



# Brothers Far from Home: The World War I Diary of Eliza Bates

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## **Brothers Far from Home: The World War I Diary of Eliza Bates** Jean Little

It has been two long years since Eliza's beloved older brother, Hugo, went away to war. Caught up in his enthusiasm, she couldn't understand her parents' less-than-enthusiastic reaction. Now that her other brother, Jack, has also enlisted, she yearns for the safe return of both brothers. If only she had a friend that she could talk to about her feelings. . .

## **Brothers Far from Home: The World War I Diary of Eliza Bates Details**

Date : Published August 13th 2003 by Scholastic Canada

ISBN : 9780439969000

Author : Jean Little

Format : Hardcover 235 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Cultural, Canada, Childrens, Young Adult

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## From Reader Review Brothers Far from Home: The World War I Diary of Eliza Bates for online ebook

### Rebecca says

Although not my favourite Dear Canada book, this was a great read about a little girl whose brothers are fighting on the front in World War 1. I thought the author was very bold in her descriptions of shell-shock and was happily surprised to read her talk about desertion, which was very common in this war.

My two concerns were that the voice of Eliza sounded much older than 12 years and I found it a little frustrating that she had large gaps in her 'diary' entries. Although an entry everyday wouldn't be feasible for a four year war, I often left that chunks were missing in her narrative.

Despite these two small flaws, this was an excellent book and a good addition to the Dear Canada series.

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### Jenna Leigh says

Now, I might be biased because this was the first Dear Canada book that I ever read, but this is definitely my favourite book in the series. It's absolutely heart-wrenching, and Jean Little didn't shy away from the sadness, and just write a book with happy ending. I thought this was one of the books in the series where the characters were fleshed out the very most. It was good to read as well because although I've read a lot of literature about WWII, I haven't read nearly as much about WWI, and I ended up doing research on WWI after reading this. Highly recommended!

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### Shanelle says

Brothers Far From Home is another book from the Dear Canada series that focuses on the life of Eliza Bates, a young girl living during World War I. Throughout the book Eliza deals with having her brothers so far from home fighting for her country and the aftermath of those who fought. This book is sure to bring tears to your eyes and bring you more knowledge about the devastation during and after the War.

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### Holly L'Heureux says

This book was so interesting. I love learning about more Canadian history through these diary books. I am in love with this series.

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### Twyla says

In this book, Eliza Bates has a very large family. She is directly in the middle and feels left out, especially when her two older brothers leave for the war. On Christmas, she gets a journal that she keeps records of all the exciting or important things that happen, happy or sad. I learned that just because something is your

favorite, doesn't mean that it won't change. Aurnyn 12 years old, 2016

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## Barbara C says

*Brothers Far From Home: The World War I Diary of Eliza Bates.* By Jean Little. Scholastic Canada Ltd., 2003. 235 pages.

**Genre:** Historical fiction

**Recommended age level:** Intermediate (8-12 years)

**Series information:** *Dear Canada*

**Subjects and themes:** World War I, 20th century history, Canadian history, grief, loss, hope, post-traumatic stress disorder, adolescence, family

Two years after her beloved older brother went away to war and as another brother prepares to leave, 12-year old Eliza Bates turns to her diary to express her worries and feelings. When a telegram arrives confirming the death of her oldest brother, Eliza's family works to deal with their grief and continue together as a family.

This book is an enjoyable account of what families must have experienced when left behind to worry and grieve during the Great War. I appreciate how Jean Little does not try to romanticize the war, nor does she shy away from the horrible grief that so many people endured simply to create a happy ending for her book. She deals with death on the front lines, "shell-shocked" characters who have returned home, as well as injured and disfigured soldiers who suffered greatly.

I really enjoyed Eliza Bates as a character. Initially, she doesn't understand much about the war or its consequences, and thinks of it as a simple distraction from which her brothers will shortly return. As she learns more about what is happening on the front lines, encounters her traumatized neighbour who has recently returned home, and deals with the loss of her brother, Eliza quickly matures into a resilient, compassionate, and courageous young woman. I was proud of how she took on the role of comforter to her siblings and parents. Eliza is a realistic, well-rounded character who also writes about trivial things that are important to a young girl: friends, the school pageant, her dog, and her rivalry with her older sister, all things that many young readers will be able to relate to.

Though I found the writing to be slow at times, the story of *Brothers Far From Home* was engrossing and quite educational. It's so wonderful for young people to be able to read a novel about a time in *Canada's* history, as opposed to always learning about world events from an American perspective. The "Historical Note" at the back of the book - 15 pages of historical information about World War I and 18 photographs, maps, and documents - was a welcome surprise. Many of today's young readers who pick up this book will not know much about the Great War and this information will be a great addition to their understanding of the novel and history.

