



Last Christmas in Paris: A Novel of World War I

Hazel Gaynor, Heather Webb

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New York Times bestselling author Hazel Gaynor has joined with Heather Webb to create this unforgettably romantic novel of the Great War.

August 1914. England is at war. As Evie Elliott watches her brother, Will, and his best friend, Thomas Harding, depart for the front, she believes—as everyone does—that it will be over by Christmas, when the trio plan to celebrate the holiday among the romantic cafes of Paris.

But as history tells us, it all happened so differently...

Evie and Thomas experience a very different war. Frustrated by life as a privileged young lady, Evie longs to play a greater part in the conflict—but how?—and as Thomas struggles with the unimaginable realities of war he also faces personal battles back home where War Office regulations on press reporting cause trouble at his father’s newspaper business. Through their letters, Evie and Thomas share their greatest hopes and fears—and grow ever fonder from afar. Can love flourish amid the horror of the First World War, or will fate intervene?

Christmas 1968. With failing health, Thomas returns to Paris—a cherished packet of letters in hand—determined to lay to rest the ghosts of his past. But one final letter is waiting for him...

Last Christmas in Paris: A Novel of World War I Details

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From Reader Review Last Christmas in Paris: A Novel of World War I for online ebook

Pamela says

"How wonderful to celebrate Christmas with you, even a quiet one . . . I'll remember it always . . the way the firelight lit your face . . If only I could bottle you up and take you with me when I return to the Front."

If I were to say: "**Oh My Heavenly stars, I LOVE LOVE LOVE THIS BOOK!!!! I wish I had the money to BUY ALL MY FRIENDS A COPY!"** Such splendidly seamless, atmospheric writing; endearing, enthralling, and deeply effecting. And characters that are so richly drawn I felt as if they were my own personal loved ones and their letters were written exclusively to me." - Non readers might think I'm some sort of deranged, over-zealous, cliché-spouting, southern-belle-has-been, narcissistic fruitcake.

Well, they would be wrong!

"The arrogance of youth takes everything for granted. Everything, that is until you find yourself at war, pushing your bayonet into the enemy's chest before he pushes his into yours."

Okay, mostly wrong.

I can be a little over the top, at times. And my southern sensibilities seep out at times. And perhaps I'm a bit deranged for liking fruitcake. But still, I'm fairly certain avid readers (especially Goodreads Peeps) would totally understand my outburst and rally in support: celebrating my enjoyment and discovery of a novel that thrilled me so.

Truly, in all seriousness, this was an endearing read with a seamless blend of fiction, history, epistolary communique, love/romance, gentle suspense, tenderness, fierceness, subtle sentiment, and garish war reality. Totally enveloping with emotional and literary satisfaction. And like I said previously, the characters/characterizations are drawn in near perfection; utterly genuine to the point I hated the book to end because I would miss them so.

"How unbearable to endure another goodbye. We seem to dance around each other like autumn leaves, forever twisting and twirling about until a gust of wind sends us skittering in different directions. how I wish we could be still for a while, that the winds of war would end and let us settle."

I do need to mention: There are maybe one or two expletives. And one grizzly descriptive scene. But nothing excessively brutish. And certainly nothing to deter awarding this gem the highest rating. Plus, keep in mind, Christmas certainly plays a role in this novel, but this isn't a Christmas themed novel. It is a war story. A love story. A story about family bonds. And it's a story of hope penned in the form of letters; the kind of hope that keeps us marching on with courage even when all seems hopeless.

FIVE *** Historical Epistolary Fiction of the Finest Order, Worthy of Praise from the Highest Heights!! ***** STARS**

Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says

I slept on my star rating, and I am still feeling the love today. ? Sometimes I need to sleep on it to see how long a story stays with me. Evie and Tom's story is still with me.

?? ?? ?? ?? ?? 5 romantic Paris stars to Last Christmas in Paris, my 2017 birthday read! ?? ?? ??

I saved this gem of a book for the holidays, and as they got closer, I knew that I would be starting a new book on my birthday. I wanted a special read for that occasion, and this most definitely was *it*. Told in the epistolary style of letters amongst friends during World War I, Last Christmas in Paris captured my heart.

