



Courage & Defiance: Stories of Spies, Saboteurs, and Survivors in World War II Denmark

Deborah Hopkinson

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When the Nazis invaded Denmark on Tuesday, April 9, 1940, the people of this tiny country to the north of Germany awoke to a devastating surprise. The government of Denmark surrendered quietly, and the Danes were ordered to go about their daily lives as if nothing had changed. But everything had changed.

Award-winning author Deborah Hopkinson traces the stories of the heroic young men and women who would not stand by as their country was occupied by a dangerous enemy. Rather, they fought back. Some were spies, passing tactical information to the British; some were saboteurs, who aimed to hamper and impede Nazi operations in Denmark; and 95% of the Jewish population of Denmark were survivors, rescued by their fellow countrymen, who had the courage and conscience that drove them to act.

With her talent for digging deep in her research and weaving real voices into her narratives, Hopkinson reveals the thrilling truth behind one of WWII's most daring resistance movements.

Courage & Defiance: Stories of Spies, Saboteurs, and Survivors in World War II Denmark Details

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From Reader Review Courage & Defiance: Stories of Spies, Saboteurs, and Survivors in World War II Denmark for online ebook

Tracie says

Profiles several people who worked alone or in groups during World War II against the Germans in Denmark. The book drives home the danger these people were in (most of them were captured and placed in camps at some point) and what the turning point for each person was to become personally involved.

Chris says

This nonfiction prose tells the true stories of various people who helped to undermine the German occupation of Denmark during WWII through defiance and sabotage. Numerous photographs, a timeline, Danish alphabet, extensive bibliography, and more supplemental materials enhance the content of the book. Hopkinson does an excellent job writing to a middle school audience, telling the truth with enough details to hold interest but without getting too gritty or entrenched with the horrors of the era.

Justin says

Courage & Defiance by Deborah Hopkinson was a book about WW2 when Germany invaded Denmark. Some of the people that lived there didn't want to wait to what the Germans were going to do to them, so they did anything from printing illegal newspapers to destroying German vehicles. Those people knew that if they got caught doing acts of sabotage against the Germans they could get torched for information and then killed. There was even a man who got pictures of a new radar system the Germans had and then he took a little plane along with a friend across the water into Allied territory. Since the plane couldn't hold enough fuel for the trip, they had to crawl out onto the wing of the plane to refuel. It also talked about what happened to some people that got captured in the war. They got sent to Concentration Camps just like the Jews. Although the conditions were a little better for the Danes, lots still died and they got very little food. There was also a story about a family that had all but the mother and a sister sent to different Concentration Camps but they all survived. Two of the brothers got freed on their mother's birthday and their mother said it was the best birthday she ever had.

I thought this was a really good book. I like reading about WW2 and other war books. I also think it's really cool that people risked their lives to try and free their country. One thing I didn't like about this book was that this stuff really happened. It's really hard to believe one person can start something that makes so many people lose their lives.

Brennan C says

This book was a very interesting read that I thoroughly enjoyed as a big fan of danish country. The firsthand stories were so exiting I forgot it was a non-fiction book.

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Above the Treeline

Nonfiction is hard for me to review, so this is sort of a backwards review today. The combination of my lack of interest in WWII and the fact that I was reading an e galley of this that was loading very slowly makes it hard to put together my usual review, which is a shame, because this book was really good, and is an excellent purchase for middle school and high school libraries.

It is well laid out, with lots of pertinent pictures and plenty of white space. This is hugely important, especially with nonfiction books. The stories are interesting, and a LOT of different people and events are told about in an anecdotal fashion, with elucidating historical information in between the anecdotes. Students who are obsessed with WWII (and I haven't had as many recently, but I don't think we're seen the end of interest in this era yet) will eat this up. It's easier to get through than adult books on the topic, and offers more interesting information than the short, general interest nonfiction about the war. The in-depth discussion of different people and events will make this good for research projects as well.

Personally, I didn't find this as compelling a read as something like *The Boys Who Challenged Hitler: Knud Pedersen and the Churchill Club*, which followed a smaller cast of characters in a more story-like fashion. This is more along the lines of Rick Atkinson's *The Battle of the Bulge*.

Take a look and see what you think. As I said, I'm definitely buying a copy because it was a good book, but reading it was a huge slog for me personally!

Greg Brozeit says

My 6th grade son gave me this book for Christmas. I was overwhelmed because I didn't think he paid much attention to my reading preferences. Distributed and sold through the American Scholastic book company—just about every American probably read many of their books in their youth, I remember reading biographies of Joe Namath and Stephen Foster—this is a collection of stories that forms a picture of the Danish resistance in WWII. Since it is aimed more for middle school readers, it focuses on personal recollections and experiences rather than larger historical trends and macro politics. Nevertheless, it provides some real adventure stories and doesn't fail to point out how people sacrificed, suffered, and ultimately prevailed against Nazi tyranny.

I appreciated learning more about the Danish experience in WWII, mostly because it is one of my favorite places in the world and I have come to love and respect Danish people. Most WWII histories I've read say little, if anything, about Denmark. There were no great battles, mass atrocities, or widely publicized historical figures in the nation's WWII experience.

