



# The Secret Purposes

*David Baddiel*

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## **The Secret Purposes** David Baddiel

When the flood of Nazism enters Isaac and Lulu Fabian's lives, they're forced to flee their home in East Prussia. In Cambridge, England, the Fabians believe they have finally found the freedom that was denied to them in Germany. But the year is 1940, and prejudice, ignorance, and suspicion abound, propelling the British government to round up thousands of Germans Nazis, sympathizers, and Jewish refugees alike and ship them off to the Isle of Man, where they are to be interned until the war's end. It is there that Isaac's story will become intertwined with June Murray's, a translator at the Ministry of Information who is determined to expose the truth about the atrocities being perpetrated across the continent. But June's encounter with internee Isaac Fabian will radically shift her purpose, remolding it into something far more personal and complex than either of them could have ever imagined.

## **The Secret Purposes Details**

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Author : David Baddiel

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## From Reader Review The Secret Purposes for online ebook

### Mish Middelmann says

We bought this book on the Isle of Man while exploring my wife's family history there. I read it because it was mostly set on the Isle of Man. I got a lot more than I had bargained for: a touching story and a powerful indicator of anti-Semitism way beyond the Nazi regime.

Thousands of Germans, most of them Jewish refugees from the Nazis, ended up interned by the British government as enemy aliens around 1940. The lead character in this novel was a refugee from Nazi persecution, who then gets caught up in this internment with extra ferocity because of his communist views.

There is a powerful personal story that unfolds within these harsh parameters in the main body of this book - a story of love and betrayal, and the huge pressures brought to bear on ordinary people when subjected to arbitrary arrest and internment.

What makes the scope of the novel even bigger is that the story spans an even longer period, starting with the protagonist's father's experience of *kristallnacht* in Germany, and ending with the protagonist visiting Auschwitz as his own life draws to a close long after WW2. I won't give away "spoiler" content here, but suffice to say that the bigger wheel of the story turns in a way to have us pause and reflect deeply on the nature of truth, loyalty, support and survival.

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### Kevin says

This is a book about people. The events that take place provide a bleak backdrop on which the characters can deliver a story of human nature. That really is the core of this book in fact - humanity. And the lack of it, however, and impressively, these moments do not dominate in any way despite being ever-present in the narrative.

Impressively, the story manages to include so many mistakes that society made without being critical or appoint blame. In fact it returns to the overall sense of humanity - acknowledging simply that we can be imperfect at times. A truth that comes across both in terms of individual character and also the combined aspect of society in general. It's a trick few authors would try, and fewer still be able to deliver.

Baddiel has crafted something noteworthy in this book, it is a worthwhile read.

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### Vanda Bromwich says

The story of Isaac, a German Jew, and his German gentile wife during the second world war. They escape to England but then he is interned on the Isle of Man. June Murray, a civil servant, is dismayed by the way no one is taking any notice of the way the Jews are being treated by the Germans and so she decides to visit the Internment camp and learn at first hand what is going on in Germany.

A gripping story based on true facts.

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## **John Wedlake says**

Recently I introduced my 13 year old son to David Baddiel's children's books (nice to have a break from David Walliams,) and he thought they were fantastic. So, having never previously read any of David Baddiel's books myself I went in search for other material that he has written.

Having read the blurb to The Secret Purposes and learning that it was a type of historical fictional account, partially based on his own grandfather's experiences. I had a feeling that this would be a good read. I had read 'The Two Brothers' by Ben Elton, another English comedian brought up in a Jewish family and really enjoyed it, so I was excited.

David not unlike Ben Elton has an appealing fluid style in his writing, I very much enjoy his little side journeys when expressing human thoughts and emotions and putting them into relatively simple but eloquent words. This style certainly helps hold the reader's attention.

The book had an interesting plot and never ventured into areas that would have rendered the narrative as unrealistic. The part of the book where both Isaac who had been interned on the Isle of Man and his wife Lulu who was living her life with their young child Rebekka in Cambridge, were being tempted by attractions to other people while living their lives apart, was very captivating.