This book has a slower crescendo. It takes some patience, but I found myself reading this a little slower than my normal speed and savoring the words, re-reading passages. It takes time to fall in love, and that's just what happened between two of these friends. They fell in love through their letters. There's so much beauty in that.

The World War I backdrop was quite the contrast. While the letters start off with the friends thinking the war will be over by the first Christmas, there were several more Christmases that would come and go before that dreadful war was over. Will Tom and Evie ever meet up to spend Christmas in Paris?

I enjoyed the authors' notes where they explained how they wrote the book together (fascinating!). The two authors formed a special friendship as a result of writing this book together and writing letters to each other. There were some interesting facts about the war also. This is not a book I would classify as a romance, but I would say it was certainly romantic in the best of ways. I was ecstatic with my birthday read choice.

Trish at Between My Lines says

This review was originally posted on Between My Lines

I'm starting this review with a very bold statement, but I stand over it with all my heart. Last Christmas in Paris is my book of the year for 2017. I don't care that it's only the beginning of November, I doubt any book I've yet to read this year will mean as much to me.

5 reasons I loved Last Christmas in Paris

The entire book is letters. Love letters, angry letters, duty letters. Letters that cover every human emotion and I treasured them all. On top of the precious letters that stirred my soul, I learned about the language of stamps. Where and how you placed the stamp had a hidden message, who knew? Not me.

War is depicted in all its awfulness. We all know the atrocities that happened. But knowing them, and then reading letters about actual life in the trenches. Well it hammers the message home.

The role of women in WWI really stirred my heart. Evie knew the value of letting Tom spill his heart to her in his letters. She didn't want to know about the realities of war, but she knew he needed to share them and she was strong enough to help shoulder his pain. Evie played an active role in the war in many ways, and she shows how women really stood up and participated in this war.

The love story. Seriously it's the love story to end all love stories. It crushed my heart at times, but sent it soaring also. I loved watching their friendship grow to love via their letters, and I have never believed in the love affair of a fictional couple more than theirs.

Feels, feels, feels. All the feels. Gut wrenching feels, tear jerking feels, heart-warming feels, excited butterfly in the stomach feels, hopeful feels, falling madly insanely in love feels. This book has them in abundance and I shook with emotional while reading it.

The bottom line: It's fab, you need it in your life. Trust me and go read Last Christmas in Paris! You can thank me later and if you need a shoulder to cry on, I'm here for you.

Who should read Last Christmas in Paris by Hazel Gaynor & Heather Webb?

If you only buy 1 book that I recommend this year, then you should make it Last Christmas in Paris by Hazel Gaynor & Heather Webb. Especially recommended to fans of historical fiction, epistolary novels, world war 1 settings and epic love stories. I think if you've enjoyed Hazel Gaynor's previous books that you'll also love this one. Fans of Carmel Harrington, JoJo Moyes and Kristin Hannah should also enjoy.

Holly says

*4.5 ??

Very good! I don't know why I love stories that take place during WW1 & WW11, they just end up making me sad. Anyway, I loved the epistolary format but at times I felt it was a bit too long. Loved the story though.

The Lit Bitch says

4.5 stars

When this one came up for review, I almost passed on it. I am not entirely sure why....maybe because it was up for review in September and I wasn't ready to start thinking about anything Christmas related until at least November.

Or maybe it was because it was a collaboratively written novel, or that the title wasn't grabbing me. I don't know, for some reason I almost passed but I am terribly glad that I didn't pass on this one!

Let me just say, I loved this novel. It's a novel written basically in all letter form which made for a super fast read that was hard to put down. The whole time I kept thinking "just one more letter" and next thing I know I was on a different year in the war! So super fast and because of the letters I felt personally connected to the characters in a unique way.

I normally don't read a lot of books with different authors because sometimes it just doesn't work. There is clearly a different voice or style and for me it doesn't always flow well. However, for this book it was a home run. I loved how different yet familiar each of the letters were. The two authors nailed the different

perspectives and gave Evie and Tom very unique yet similar voices. If this book hadn't been written in letter form, then I am not sure that it would have worked as well.