*Brothers Far From Home* is a beautifully crafted book that will appeal to young readers, particularly girls.

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## Young Adult Historical Vault says

Jean Little is a treasure, and this is a wonderful book. So well-written, and she's a master of subtlety for young readers. So much happens in this book that's unsaid, but resonates through the text in a way that still manages to be felt and influence the other characters. A beautiful and sensitive handling of grief and

confusion and fear and depression, but still manages to be age-appropriate and historically accurate as well. I loved it.

For my full recap, with spoilers, check out Young Adult Historical Vault:  
<https://yahistoricalvault.com/2016/04...>

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## **Kat Hardy says**

What can I say Jean Little is an amazing writer. When I started this book I didn't even know it was written by her till I had finished. And when I found out it was written by her it made sense. This book really took me back and it made me feel as if it were my own brothers fighting in the war, it was just a fabulous read.

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## **Molly says**

This entire series is a wonderful way to learn history or teach it to adolescents. I find today's generations seem to recall more when they learn through other people (pop songs, celebrity gossip, etc.), so what better way to teach history than through someone else's perspective? Yes, "authentic" diaries would be "better", but would the language really hold the modern student's attention? Did the diary writer know what WOULD be important in the context of history? Probably not.

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## **Georgia says**

It's Christmas 1916, and the first thing twelve year old Eliza Bates writes in her new diary, that her sister Verity is heartless because she called her immature and went skating without her. Nobody seems to see her grief because her parents have six other children and her brother Hugo has left to fight in the war and her brother Jack is about to go overseas to going the Air Force. Also, Eliza longs for a friend, there is Cornelia Webb next door, but she's always too sick or complains. Eliza discovers why when Cornelia's brother Richard comes home shell shocked. The entire Webb family is in disgrace, Dr. Webb also says that there is no god right in Mr. Bates' face (Mr. Bates is a minister) Eliza also worries about her brothers fighting in war, and says that Hugo would have understood her loneliness. She is also fearful, because the Allies seem to be losing the war. That is until the Canadians capture Vimy Ridge, and proclaim a victory, despite the many casualties. They celebrate and Verity goes to get her hair bobbed and Eliza says she's going to act like a "flapper." Then they get the news that Hugo has been reported missing at Vimy. The Bates continue to keep their hopes up and pray that he is all right. Until they get the terrible news, Hugo has been "killed in action." They are shocked, in grief, and of course cry (I cried too) There father is so shocked that he doesn't speak to anyone. Mrs. Bates sends Eliza and her younger siblings to stay with their Aunt Martha for a few weeks. They say that their Aunt Martha is an unusual woman, she's taking driving lessons and getting a "Tin Lizzie." Then she surprises Eliza, saying that she will soon have the right to vote. While they are there, Eliza gets news from Jack, saying that he is in love with a girl in England, but the problem is, she loves his friend. Eliza keeps writing Jack and keeping his secrets. Soon, she starts to wonder about the role of women, they are demanding the vote, leading how to drive, and becoming doctors. She is also surprised when Verity becomes a nurse at sick kids hospital. And just when things are getting back to normal, Jack's plane crashes and he is suffering from severe burns, inside and out, because his friend Rufus had died, and Rufus was also

Rosemary's (the girl that Jack likes) husband-to-be. So, a long time flies by, and they have barely any news of Jack. Until one day, Jack arrives at their front door! He tells Eliza that he's now married to Rosemary and they have a baby boy. Then, her Aunt Martha sends Eliza a telegram, saying she's bringing guests from England. But Eliza keeps this to herself and surprises her parents when Rosemary, and their son Rufus Hugh come to stay. Along time goes by, and then Eliza records on November 11th, 1918, that the war is over, but it won't ever be for her family. Then, on that Christmas Day, she meets her "Dear Reader" Tamsyn Taylor, and finally finds a friend.

Loved the book. I made the rating higher when I read it the second time. I cried a lot to, and I never cry at books! I hope to buy it someday. This one is one of the best! Read it!

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### Seema ♥Nerdgirl♥ says

It was good \*shrugs\*.

I'm not a fan of the Dear Canada series, but I picked this one because when I opened the first page, it seemed hooking so I thought I may as well give it a go. It was good, though. Except the ending was a bit confusing.

I really liked Eliza. I loved how she was making references to books.

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### Michelle says

I remember enjoying this one. Maybe it was because that it had a different tone to it that made you really look into it, and it really made you read into the story and what happened to dear Eliza and her family. Another good "Dear Canada" novel that puts you back into history with the use of a diary format; meaning you learn something about our nation's history when you read it.

