



Soldier Doll

Jennifer Gold

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Fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Bryant is not happy. She's had to leave all her friends behind and move across the country for her dad's job in the military. One hot summer evening during her first week in her new city, she's out killing time at a local garage sale when she spots a little soldier doll amid the junk. She thinks only that it might be a good last-minute birthday gift for her dad, who's about to ship out to Afghanistan. She doesn't realize that it might be a missing (and very valuable) historical artifact. With the help of Evan, the cute guy she's just met at a local used book store, Elizabeth discovers that the doll might be THE soldier doll: the inspiration for a famous World War I poem of the same name.

Elizabeth's story is interwoven with the amazing, tumultuous story of the soldier doll itself. Fashioned with love by a father for his only child in England years ago, we follow the doll back to England during World War I, then on to Nazi Germany in the 1930s, a Czech concentration camp during World War II, Vietnam in 1970 and through the aftermath of 9/11.

Soldier Doll Details

Date : Published March 1st 2014 by Second Story Press

ISBN : 9781927583296

Author : Jennifer Gold

Format : Paperback 256 pages

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

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From Reader Review Soldier Doll for online ebook

Chapter by Chapter says

Soldier Doll by Jennifer Gold is one book that I am really hoping will be made into a movie. As I read the pages in this book, it wasn't difficult at all to imagine the words and images making it onto the big screen.

And the basis of the book? A soldier doll that was found by Elizabeth at a garage sale whom she buys for her father for his birthday. A perfect fit seeing as her father is a soldier who is supposed to ship out to Afghanistan. But little did she know that the little soldier doll that she has found, may be the actual soldier doll made famous by a poem by Margaret Merriweather, written during WWI.

It is with this revelation that Elizabeth and father decide to have the authenticity of the doll looked into to see if it is, in fact, that very same doll.

The story flips from the past to present day. The past is what made this book very fascinating to me. It goes back from major war (starting in WWI) to major war tracing the travels of this soldier doll. You witness the hands it exchanges and how it ended up in Toronto, Canada and into the hands of Elizabeth.

Every war story pinged my heart. Soldier Doll by Jennifer Gold tells the stories of the different soldiers and families that are in the possession of the doll. You can vividly see the harsh reality of war and the sacrifices made.

Another thing that I really enjoyed about this story was how you were able to put the pieces of the soldier doll puzzle together to get the whole picture. You get to see how different lives would become intertwined, and witness just how amazing the soldier doll's journey was.

Did this book make me cry? You bet your sweet patooty it did. Soldier Doll had me reaffirming the bravery of the soldiers who have fought in the past and who fight now for the things that we have today. Things that we may take for granted. Heroes...every single one of them.

There was a part where a soldier was at a loss for words after finding out that the very person he gave the doll had a life and family of their own. The emotion that was written throughout this book gave me goose bumps, and I had a very difficult time putting it down.

What did I not enjoy about this book? Well, to be honest, I had a difficult time with the main character, Elizabeth. I felt like she was a rude little spoiled kid at times, and had to shake my head at her with how she interacted with her parents. And then there was the parts where the parents were made out to be very daft when it came to connecting with Elizabeth. As a parent myself, I know what Facebook is and how to use it, as well as other means of social networking. And I'm pretty sure I'm pretty close to the age group that Elizabeth's parents are (I think!). And I do know many, many parents who are tech savvy as well. So when they were portrayed as having no clue at all about Facebook (for example), I was a little taken aback. But that is all just minor stuff, dear readers. Minor, minor, minor.

Jennifer Gold is one author that I will definitely be keeping my eyes open for. I would recommend this read to...everyone, actually. I feel like you need to experience this book, just like I did. Let the words carry you away to a past in history, and let it open your eyes to the harsh realities of the lives that were lost and the lives that were affected by the different wars portrayed in this book.

Lindsey Ellis says

I received this book as part of a Goodreads giveaway.

Even though Soldier Doll was written for a younger demographic, I really enjoyed it.

The main character, Elizabeth, is looking for a present for her father's birthday when she comes across a small doll that resembles a soldier. Shortly after purchasing the doll, Elizabeth is introduced to a poem written about a similar doll that is gifted and lost by the author's sweetheart during WWI. With the help of her father, Elizabeth begins to follow clues to the doll's past.

Soldier Doll incorporates Elizabeth's story and those of the doll's previous owners. I really enjoyed each individual story. I actually enjoyed the various doll owner stories more than Elizabeth's.

I know I am a little biased because historical fiction is my favorite, but Soldier Doll was a great, quick read.

Cheryl says

As a big fan of young adult fiction I have lately been tired of the same supernatural, bloodsucker plots. It was so refreshing and satisfying to read this beautifully written, unique story that gripped my attention from start to finish.