So as I said, I loved it, but that doesn't mean that it was flawless. For me, I felt like the last two parts (last two years of the war) were rushed and not nearly the same attention to detail as the other parts/years or letters. The ending felt rushed and I am not sure that they knew how to wrap things up. I felt like so many pages and letters were dedicated to developing the romantic tension between Evie and Tom and then toward the end it just happened too fast. There was only really two letters between the two that really committed their love to one another and that was too few for me.

Also I felt like it took Evie way too long to enter the War herself and when she did her time there was too fast and there wasn't enough insight through her letters to convince me that she was ever really changed or had really seen anything at all. All this ground work had been laid for her to go to the front and when it happened we only had a few letters that were short and rushed. So I felt like I needed more on that. It almost seemed like an after thought.

All criticism aside though, this was a fantastic story. I loved the research and knowledge that went into the time period and history of the war. It was fascinating to read and clearly the authors did a ton of research on WWI to give it a realistic ring and it was well worth it!

This novel isn't really about 'Christmas' so the title is a little misleading but if you are looking for a war time romance with characters that you will no doubt fall in love with, check out this intimate novel full of letters!

See my full review [here](#)

Cindy Burnett says

Last Christmas in Paris is a dual timeline story told predominantly through letters and telegrams. The majority of the letters are written between Evie Elliott and her brother Will's best friend Thomas Harding. The authors do an incredible job describing the horrors of war both on the battlefield and at home while also detailing the relationship developing between Evie and Tom. The story unfolds at the right pace, and I was constantly turning pages to see what was going to happen next.

My favorite parts of the book were that it was told through letters (I love stories told through correspondence) and the historical information that was included. Some of the World War 1 facts included are commonly known: the British and Germans singing carols on Christmas Day in 1914 and the British thinking the war would be short-lived; however, other facts were new to me. I didn't realize that treatment for the mental anguish of war (PTSD but not named that during World War 1) existed that long ago. I think of that as a more modern phenomenon. I also was completely fascinated with (and somewhat horrified by) the Order of the White Feather, a woman's group that made it their mission to shame those men who did or could not join the army to fight in World War 1; many men were working undercover or had been rejected for service for health reasons and still these awful women were indiscriminate in who they targeted. I knew that men who didn't sign up to join the army were harassed, but I had no idea there was such a coordinated effort. It is very depressing that people are so quick to judge or condemn, and I found this group's actions to be a good reminder of how an idea (in this case to try and recruit more soldiers) can go so completely awry.

Last Christmas in Paris is a gem. Thanks to William Morrow for this ARC; all opinions are my own.

Cheryl says

The year is 1968 when an elderly Englishman who is nearing the end of his life, decides to make one final trip to Paris at Christmastime. He brings with him a large packet of letters. His days are spent peacefully as he reads the letters and reminisces about the course his life has taken.

Set against the backdrop of World War I, this beautifully written novel is told through letters exchanged between a young Englishwoman and her brother and her close friends. It is a historical novel but more than that, it is also a moving love story.

This poignant novel with it's likable characters will draw you in as friendship, hope, and love prevail against the horrors of war.

Amanda - Mrs B's Book Reviews says

*<https://mrsbbookreviews.wordpress.com>

I have read a handful of epistolary novels over the years and it was a pure joy to read *Last Christmas In Paris*, an exceptionally well executed novel that employs this structure. The authors of *Last Christmas In Paris*, renowned historical fiction writers Hazel Gaynor and Heather Webb, are now the best of friends, after they collaborated to compose this unforgettable tale of love, in the face of the Great War. These two authors have nailed the characters and voices of the protagonists of this novel so well. There is a seamless quality to this book, so it is hard to believe it was devised by two different pens (more detail on this collaboration can be found at the back of the book). Paris holds a special place in my heart, I adore Christmas themed books and I always lap up novels about the Great War. I couldn't ask for a better combination for a novel! I had an early indication I was going to love this book and love it I did. Although there wasn't a huge focus on Christmas, which I had hoped for based on the title and premise, but I was still taken aback by the beauty of this book.

Karen says

It's not easy to tell a story simply by using an epistolary format. It has been successfully done before (*The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*) immediately springs to mind but I'm delighted to say that these two authors have pulled this off magnificently, *Last Christmas in Paris* is a gorgeous read and I loved it.