But in true Danish style, this story is about regular people who love their country and anonymously go about their business to build a better society. They don't beat their chests or try to tell the world how great they are; they just do the best they can. And the people Hopkinson chose to portray are among the best the nation had

to offer.

I could quibble about little things that occasionally annoyed me, like the few times Hopkinson refers to something of the effect of “and this was before the era of cell phones and computers.” But I had to remind myself that the book’s intended audience is middle schoolers who likely know little or nothing about WWII or what it is like to live in a state of war with a totalitarian state.

All in all, if you have or know children in middle grades, this is a nice book to hopefully inspire them to learn more and understand the sacrifices that sometimes need to be made to achieve a better world, whether or not it is in times of war or crisis. Even getting through the day in the 21st century requires a sense of personal decency and social responsibility.

My rating of 3 stars is for adults. For the intended audience, it’s probably closer to 4 to 5 stars.

Angela Blount says

Originally Reviewed for YA Books Central: <http://www.yabookscentral.com/yanonfi...>

Immersive, impactful and informative. This non-fiction account of World War 2 takes a somewhat more alternate angle than is usual—shedding light on those among the Danes, specifically, who resisted the Nazi invasion.

Filled with black and white pictures of brave rebel Danes, newspaper pages, and historic moments in progress, Hopkinson stitches together a vivid sense for the oppression and pushback in a tiny nation that regarded all of its citizens with uncommon loyalty. The stories are sobering and significant in historical value, while the language choices leave it accessible to those as young as 10.

COURAGE & DEFIANCE is broken into five parts, beginning in April of 1940 with the overnight invasion of the tiny nation of Denmark. Sedition was initially scattered, disorganized, and small scale until the Summer of 1943. As news of Allied victories spread, it brought embodiment and hope to the Danish people. They began to openly revolt, and the Germans cracked down with martial law and the total neutralizing of the Danish military. It is here, at part 2 and the book’s halfway point, that the Nazis ordered the roundup of all 7,700 Jews living in Denmark. The pacing accelerates from here on out as the Danes worked together to warn their Jewish neighbors, then evacuate as many as they could. Part 3 covers the Fall of 1943-Summer of 1944, as a number of the resistance members that readers have come to know are captured and imprisoned. Some are executed. Part 4 tells of those who survived to be deported into Germany and face the cruel and deteriorating conditions of Nazi camps—illness, starvation, and ten hour work days. Part 5 recounts Liberation in the spring of 1945—though survival was far from assured for these political prisoners, even to the final moments.

What’s most striking is how perfectly well these men and women understood the risks they were running in opposing the Nazis. There were no guarantees that Hitler could be stopped. Torture and death awaited any caught engaging in espionage or sabotage. And yet, there were many who could not just stand by and passively watch their society and principles were ravaged a piece at a time. They were willing to put their bodies and lives on the line—potentially being betrayed by their own Nazi-sympathizing countrymen—to defy submission to a genocidal war machine.

One of the most harrowing accounts would have to be that of The Flight of the Hornet, which begins on page 47. It tells of Tommy Sneum's daring escape from Denmark to Great Britain in an outdated little plane, which he had to secretly reassemble himself in a barn. The tension throughout this incident is palpable.

On the flip side, readers may have a bit of trouble keeping track of all of the characters followed throughout. Pictures of said persons are offered, but not up front. And while the linear chronological ordering of events makes perfect historical sense, it leaves large alternating gaps between character accounts—and thus time for readers to forget who they are being told about. For this reader, it caused distancing and disconnect from their individual plights.

This book has great bottom-line potential as a tool for bringing the tensions and conflict of WW2 to life in a whole new way; suitable for students as young as lower middle-grade, or for anyone who is simply interested in expanding their understanding on the subject.

Arleigh says

“Only a drop in the ocean, that’s what they say. Well now, the ocean consists of drops.” – Mogens Fog

An emotionally affecting story based on a collection of survivors’ memoirs, this WWII account focuses on the resistance efforts in Denmark during the five years of German occupation. Readers are immediately drawn in with riveting action from the Danish spies and saboteurs—ordinary men and women who, instead of meekly surrendering their freedom and watching their fellow countrymen in danger, chose to covertly help the official resistance organizations by destroying German machinery and weaponry, disrupting their supply lines and secretly transporting the Jewish population to nearby neutral Sweden. At a great risk to their own lives—and in fact many of the Danes featured were eventually sent to concentration camps—these men and women were brave, admirable heroes of WWII and humbly represent the spirit of the Danish people in a time of great deprivation and strife.

Courage & Defiance easily garners interest in its subject, giving supporting information on the causes of the war succinctly, and age appropriate descriptions of Hitler’s rise without overwhelming details. Headings include a date, relevant quote or newspaper headline, and there are captioned photos throughout. A vocabulary list for young readers is included, as well as a prologue that is both informative and personal while anticipating any qualms readers may have, such as the timeline that skips around.

