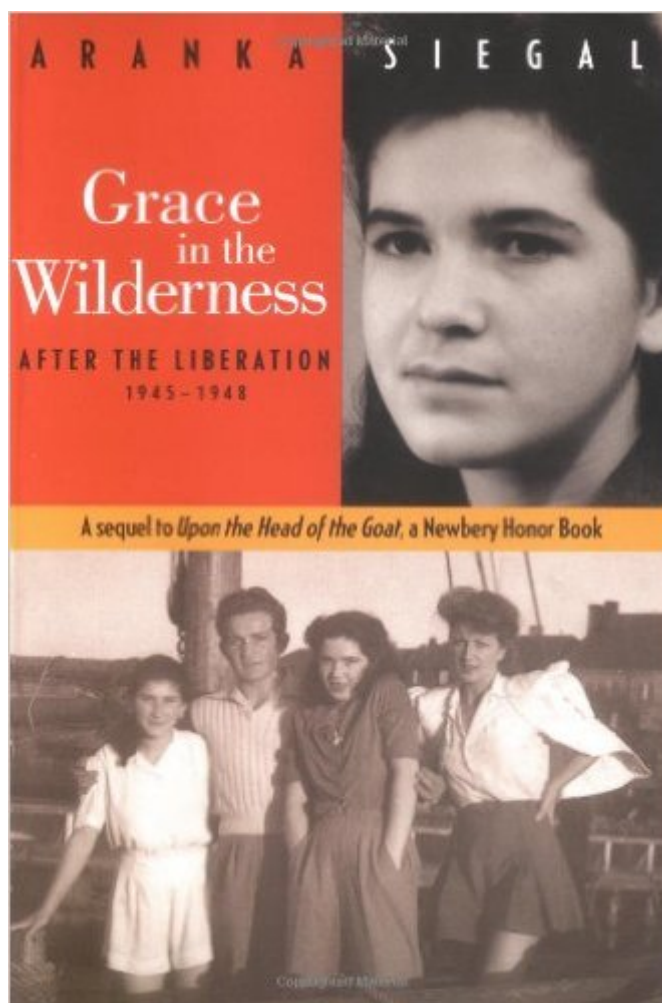


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Grace In The Wilderness: After The Liberation 1945-1948



Synopsis

An NCSS-CBC Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies. A sequel to *Upon the Head of the Goat*, a Newbery Honor Book.

Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

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Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (14 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #851,042 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #135 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Holocaust](#) #136 in [Books > Children's Books > Religions > Judaism](#) #1331 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Historical](#)

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

(Actually, this is a 4.5 star rating.) This is a very memorable book, like the first book 'Upon the Head of the Goat' (I read them both at age fifteen, in the spring of 1995, haven't reread them yet, and yet can still vividly remember a lot of names, details, and events from both as though I'd only finished reading them yesterday). However, in hindsight it seems as though something is missing, and not just all of the friends and family members who were killed by the Nazis. A lot of sequels to books that were about the Shoah, whether fiction or memoir, or whether the characters were in camps, ghettos, in hiding, or just continually on the run, are kind of a letdown. A lot of intense things happened before, what with daily deprivations, increasing regulations, friends, neighbours, and relatives murdered, taken into ghettos, camps, prisons, and death marches, but the sequels to such books seem more like a routine tale of life after the War, no constant "What's going to happen next?" now that the danger is past and the Allies have assumed protective control of the European nations. Though this book, while being guilty of being mundane in comparison with what went before, is one of the better sequels. The early part of the book is the most compelling, during the final days Piri and her older sister Iboya spend at Bergen-Belsen before the liberation. Piri is very