With the occasional interruption into a change of timeline set in 1968, *Last Christmas in Paris* is told entirely through letters (and telegrams) during the years of 1914-1918, mainly between Evie Elliott and Thomas Harding – the childhood best friend of Evie's brother Will. Evie is a prolific letter writer and it's not only Tom who receives her missives but her brother Will, and her best friend Alice.

Evie was an absolute delight and I adored her. She wasn't content just to sit by and let life pass by. She had principles, gumption and bucket loads of courage. Although from a privileged family, she had no airs or graces and was desperate to 'do her bit' for her country when war was declared. Her mother was dead set

against her working at all but eventually Evie is able to get a job with the local postmistress delivering letters and those awful official telegrams bringing bad news. Not content with keeping quiet about the propaganda from the government and other news agencies who put out the false reports that everything is going swimmingly well for the troops, she secures a column in a newspaper – telling the truth as she sees it from a woman’s point of view and not holding back on the awful conditions in France and the difficulties faced by both fighting soldiers and the people at home waiting for their return.

When Tom went to war, he and Evie were not romantically involved. As Will’s younger sister, she has always been teased by both boys but through their correspondence we begin to see a different side to both Tom and Evie. Tom’s letters are heavily censored for mentions of location and other sensitive information but nevertheless through the level of detail, the evocative prose and historical facts I was completely swept up in their lives. The letters start off formally from Tom’s side – signing off with ‘Lieutenant Thomas Harding’ whilst those from Evie are jolly and newsy and include gifts of hand knitted socks, tobacco and books – anything to try and lift Tom’s spirits. As the war continues for far longer than anyone expected, their correspondence becomes more personal and intimate. Both pour out their innermost feelings about the war and life in general.

The characterisation was spot on with the main characters being incredibly engaging and believable – Tom stole a little bit of my heart and even those I disliked intensely (yes John Hopper I’m looking at you!) were able to get under my skin! The storyline of ‘war neuroses’ (what we now know as PTSD) was extremely poignant and saddening. These poor soldiers who had been through hell at the front, were referred to as ‘Lacking Moral Fibre’ and ‘weak-minded’ when they were returned to Britain for hospital treatment.

Last Christmas in Paris will make you smile whilst breaking your heart. I was completely mesmerised by the letters, the characters, and oh just by the entire storyline and it will definitely be one of my favourite books this year. I made the mistake of finishing the last 50 pages or so on my morning train commute. My goodness this was an emotional read – a word of warning – if you’re reading this book in public make sure you have tissues!

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <https://historicalfictionreader.blogs...>

I caught wind of Last Christmas in Paris in March 2017 when the cover started circling social media. I’d read and enjoyed both Heather Webb and Hazel Gaynor, but it was the subject matter that caught my attention. I’m a junkie when it comes to war era literature and couldn’t wait to get a copy of my own.

The story itself is relayed through the correspondence of the novel’s cast and while I know the format doesn’t appeal to everyone, I couldn’t help appreciating the sense of intimacy and depth created by the approach. I felt connected to the characters and that made it easy to empathize with their views and experiences.

In many ways, the narrative reminded me of Vera Brittain’s *Testament of Youth*. Webb and Gaynor clearly meant to echo Brittain’s unique perspective and much like the famed memoirist, I feel they succeeded in capturing both the romanticism and realities of the conflict while illustrating its impact on the men and women who came of age in its shadow.

Sweetly romantic and beautifully composed, *Last Christmas in Paris* proved compelling and heartfelt. A brilliant tribute to the tragedy of war and the endurance of the human heart.

Suzanne Leopold says

Evie Elliott watches her brother Will and his best friend, Thomas, leave for Europe to serve in World War I. The three of them are very close and have never been separated. Evie is naive and believes that everyone will be together for a Christmas reunion in Paris. The three of them stay in contact via letters, and these communications become the fabric and timeline for the story.

Evie is frustrated with her life as a young woman and is also unsettled with the lack of “real” news reported by the British government. She has an idea of the grim life as a soldier in France from Thomas’ letters. Evie channels her disappointment by writing a column for a local newspaper. As the war drags on, Thomas and Evie continue their correspondence while hoping for the elusive Christmas in Paris.

This novel by Hazel Gaynor and Heather Webb was unique because the story is told in letter format spanning over several years. This book was collaboration between two authors living in different countries, and is a great read for those loving historical fiction.