I found that after a splendid first third of the book it did not quite maintain its grip and I found myself enjoying it but it was reasonably easy to put down. The book has a strong ending when the narrative gets shifted forward by over 50 years into the future when Isaac is an old man and his daughter Rebekka is 61 years old and they visit Auschwitz together. A copy of the dossier that had been put together by a woman whom he felt he had fallen in love with while being interned more than 50 years earlier connected the two time periods well and made for a fitting finale.

All in all a very well written enjoyable read.

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## **Tara Fitzgerald says**

I was delighted that such a high profile writer had chosen to write a book about the internment of enemy aliens on the Isle of Man in the Second World War, however I was disappointed to find that some facts had been distorted in order to fit into the fictional story. The story itself I didn't find very believable in the circumstances but as the book progresses the tale reveals some interesting twists.

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## **Bowerbird says**

The story is mainly set on the Isle of Man, where Jewish Germans who had fled to the UK were interned during WW2. (something I was not aware of until reading this. Yet amongst these internees were some of the most talented men of Europe.)

Through Isaac's story we see the dicotomy of being German and therefore the enemy to the British, but Jewish and therefore treated as the enemy in their own country.

Isaac is a flawed hero but a very human one - a character puzzled by a life over which he has little control. He loves his wife and child, but his separation from them causes a rift which damages their relationship. The brief encounter with June becomes equally important.

David Baddiel's writing is quite a revelation in other ways. Having totally associated him with TV comedy, the book shows the serious side of a very talented writer.

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### **Peter Jordan says**

Isaac Fabien, escapes persecution in Konigsberg, but after a brief time in Cambridge is interred in the Isle of Man. Here he meets June Murray a Ministry of Information translator who is determined to find evidence of Nazi atrocities against the Jews.

A very readable story about love, loyalty and coping under terrible strain. The underlying theme is truth - how is it discovered, interpreted and communicated, on both a personal and political level.

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### **Cindy Kirkland says**

I thought this was a great book. The main character(s) are well developed and the story is not too repetitive. It's fiction with some historical references so do not read it with the assumption that it is a true story. It was slow to start, I really did not get into it until about the middle. The story is both thought provoking and unbelievable. I could have read the end over and over. It was particularly poignant.

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### **Nick Davies says**

I bought this book soon after it was published, on the strength of having enjoyed Baddiel's two preceding 'lad-lit' humorous novels. I did attempt to read it at the time, but never got very far - disappointed perhaps with my incorrect assumption that this would be more of the same.

This semi-autobiographical novel tells the tale of a Jewish man and his family following his evacuation to England at the start of WWII. It is, however, not solely a tale of woe and atrocity and anti-semitism, the story focuses a lot more on relationships and adjustment and community - discussing the internment of German Jews on The Isle of Man, how the holocaust was perceived by British government, and how people adjust to unusual circumstances. It was an interesting book, quite a lot I liked, but overall was a bit slow and heavy in places. I can understand the catharsis of Baddiel writing this novel about his cultural/family history, and it was well written, but it never felt to me as a reader that I was rapt or enjoying it massively.

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### **Reginald says**

I didn't know what to expect from David Baddiel-my only experience being of him as a comedian. Well this is a very serious book about how we treated the Jews during World War Two. It is engagingly written and I felt a great empathy for many of the characters. However this is not a 'cardboard cut out' view of Jewish people but an honest warts and all picture. Well worth a read it shows the value of family solidarity even with annoying foibles.

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## Jeremy says

This is a real masterpiece, a seminal piece of writing that deserves to be used as a set text in schools. It deals with lies, deceit, temptation, the effects of separation on a family and the terror of being unable to control your destiny.