sick and has to spend a long time in the makeshift hospital the Allies set up, and then she and Iboya are off to Sweden to begin new lives, along with their friend Dora (who lost her mother about six months after they were taken to the camp they were in, and is now an *einer allen*, or one alone in the world) and the two Berger girls, the daughters of the woman who pulled Piri into line with them after she had been selected to stay behind in the camp since she was so weak. Mrs. Berger switched Piri with another woman who had been marching with them in the *fünferreihe* (row of five prisoners). They meet a lot of fellow survivors in Sweden, including Herschel, who becomes Dora's boyfriend, and David, who becomes Piri's boyfriend for a short time. Piri and Iboya also discover that one of their four sisters, Etu, has survived too. Etu was living in their old house in Hungary, along with her new husband Geza, but now she wants to go to Palestine, where David and several of his friends are also going. Maybe it's shellshock or denial, but in hindsight I don't really recall some of the strong emotions displayed in other after-the-war narratives present in Piri or Iboya, at least not for long stretches of time, just an occasional moment of reflection that they almost didn't have one another, or remembering back to something awful that happened, like how Piri lost her best friend Judi. I know that no news was usually bad news, and the longer there was no news, the worse it probably was, but where is the frantic searching for their other relatives that I see so often in other memoirs of this sort, even denying that they died and that maybe the Red Cross got it wrong? Other survivors even hold out hope for decades that that other person miraculously survived and is alive somewhere, constantly wondering, placing ads, asking everyone they see in refugee centers or walking by on the road after liberation. When do they even attempt to look for *Räzsi*, Lilli, *Lájos*, Manci, even their stepfather, or try to find out what happened to them if they're pretty sure they're dead? Piri suggests looking for their stepfather, but Iboya says if he survived the Russian POW camp, he knew what happened and wouldn't think any of them survived. So they won't even look for him so that if he DID survive, he'd know at least Piri, Etu, and Iboya are all still alive? Only towards the end does Piri finally seem to be hit by the full emotional impact of what has happened. I also, in hindsight, don't agree with how they decided to go to America to be with some aunt they've never met, over staying in their new haven in Sweden, among all of their friends and surrogate family, or going to Palestine with Etu. Etu hasn't been in any camps, but at least she has more of a shared sense of what they had to suffer through, far more than some relative they've never met in America will ever! And why wouldn't they want to be reunited with their only sibling left, the way Etu wanted it to be? Also, Piri and Iboya obviously went through a lot together, yet Piri is content to live with a childless older couple who adopts her, while Iboya is away living in some type of workers' dormitory? In other narratives I've read, the friends or siblings who went through that sort of thing

together were inseparable; they wouldn't have been okay with going in different directions so soon after that intense bonding experience. They came so close to losing one another before, so why live apart instead of sticking extremely close together? The other survivors I've read postwar books by want to be close together for comfort and reassurance that they're still there and together; they wouldn't be fine with splitting up! I also would have liked to have had at least one chapter dealing with their new life in America, or maybe just one devoted to the emotional turmoil within. It is one of the better postwar books out there, but still leaves something lacking, both in emotions and in the rather bland life they lead in Sweden after getting used to their new home.

Aranka Siegal describes life after the Holocaust in this amazing novel. After all of what Piri (the main character) had lost during the Holocaust, she and her sister Iboya must not look back at those horrible memories, but they must start a new life. It's a story about moving on to a different world and leaving behind all the loved ones. It's a story few lived to tell.

This book begins with the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at the end of the Holocaust. Fifteen-year-old Piri and her older sister Iboya have managed to stay alive and together throughout the war, and now they are free. Unfortunately, they have no home. They don't think any of their family members have survived, and they don't even try to go home to their old house, afraid of what they would find. Instead, the girls are taken by members of the Swedish Red Cross to Sweden, where they are placed in a boarding school until they grow old enough to work. Piri begins to feel like a real person again, going to school and making friends and even falling in love with a young man who has decided to go to Palestine to find a new life for himself. When the boarding school closes and Piri's love has left for his new homeland, Piri and Iboya start working in a factory, but Piri is a daydreamer who can't seem to keep her machine under control. When a Swedish couple touring the factory take pity on her and invite her to live with them as a daughter, she reluctantly agrees. To her surprise, Piri fits in with this family. She even begins thinking of them as her own true family, and she is happy with them. She falls in love again with a nice young man, but she is torn. Piri had promised Iboya that they would travel to America to live with their relatives there and begin a new and better life for themselves. Is Piri strong enough to leave her love behind? Is she strong enough to refuse to travel to America with her sister? It was interesting to get to read about the sorts of things Jews did after the war. It was good to read a story about people being able to get on with their lives. However, the ending of the story was pretty crummy. It didn't really resolve anything, and I thought Piri should have been stronger.

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