



Two Suns in the Sky

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During World War II, a 15-year-old girl meets a young Jewish refugee in a New York shelter and soon learns the history behind her city through interaction with her new friend, as well as the barriers that exist when different cultures unite. Winner of the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction.

Two Suns in the Sky Details

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Author : Miriam Bat-Ami

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From Reader Review *Two Suns in the Sky* for online ebook

Natalie says

3.5 stars. This is a coming of age story set against the background of a Jewish refugee camp during late WWII. The theme of fences and freedom is peppered throughout. The sweet romance is fairly age appropriate but a bit sad because of the difficulties of the time. One of the most memorable lines is at the very end. "There should have been more camps like this. Without fences. We should have had so many."

Olivia says

When Adam Bornstein is given the opportunity to travel to America with his family as refugees of WWII, his life is completely altered. Surrounded by American culture and customs, he becomes enchanted with his new way of life. And when Adam meets the beautiful and American Chris Cook, his life is once more changed. Can Adam and Chris withstand their disapproving parents' ridicules and the conventional ideas of relationships that society pressures them to follow? Brought together by war, will war be the thing to tear them apart?

solemnlyswear says

loved this book so much!! a beautiful love story

Julianna says

Reviewed for THC Reviews

"4.5 stars" It is always such a joy to me when a random book buy turns out to be a fabulous read. I picked up *Two Suns in the Sky* at the library book sale for only fifty cents, but had I known how good it was going to be, I would have been happy to pay full-price. This young adult novel is a combination of historical fiction and historical romance. It is written in such a way that I believe teenagers could easily understand and relate to it, but it is full of the mysteries and complexities of life which I, as an adult, can appreciate as well. The narrative is written in first person point of view, alternating back and forth between the two protagonists, which I found to be very unique. I wasn't sure that I was going to like that at first, and it did take me a little while to get used to it. Ultimately though, I thought the author did a great job with not only the first person perspective itself, but also with differentiating between the two characters and giving them each their own distinctive voice. It took a little while for the character development to build. However, once I came into a full understanding of the two main characters, the story really hit its stride for me, and I had a hard time putting it down.

The historical aspect centers around the one and only refugee camp that operated on American soil during World War II. Located at Fort Ontario, Oswego, New York, it housed 1,000 European refugees, primarily Jews, for about 1½ years. I thought that the author really brought to life this overlooked snippet of American history by showing what it was like living on both sides of the fence. For those living inside the camp there were some, usually the older residents, who had difficulty adapting and felt like virtual prisoners, while the young people (children and teens) loved this new country and embraced the ability to attend school and just

be normal kids without the worries of war hanging over their heads. There was a dichotomous state of mind for those living outside the camp as well, with many Oswego residents welcoming the new-comers with open arms, while others, of which Chris's father was one, exhibited a bigoted attitude of fear and suspicion,. It was very difficult for me to read these parts of the story, as I don't think I will ever fully understand the mindset of a prejudiced person. Still I thought it rather ingenious the way the author rendered Chris's father as a rather conflicted man who was not an inherently bad person, just one who made bad choices but was still loved by his family in spite of his flaws. I also liked how the independent-minded Chris pointed out (though silently to herself) in one passage, just how ridiculous and un-Christian-like her father's views were. In addition to capturing the differing opinions of the characters, Miriam Bat-Ami also presented a historically accurate picture of these events. In her notes at the end of the book, she seems to indicate that information on the Emergency Refugee Shelter is not easy to come by, but through extensive research and interviews with actual residents of both the ERS and Oswego during that time period, she has been able to recreate this moment in history. In fact, the two main characters are based in part on real-life people that she met. Each chapter begins with a quote which in most cases came directly from one of the interviewees, making the story all the more authentic.