DJ Sakata says

Favorite Quotes:

Marrying Charlie would be rather like marrying a broken carriage clock. How the hours would drag.

I feel like an unworn dress, hanging limply in the closet, without purpose or shape or form.

I've already lost an innocence I didn't know I possessed.

Do you remember Lloyd George's rousing speech “The war to end all wars”? They said it would be over by Christmas. They didn't say which one though, did they?

You're a star, Evie. About the only light I see in these endless nights.

My Review:

Last Christmas in Paris was simply stunning and a pure delight. This beautifully written and emotive tale alternated between eliciting frequent smiles of pleasure and contentment to stinging my eyes and burning my throat; at either end of the emotional spectrum, the intensity was strong enough to take my breath away. Ms. Gaynor and Webb's eloquent writing reached a level of poignancy and excellence I had yet to experience and the effects may take more than a few beats for my recovery. I seem to be stunned, mentally dazed, and annoying unable to find the appropriate words to give tribute to their remarkable skills and acumen. I adored their enticing characters as much as their exceptionally engaging and descriptive style. I was quickly

swallowed up and transported to a different time and place as I devoured the personal letters and insightful inner musings that comprised most of the manuscript. I relished the lighthearted banter and jocularity of the earlier missives that gave way to deeper observations and confessions as the war waged on much longer and harsher than expected. Having read their lovely exchanges, I am moved to bemoan the lost art of human interaction found in putting pen to paper on beautiful stationary for heart-felt letter-writing versus our abbreviated communications of emailing, texting, emojis, and gifs. Hazel Gaynor and Heather Webb have mad skills and a new fangirl; I have an extremely strong desire to greedily gather and consume all their words.

Caz says

I've given this an A+ for narration and a B+ for content at [AudioGals](#)

Last Christmas in Paris is a beautifully written, superbly narrated epistolary novel which centres around the correspondence exchanged between three friends during the years of the First World War. I suspect the degree to which any listener will enjoy the story will depend on whether one enjoys novels that consist entirely of letters; personally, I'm a big fan of that literary device, so that, added to the fact that I have a particular interest in the history of the period, plus the list of excellent narrators attached to the project pretty much ensured my enjoyment of this audiobook. And enjoy it I did, although 'enjoy' seems rather a feeble word to describe how I feel about it now that I've finished listening to it. I was so caught up in this story of friendship, emancipation, love, loss, tragedy, hope, despair... a real gamut of emotions, that I couldn't bear to set it aside; I listened to it in only two or three sittings and, when I finished it, felt that strange sense of emptiness that always seems to descend when I've finished reading or listening to something really good – that feeling of "what do I do now?"

You can read the rest of this review at [AudioGals](#) .

Sonja Yoerg says

War changes everything--individuals, relationships, priorities, dreams--so it's not surprising that stories set in wartime are so popular and, in this case, so engrossing. In *Last Christmas in Paris*, best friends Will and Tom head off to fight the Germans, leaving behind Will's sister, Evie, and, soon enough, the hope of a Christmas homecoming. By the end of the war five years later, these young, spirited characters and their circle of loved ones have experienced the full spectrum of human tragedy and plumbed the deep reaches of the human heart. I was captivated by their story, and moved.

Webb and Gaynor artfully craft the narrative using letters and telegrams, a structure that drove me from one letter to the next, eager to learn what the response would be, or which secondary characters might swoop in to complicate the story. It was hard to tear myself away! The multi-layered plot kept me guessing about what the next missive might reveal and I admit my heart was often in my throat. And, yes, I cried.

A truly remarkable book brimming with passion, intelligence, courage, and humanity.

Kate Quinn says

Got a chance to read an ARC of this one for a cover quote! My review and quote:

This joint collaboration between authors Heather Webb and Hazel Gaynor is a gripping epistolary novel in the tradition of Letters from Skye and The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society. Beginning with heartbreakingly gaiety at the start of the First World War, "Last Christmas In Paris" follows a progression of letters between a spirited female journalist, a bookish new-minted soldier, and the various bright young things who make up their band of friends, charting the slow, heartbreakingly passage of years as war and disillusionment grind away youthful dreams and ideals. Humor, love, tragedy, and hope make for a moving, uplifting read. A winner!
