to make her own decisions based around her own beliefs. From descriptions of Anna's father, who felt an outsider in the village and committed suicide, to Anna's developing interest in Russian literature and culture and on to the support she receives from Herr Beranek, a friend in the nearby town, Pausewang subtly shows how unnatural the Nazi ideology was and how it was rejected in little ways by ordinary people. Anna's younger brother Felix idolises Hitler and dreams only of moving through the ranks of the Hitler Youth and eventually the army. As a fatherless boy who has lived most of his life under the Nazi regime, this seems an accurate portrayal that really brings home in another way what it was like to live in Nazi Germany. Anna's older brother dies fighting shortly before the end of the war and the family's grief is painfully described, including Felix's desire to avenge his death through fighting for the Fatherland. Anna shows Maxim, the Russian prisoner, how the Russian and Allied armies are advancing on Germany, using flags on a map of Europe. Although the action of the novel all takes place in a very small area it might have been helpful for the book to have a map of Europe too, for the reader to see quite how near the Russians were coming to Germany. Then again, this may detract from how so much of the novel is about beliefs and emotions, not advancing armies. Rachel Ward has translated the story well from the German but there are moments where it needs an English proof-reader to double-check the text for fluency, with occasional inappropriate prepositions and overly short sentences.

Running Order:

37

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[1] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/traitor-0>

[2] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/150>

[3] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/olivia-dickinson>