The romance aspect of the book is all about the forbidden love shared by two teens, Chris, an American Irish Catholic girl and Adam, a Yugoslavian Jewish boy. I related to both characters quite well. Chris is a girl with an adventurous spirit, dreaming of joining the WACs to help in the war effort. She also has an incredible curiosity about and compassion for other people. Chris seems to want nothing more than to travel the globe and learn about other cultures, so when the refugees arrive in her home-town, she, not surprisingly, is right there in the thick of things, making new friends and fitting right in with these new kids. Adam is a boy who has experienced far more pain, hardship and horror than anyone his age should ever have to. Coming to America gives him a sense of freedom, and he wants nothing more than to start a new life in a country that he hopes will soon adopt him as a citizen. There is an instant attraction between Adam and Chris when Chris generously loans her bicycle to Adam's little sister on their first day in the refugee camp. Their relationship is slow building though, with them first becoming friends through school and the occasions that Chris sneaks into the camp to visit, not only Adam, but other friends she has made there. In spite of initially just being friends, they both often dream of kissing each other, and once they do become boyfriend and girlfriend, theirs is a romance filled with all the tenderness and sweet innocence of first love. As the relationship progresses though, it becomes rather bittersweet as Chris must constantly battle against her father's bigotry and the feeling that she is doing something wrong just by seeing Adam, and both must deal with the reality that at some point Adam is going to leave the camp, whether it be to become an American citizen living elsewhere or to go back to his home country. In the meantime they try to enjoy their stolen moments together to the fullest. At times they would make what in my opinion, was a very mature decision to stay away from each other, either in deference to Chris's father's edicts or to minimize the pain of the separation that seemed inevitable, but no matter how long they were apart, they never stopped loving one another. In some ways, I felt that it just made their feelings for one another grow stronger.

As a parent, I am always on the look-out for quality books that are not just entertaining, but also teach something while being age-appropriate, and I think that *Two Suns in the Sky* fits that bill nicely. If I, as an adult, learned something about history from this book, then teens most certainly will as well. I also thought that it had some good lessons in compassion for others and standing up for what you believe in. Content-wise, I thought the book is quite appropriate for the teens at which it is aimed. I only recall one or two mild profanities. Chris's dad and uncles drink beer on Thanksgiving, and Adam mentions being allowed to have a sip of brandy on the Sabbath. As I mentioned earlier, Chris and Adam's relationship is very innocent. Except for one scene they share nothing more than kisses, some sweet and others a bit more heated. On that one occasion, they engage in a small amount of moderate petting, but in my opinion, it is handled very well. At that point, both characters were feeling extremely vulnerable, which certainly could have led to things getting out of hand, but they both made a conscious and responsible decision to stop. Although the story contains some mature thematic elements such as body development and image, the death of loved ones, and the various horrors that are associated with war, I thought that everything was treated in a pretty matter-of-

fact way and nothing was described in explicit details. Chris does disobey her father on several occasions by visiting the camp against his wishes, but I was not bothered by that because it is abundantly clear that her father is being unreasonable. If he had not been prejudiced and had invited Adam into their home, there would have been no need for Chris to sneak around. Chris's father does say some rather harsh things at times and meets out a very severe punishment to Chris on one occasion, all of which was difficult to read but can also teach lessons on the stark realities of life. Young or not, readers who are averse to overt depictions of religion may not care for this book, as both of the protagonist's religious backgrounds play a strong role, particularly Chris's Catholic faith. I personally was impressed with the care the Jewish author took in describing Catholicism, and anyone who is open-minded and interested in a love-overcomes-all, inter-ethnic romance which is blind to religion, should really enjoy it.

As a romance, *Two Suns in the Sky* has a rather ambiguous ending, not bad or sad, just no concrete answers about what the future holds for Chris and Adam. They were still young though, and their love for each other was so strong and passionate, it is easy for me to imagine them eventually riding off into the sunset of the fictional happily-ever-after. As a connoisseur of romances, I normally need a strong HEA to be fully satisfied when finishing a book with romance in it, but in this case, I was able to overlook it because of the strong historical element, which I believe was meant to be the main focus. The author makes a comment in her notes at the end about *Two Suns in the Sky* being her contribution to preserving the memory of the ERS camp, and in that capacity, I think she excelled beautifully. Not only did I learn things that I previously did not know, but I turned the final page only to discover a hunger to learn more. I was compelled to look up the works Ms. Bat-Ami cited in her notes, and have already put one of the books on my TBR list for just that purpose. In my opinion, one of the characteristics of a truly good author is the ability to both teach and stir up the innate desire for learning. I also had never read any books set in WWII before, but now I plan to look for more. I highly recommend this book for anyone who likes a good romantic story, both young and old alike. For me, discovering *Two Suns in the Sky* was like finding a bit of buried treasure that now forever has a home on my keeper shelf to hopefully be shared with my children and re-read many times over the years to come.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

I read this along with Norma Fox Mazer's *Good Night, Maman*. Both are about Jewish refugees at a camp in Oswego, New York, during World War II. Mazer's is for younger children and focuses on the experience at Oswego. Miriam Bat-Ami's book is more of a love story, with less of the focus on place. Of the two, Mazer does a better job of evoking the feeling of 1940's upstate New York. I enjoyed both, however, and recommend both, along with Ruth Gruber's adult non-fiction book *Haven: the Dramatic Story of 1,000 World War II Refugees and How They Came to America*.