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### QNPoohBear says

**Somewhere between 4-5 stars. (It would be 5 if it wasn't so specific with references.)**

Eliza Bates is the twelve-year-old middle child of a Presbyterian minister. It isn't easy being the middle of 7 children and Eliza often feels like a changeling, like she doesn't belong. Only her oldest brother Hugh understands her, but he's far away fighting in Europe in a war that never seems to end. Second brother Jack and his pal Rufus are headed overseas to fly planes soon and Eliza will be left with her older sister (a major pain) and younger siblings. There are expectations placed on her as a preacher's kid and as a member of a large family and war shortages to endure. Eliza wishes for a bosom friend but must make do with her diary, a Christmas gift from her grandmother.

This is a great entry in the series but it is written specifically for a Canadian audience and a lot of the references were lost on me. I could have done without the minister father. I have no idea what the difference between Presbyterians and Methodists is and why it's a big deal, but Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote a lot about it, especially in Rainbow Valley and her journals so I have a little bit of an idea that it was a big deal but not so much why. Who on earth are the Wesleys and why are the children all named after them? The historical note in the back was all about Canadian involvement in WWI. Don't kids learn that in school? It

was too long for me and uninteresting.

The plot was interesting. The hook was whether the brothers would survive and how the family would deal with waiting for news, waiting for the war to end. It kept me reading but I was able to put the book down in the middle. I liked Eliza's voice. She sounds pretty realistic for a 12-year-old girl 100 years ago. I ESPECIALLY loved all the references to books Eliza has read. I, too, have read and loved all the same books she did. The funny thing about that is that the opening scene of the book echoes a scene in Little Women and Eliza didn't realize it. I also liked the reference to Mrs. Macdonald ( L.M. Montgomery). This story doesn't shy away from the gritty realities of war so this is not for the young, sensitive reader. It's a little less intense than Rilla of Ingleside but drew a lot on that book and L.M. Montgomery's journals. The story deals with PTSD, trench warfare, insubordination and other wartime realities.

I loved the Bates family. They were all so real and three-dimensional. I had reservations about Eliza's father because he is a minister, but I liked him. Rev. Sam Bates is a pacifist, a kind and loving father and doesn't often preach at his children. Eliza's mother is patient but has a spark of mischief. The way the war affects them is very realistic and I liked that the author didn't make everyone happy all the time. Eliza is a great storyteller. Her concerns are very valid for a normal girl her age and then she has the added stress of wartime on top of it. Her character development is excellent. I enjoyed reading about her maturity process though it was bittersweet. Her younger siblings are funny. I liked Charlie and how he deals with the stress of having two brothers away fighting. Hugh sounds like a fun big brother and a big influence on Jack. Jack is a little more introverted than Hugh. He internalizes everything and tries to be the light-hearted, fun brother while Hugh is away, but then he too goes to war. Verity's character development is also good. The actual development gets lost in the story of the brothers but she does grow and change.

The Webb family was less enjoyable but I did like their inclusion into the story. With them we see a different kind of family and how they deal with children/young adults who are less than "perfect." The character of Richard was especially powerful. On the light side is Jack's best buddy Rufus. He sounds like a fun guy and a true friend.

I really liked this book. I received it through BookMooch.com and hope I can get more Dear Canada books. It's nice to learn about our northern neighbor, as we should, especially since Montreal is only a few hours from here!

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### **Kohavit says**

I loved this book. It was about a girl that lived in Ontario during the First World War. Her brothers were fighting for her country. I thought it was really interesting because when I read it, it felt so realistic and I had some things in common with that girl, she was 12 years old too. It was interesting to learn a bit about how people lived way back then.

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### **Nicola Mansfield says**

Reason for Reading: I am working my way through this series. I chose this one in particular because I am participating in a WWI Reading Challenge.

I was thrilled when I saw Jean Little had written this; she is one of my childhood favourite authors and I just knew it was going to be good. A wonderful story that tells the story of life for those left on the home front

after the two eldest boys of a large family go off to war. The war itself is experienced in a roundabout way through letters home and the family's reading of newspapers and listening to the radio. Eliza occasionally pastes these letters and clippings into her diary. During the story, more than the facts and details of the war are presented along with the feelings of the participants and, mostly, those left behind. Eliza's father is a minister who is a pacifist, unusual at the time, praying for the war to end and for the safety of the boys on both sides. An opinion not exactly popular when everyone else is praying for the Kaiser to die and for "our" side to win. We see into the feelings of pride and constant fear of the parents and the mixed feelings of the various aged siblings. We also see the day-to-day life and how the war affected it back home in Canada. The women's movement is explored through an aunt who becomes independent and the eldest sister who becomes a nurse. Eliza herself, writes a charming diary. She is the middle child of seven and lonely within the large family, especially when her favourite sibling then eldest brother leaves. Her diary takes the place of a best friend and we, the Dear Reader become her confidant and see her mature over the two year time span. A delightful read!

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