Right from the very first page, when Rabbi Fabian takes his daily walk across Konisbergs 7 bridges to contemplate the 7 deadly sins I was captivated by the quality of David Baddiel's writing. I confess I was not really expecting such reading enjoyment from the pen of a BBC comedy writer but I put this up there with Snow Falling From Cedars. He carefully and skilfully develops Isaac and Lulu and their baby Bekka and describes the pain that extended Jewish family's suffered as they had to choose who was given the opportunity to live and who wasn't (in this case visa's to get out of Konnisberg and the German persecution that was beginning). And the luck of chance in that crazy world. But the refugee family is split up and the story explores the various pressures and, for want of a better word, temptations that threaten this family – a family thrust into chaos, a chaos not of their making, and a chaos in a supposedly friendly country. The subject matter of this novel is factual (you know how much I like a story that is rooted in historical fact) and I suspect a touch Baddiel family biographical. It is a thought provoking novel which encourages self inspection and exposes some truths about the British attitudes of the time

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## Carol says

Absorbing context: the Isle of Wight; World War 2. German Jews, including Baddiel's own grandfather, and Nazi sympathisers were interned in seaside boarding houses. This pretty sombre read, is shot through with grim irony. The Ministry of Information expects its translators, for instance, to ignore the horrors of Jewish massacres. Baddiel is particularly brilliant demonstrating how difficult it is to establish truth in wartime. Some fascinating detail. The romantic interest is probably the weak link.

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## Kahuna1234567890 says

A very slow moving book which is written in the style of a not that impressive GCSE student. I'm surprised to see it has such a good average.

The sentences that go on forever, the fact that every Jew is some kind of genius, the fact that gentiles are crude and cruel, the shots at comedy which usually fail, the wholly unbelievable love story.

How anyone thinks this is a 5star book is mystifying, some people actually believe this is one of the best books ever written? One that would be hard to improve?

Religious solidarity no doubts plays a part in some of the favourable reviews and ratings but there are far better books you can read on this subject. Or many other subjects.

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## Shonna Froebel says

This novel is set in Konigsberg, Cambridge, the Isle of Man, and Auschwitz, most of it during World War II.

The main story follows Isaac Fabian, son of a rabbi, who rejects his religion and becomes a communist while at university. He also marries outside his religion, to Lulu, a woman he meets at university.

As Hitler's persecution of Jews grows more blatant, Isaac and Lulu emigrate to Britain, on their way to their final destination of America.

While living in Cambridge, working menial jobs to get by, the British government begins rounding up Germans, including Jews, and interns them on the Isle of Man. Lulu manages to escape this fate, but Isaac does not and the two are separated even more than the couples where both are interned.

While Lulu struggles to make ends meet and look after their daughter Rebecca, she also looks for ways to work towards Isaac's release. Isaac, meanwhile, adjusts to his life in restricted quarters, angry at the lack of understanding of a government that would round up Jews as suspects of possible German espionage.

June Murray, a translator at the Ministry of Information is also struggling with the government's view of Jews, and makes it her mission to find the proof she knows exists of the terrible suffering that the Jewish people have undergone by the Germans. Her unauthorized trip to the internment camps brings her in contact with Isaac and makes her more personally involved than she intended.

Again with an historical novel, I learned much I didn't know about historical actions. While I knew there were internments, I hadn't realized that the British interned German Jews as well. Some were living in poverty like Isaac, but the experiences varied widely, and some were working in their fields and well respected before their internment. There is much to ponder in this novel, from the nature of ethnicity and culture, to the outcomes of fear during wartime, to individual human behaviours and motivations. This is an intense book, that looks at an experience seldom talked about.

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## Clare Evans says

We certainly live in interesting times, with the beginning of the Trump presidency, the rise in populism and fear of the 'other.' A very appropriate time to read this wonderful novel in which David Baddiel brings to life the plight of the refugee in a turbulent world. He is talking about Jewish refugees fleeing from Hitler but his theme is just as relevant today, as we witness the flight of millions from the killing fields of Syria and elsewhere.

This is a great book with a strong story and believable, rounded and flawed characters. He writes beautifully, with passion and warmth. Strongly recommended.

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