Rae says

1944 New York City, Emergency Refugee Shelter. Despite her father's objections (to all things that may be different than his norm), fourteen-year-old Christine goes often to the refugee camp in her hometown of Oswego, New York. There she meets and falls in love with Adam, a Yugoslavian Jew. They have a sweet and somewhat clandestine relationship...which doesn't seem too sappy because of the realistically open ending. I really enjoyed this novel. The author placed quotes from actual refugees and Oswegons at the beginning of each chapter. That added authenticity to the story.

Sue says

This tells an important story about the only shelter provided by the United States for European Jews fleeing the Holocaust. It was in Oswego, NY and this book is based on narratives by refugees and citizens of Oswego who have made accounts of that time. It's important for young people to know about this chapter in our history. That being said, I didn't love this book, although I wanted to. It tried to be too many things—a history of refugees, a first love story with lots of physical tension, a girl's coming of age story, an account of religious tension between Catholics and Jews, an anti-immigrant harangue, etc. The main characters were somewhat engaging but it was hard to relate to them and some of the dialogue just sounded false. Although well-researched, I don't think it really rings true.

Andrea Clouthier says

In school they made us read a book every month, I think, to write a book review later. This book caught my attention so I picked it: forbidden love story, different religions, World War II... I really liked the plot and summary. The story is narrated from the two POV of the main characters, something I really enjoyed. Overall a good book, but why three stars? I got bored multiple times when Christine narrated, maybe because to me her life wasn't as interesting as Adam's, and to my disappointment he didn't narrate as much. And the other fact that I didn't fully enjoy was that I felt the book could have been just a little more romantic. I don't know. I liked the book, one of the only books I've been forced to read that I liked, but I think it could have been so much more.

Hafsah Khan says

God this book traumatized me when I read it in the fifth grade. I mean, it had so much potential!!!! It could have been amazing since it brings light to the refuge the US provided for Holocaust victims but the ROMANCE UGHHHHHHH. And they practically had sex too and I was so not ready for that at the age of 11. What kind of teacher puts a book like that in her classroom library?? Did she even read it???? Anyway, it was terrible regardless of the ~almost~ sex scene, with all the Angsty Teen Romance™? and whatnot. Don't waste your time on this one.

Libero410 says

I hate this book. Ugggggghhhhhhh this book is so daft and annoying!!!! These characters are the most awkward characters I've ever had the misfortune of reading. I could go on about how much I hate it but that would take all day. Just don't read it, please. I mean seriously, this is the cheesiest thing I've ever dealt with since high school musical. And god the awkwardness!!! If you like angsty teenagers complaining about life, then go for it. But otherwise I seriously don't recommend this book. If you have the misfortune of encountering it, run. And then come back with a blowtorch. And once it's a pile of ashes, run again. And do not look back. That's all I have to say.

Alison Jayne says

A good history of how the United States dealt with Jews from Europe during WW2 and showing that friendship can happen anywhere.

Tracy says

A cute story about a boy who comes to America to escape the Nazis. He is put in a camp and meets a girl who he falls in love with. But the father is strict and doesn't like his catholic daughter hanging out with a Jewish boy

Nicole says

Christine Cook is a Catholic. Adam Borenstein is a Jew. This book is set during World War 2. Adam and his family move to America from Yugoslavia. They are living in a refugee camp. Christine and Adam meet and a relationship forms. Chrisines father doesn't like this one bit because of the difference in religion. She does everything hat she can to see him. The book deals with the happenings of the war and the government at that time.

I liked this book because it was very educational. I like it when I can learn things from books because those things stick in my mind. I like how the book is fiction but also has true facts. I don't know what I would do if my father was so against a boy that I liked. I would reccommend this book.

Gaile says

A heart warming YA book about two teens from vastly different backgrounds who fall in love. Chris is an American Catholic. Adam is a Jewish refugee from Yugoslavia who ends up with his mother and sister in the only Emergency refugee shelter set up in the United States. She is fifteen. He is eighteen. Her family forbids her to see him and she tries not to. He wants to see her but as time goes by, he comes to an understanding of how his family has to make their way in America. He becomes a citizen and his family decide to move to New York City. There the story ends. I felt this was a bit young for me to read as I remember at fifteen I had no idea where life would take take me. I recommend this book for teens although I think it will leave some especially the girls in tears.

Katie says

I read this book in a day. I didn't know anything about the Oswego Refugee Shelter in New York during WWII, so it was important to learn about this part of history. The growing relationship between the two main characters, an Irish Catholic girl and a Yugoslavian Jewish boy, make this story memorable and a true page turner. I rarely tear up at the end of books, but I did with this story. Excellent read! Definitely recommend.
