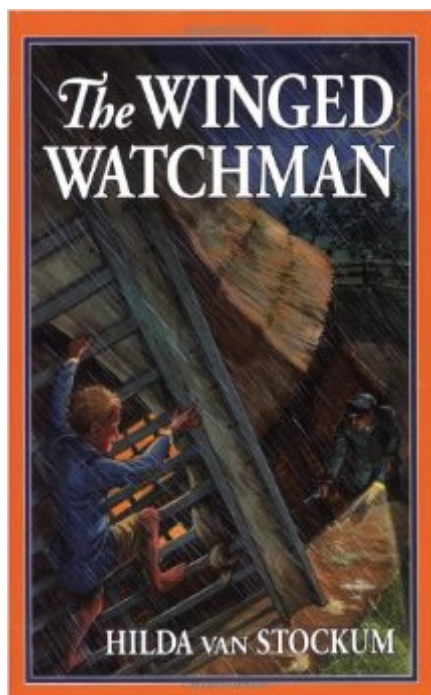


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The Winged Watchman (Living History Library)



Synopsis

Dutch-Irish-American storyteller Hilda von Stockum has placed this adventure of resistance among the windmills of Holland during the Nazi occupation of World War II.

Book Information

Series: Living History Library

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Customer Reviews

I have loved this book since I was a child. It is a fascinating portrayal of life in Holland during the Second World War. It is replete with Dutch customs, such as the significance of the different positions of windmill blades. I really enjoyed the description of the Dutch Christmas with "Sinterklaas." It helps to put a human face on those who suffered during the war. The central characters take in a child whose family was captured by Nazis and raise her along with their children. The description of how Trixie's foster mother teaches her to respond to her natural mother when they are reunited at the end of the war will warm one's heart. The real heroes are "Kees Kip," who might be loosely based on Wallenberg, a humanitarian now famous for saving the lives of many during the war. It is a wonderful book. Please read it.

The Nazi occupations of neighboring European countries is not a subject that is well addressed in children's literature. Here is a chance for young and old alike to face the impact the Nazi occupation had on The Netherlands. It is a fantastic tale of bravery and faith amid the inhumanity of the Nazi mentality and those who cooperated with them. We see how the Nazis courted a young man, known to be bad anyway, for the task of spying and informing on his neighbors. we see how even his own

family was afraid of this youth's power and its abuse. But, we also see the strength of the Dutch character as they suffered hunger, bombings and loss of life and property. Von Stockum has clearly exposed the evil of the Nazis but she has shown the courage of those who fought them. Memorable and so appropriate after Sept. 11th.

Set in WWII Holland, Hilda Van Stockum, paints a historically accurate picture of family life in the polders and windmills during the Nazi occupation. She describes a Dutch family that must overcome the atrocities of the Germans and remember a greater purpose of life despite these difficulties. I began reading this book to my children, one chapter at a time. It was so good, that we huddled late into the night to read several chapters. In the end, I stayed home from work one morning, just so we could finish it. We can't wait to read her next book!

Set in Holland during the German occupation of World War II, the story follows the wartime trials, joys and adventures of a Dutch family that lives in a windmill called the "Watchman". Gradually, the children become more and more involved in the Dutch Underground movement, resisting and outwitting German soldiers in several hair-raising episodes. My 8 year old daughter loved this book... it helped us to bond (and she can sometimes be hard to reach). I read it aloud before bedtime; we laughed, held our breath in suspense, cried and rejoiced together. She loved that the children were empowered to take on such a monstrous enemy as the German army. She also loved the characters; each has his or her own well-drawn personality. And who is Kees Kip, the Underground Resistance hero who does such shockingly funny things to the Germans as he frees the "underdivers"? This book differs from other books of this type in that there is an air of innocence that is preserved, innocence and idealism. Although concentration camps and shootings are mentioned, they happen elsewhere and are not graphically portrayed. The children ask several questions about the morality of their enemies and I like that in the end they conclude that to stop war, they must not hate their enemies, but learn to respond with peace. One does not feel a heaviness upon finishing the book; it's not like Schindler's List. It contains everything a child could want: adventure, fun, empowering knowledge... and it slips in quite a lot about the history and culture of Holland during that time. Excellent book!

I first heard of Hilda Van Stockum when I bought a used book by her, "Pegeen" for a mere quarter a few years ago -- oh my! What a find!!! Couldn't put the book down, started researching all of Mrs. Van Stockum's books, and read them as fast as I could find them. Bought several from Amazon and ebay,

and they are WONDERFUL. They're written for children, but utterly held the interest of this 51 year old reader. What a shame these books aren't still widely circulated and read by today's kids. If you read the reviews posted here, you'll get an idea of The Winged Watchman's story -- a riveting account, clearly truth-based, and perfectly told. All of the Van Stockum books have made me cry with their impact, yet they are told in an utterly natural way, no grandstanding. These are the kind of characters that stay with you, in the best sense, like Francie from "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" or the Moffats, or Scarlett O'Hara. They are unforgettable. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND The Winged Watchman and all of Hilda Van Stockum's books. And you should Google her! A fascinating and accomplished person, her life will impress and inspire you. Sorry to ramble on! Thanks.

The Winged Watchman is a fictional story about a Dutch family, the Verhagens, who live in a mill in the middle of WWII. They include Mother, Father, Joris, and Dirk Jan. Throughout the process of the book there are many additions to the Verhagen family. They include Trixie (a little Jewish girl who's parents were taken away at the beginning of the war), Freya (an abused dog rescued by Joris), Charles (an English aviator), Uncle Cor (a member of the Underground Resistance Movement), Koba and Betsy (two young girls who came to stay with them because of lack of food at their own house), and Hildebrand (a young man who was interested in studying rather than working in the resistance). The Verhagen family eventually becomes very involved in the resistance movement. It is sad when Uncle Cor dies, but the book actually has a very happy theme to it. This book mixes adventure, history, and suspense, and it's okay for children. They do mention shooting and concentration camps, but they aren't graphically described. They don't happen at the same time. They are mentioned as something that happened somewhere else. This book is a perfect example of the spirit of teamwork.

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