



Under Fire: Children of the Second World War tell their Stories

Books Reviewed:

[Under Fire: Children of the Second World War tell their Stories](#) [1]

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Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

New to Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Phil Robins has collected these adult memories from the oral history archives of the Imperial War Museum. Despite the title, they do not claim to offer a recollection of the experience of all children caught up in the last world war, but they give a vivid account of the lives of three particular groups: British and German children who lived through the rise and fall of the Third Reich and the suffering visited on civilian populations by saturation bombing; and those Jewish families, first in Germany, and then across Eastern Europe, who were the victims of the Holocaust. Robins has collected a wide range of experience and perceptions from the archive. Much of what is described is, as would be expected, disturbing and at worst harrowing, but there are lighter moments, particularly in the British memories. This is childhood experience filtered through the wider knowledge and experience of adults looking back, but it is presented with an immediacy and frankness that will make an immediate connection with young readers today. In extreme situations, children are as often found acting with courage and selflessness as they are with thoughtlessness, cunning and an eye to their own survival. Robins' unobtrusive organisation of the recollections within a historical context allows these stories to take their place as part of the greater story and encourages perceptive readers to trace the fate of the individual witnesses they meet throughout the book. Robins also includes a full list of suggested reading for young people, acknowledgments of adult texts that he has used, and an excellent index. If the book falls down anywhere, it is in its use of photographs. They have been carefully chosen, mainly from the archives of the Imperial War Museum, for the light they throw on the text, but they are not given the space or the quality of reproduction that would have made them most effective. Also relevant to older readers.

Running Order:

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