The author’s enthusiasm for these brave men and women shines with each new chapter, encouraging readers to further independent research. While recommended for ages 8 -12 years, it is suitable for both young adults and older readers as an indispensable reference for those interested specifically in the history of Denmark during World War II.

Noah B. 8B says

It's really too bad. I simply couldn't get into it. History is history, but this did not engage me.

Carl Ernst says

I thought this was a really good book. I like reading about WW2 and other war books. I also think it's really cool that people risked their lives to try and free their country. One thing I didn't like about this book was that this stuff really happened. It's really hard to believe one person can start something that makes so many people lose their lives. These people were very brave and this book captured their sacrifice to help others to survive.

Lynn says

Not as dynamic a read as Phillip Hoose's book on a similar topic but very interesting. This provides an intriguingly different premise which makes me want to do some research and comparisons. Hopkinson's book has much more detail on the rescue of the Jewish population and on the two British intelligence organizations who seemed to be in competition with each other. A very worthwhile read and great to use in classrooms with the Hoose book.

Andrew Bott says

Courage and Defiance was a good book on the Holocaust. It told the stories of many different people that were involved in the Holocaust. It helped me to understand what the conditions were actually like. It also showed me how many people actually tried to help the Jews to escape to other countries or to hide. Some people even helped by sabotaging the Nazis. Overall, the book was good and it had a lot of information on the Holocaust.

Joan says

I purchased this as J since the YA nonfiction budget is basically nonexistent. It really fits the YA category a bit better. The first interesting item I noticed was how little attention Knud Pedersen, the main focus of the last book I read, got. It confirms my suspicion that likely he was among the first but not the first as recognized by other Danish groups. I also suspect one of the themes of that book was inaccurate too: plenty of Danish people were trying to work against the Nazis but they had to be careful and were more cautious than Pedersen's group and kept their secret better.

I checked and a juvenile title that came out in 2005, Darkness Over Denmark by Ellen Levine, was cited in the bibliography which I found commendable since I had been very impressed by that book. This had a slightly broader scope than that title but did cover similar material in part. This one covered the resistance movement in Denmark in general and followed a few people, mostly saboteurs but other resistance people as well, throughout the resistance period. Denmark was unusual in that it was not exactly a conquered country but one that had submitted to the Nazis threats of bombardment. This did protect the general populace and the Jews there for a fair amount of time. Although often condemned as cowardliness, it did its purpose of keeping more people from being killed directly. Indirectly, it may have failed in this aim since Denmark was milked extensively to help the Nazi war effort, so plenty of people died as a result of that. So that would remain a controversial decision.

I did not care for the layout design of the book. A lot of the print was not easy to read. I also do not think the author's decision to go by chronology was a wise one. It was hard to keep track of the people she was telling about. It did lead to a better understanding of what was going on in the broader picture, so was successful that way.

The author often felt rather removed from the people being written about. The word tragic was used too often, even if accurate. The repetition removed the drama from the word and events being written about. There was no follow up, no list of wives, or other family members left grieving. The account of that person just stopped.

Having said that, a lot of the story was very well told, with interesting details added. I found the photo showing some of the large number of underground newspapers fascinating. The vivid accounts of how the prisoners kept their spirits and physical conditioning up was intriguing. One person did chin ups using his window shelf in his cell after figuring out how to slip out of his handcuffs. It described some of the ways the prisoners were able to communicate with each other. I also found the description of the moral anguish the various resistance people had before and after their decision to start resisting very interesting. I appreciated it being less black and white and more realistically grey than the last book I read.

Recommended for units on war and the effects it has on the civilian population.

jv poore says

In April of 1940, Germany invaded Denmark and the quiet, common thread running through the Danish people was plucked. If ever there was a more resilient, resolved and remarkably sympathetic collection of human beings, they are unknown to me. Ms. Hopkinson honestly portrays the dangers of dismal, every-day-life under occupation as well as the cruelty and despair of concentration camps, simultaneously displaying the intuitive empathy and bravery of the Danes.

What strikes me the most is the that each person has an individual 'line he will cross' while still doing his level best to resist, if not fight, against the gruesome German goals. That is, until learning of Hitler's plan to round up and relocate Danish Jews to concentration camps. The unspoken, unanimous decision to prevent this was almost palpable as plans for moving Jewish Danes to Sweden were formed.

I do not have the ability to aptly convey the reasons that I will be highly recommending this non-fiction nugget, so I'll just leave you with this: reading Courage and Defiance reminds of the quote that Mr. Rogers would share from his childhood. When he would see scary things in the news, his mother advised, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

This mini-review was written for Buried Under Books by jv poore.

Scott Krantzman says

Courage And Defiance by Deborah Hopkinson is a heart touching book that is a addictive page turner. This book is about the stories of spies, saboteurs, and survivors in World War 2 in Denmark. This book is full of

stories that are told in the first person from the spies, saboteurs, and survivors. I really loved this book so much that I recommended it to my whole family and they all loved it. My dad is reading it right now. I would recommend this book to anyone looking for a adventure.