The Soldier doll is captivating and moving and left me feeling enlightened. It offers thought provoking perspectives on a subject as contentious as war in a way that is relatable, while still engaging readers in a number of other important themes throughout the narrative.

This is a great book for its intended young adult audience but would certainly be enjoyed by readers of all ages. It's the perfect novel for a middle-school curriculum or an adult book club.

I look forward to reading the author's future books!

Phoebe says

I found this to be a very good young adult/teen book. The story follows a doll painted to resemble a soldier. Over time, the soldier doll has been handed off from person to person as they experience and live a part of history (war, concentration camps, etc...). In present day, a teen, Elizabeth, is in possession of this soldier doll and is uncovering all of its' back stories.

Thank you Goodreads Giveaway for the opportunity of winning this book and getting to be a first reader.

Ashley says

Rating: 3/5

Minor spoilers

Elizabeth and her family have recently moved from Vancouver to Toronto, and Elizabeth is trying to cope with the change. Her father is going to Afghanistan for a year soon, and it's his birthday coming up. When she sees a little doll at a yard sale that is painted as a soldier, she buys it for her dad. When Liz visits a bookstore and meets a boy named Evan, he mentions that there is a very famous poem named The Soldier Doll, and that the doll in the poem has been missing for a very long time. Could this little doll Liz gave her dad for his birthday be the very doll in the poem? Along with trying to discover if the doll is real, we travel back in time and read about the people who were in possession of the doll after it left the author's hands and before it came into Elizabeth's.

I liked this book more than I thought I would. I read this one for the school book club, and I spoke to several people who didn't like it. The only parts of this book that I didn't really like were the parts from Elizabeth's point of view, because she seemed very whiny and annoying to me. I liked the parts where we read from the other people who possessed the doll. I liked the history, and I learned a bit more about the wars. We're brought through World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War, from the point of view of those fighting and those left behind.

Despite the book having so many perspectives, I actually didn't find it very hard to follow. I forgot some of the names at times and had to stop and think about who they were when they came up later in the book, but that was to be expected. I know that Elizabeth was the main character, but when there were so many perspectives it became hard to become emotionally attached to her, and the other characters in her story. (view spoiler)

Overall, this was a pretty decent quick read, and I enjoyed the historical aspects of it. I didn't like the present day perspective, but reading from soldiers in the wars and from different people who were affected by the war, like a young Jewish girl, was quite fascinating. I think the idea of this book was quite interesting, but I wish the present day perspective was more interesting, and that I was able to get more emotionally attached. I would recommend this book if you're interested in reading about those wars (WWI, WWII, Vietnam) but if you're not too interested in that stuff, there isn't much else to like about this book.

Barbara says

Fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Bryant is miserable after her family's move from one part of Canada to another. When she finds an odd-looking wooden soldier doll at a yard sale, she figures it might be the sort of thing her father would like. While Elizabeth seeks a substitute for her friends back home, finding a friend and maybe a boyfriend in Evan, a boy who works in a local bookstore, the story moves between her experiences in 2007 Toronto and the doll's own history. It turns out that the doll has been passed down from one person to another, starting with a young woman who gives it to her fiancé before he heads off to fight in WWI. After Evan unknowingly provides a clue as to its origin and Elizabeth and her father verify its authenticity, it may return to its original owner. But as the doll's history is revealed and Elizabeth faces her own heartbreak, it isn't clear whether the doll is a lucky or unlucky talisman. Along with Elizabeth, readers may wonder if it brings luck or misfortune. The descriptions of how war was waged on various battle fronts, ranging from WWI to the war in Afghanistan, seem true to life and emotionally wrenching in many ways. Most fascinating of all are the stories of what happened next to the owners of the doll. Since the author allows great chunks of time to be omitted before picking up the various threads of the stories, readers need to pay close attention. I enjoyed the story although I've read similar types of narratives.

Lucy says

I've always been an archaeology geek, so when I read the blurb for *Soldier Doll* it instantly sparked my interest. *Soldier Doll* follows the incredible journey of a single historical artefact (a small wooden doll dressed as a soldier) as it passes from owner to owner, silently witnessing a century of warfare. It's a difficult task for an author - attempting to forge an emotional attachment between the reader and an object rather than a single individual - which is maybe why although I enjoyed reading *Soldier Doll*, I didn't really feel a strong attachment to the story or its characters by the end.

The plot follows the soldier doll through time, interspersing the past with the present. The doll's present day owner, Elizabeth, is Gold's main protagonist. While I think Gold did an excellent job of writing a realistic teenager (sometimes kind and thoughtful, other times bratty and insolent) I wasn't drawn to her. Elizabeth had no drive and her story lacked urgency. I was much more interested in the past sections of the novel, which, while overtly didactic, were significantly less predictable.

Soldier Doll was a quick, easy read, but I was never able to fully immerse myself in the story. I felt almost as though I was being held at arm's length away from the characters, unable to fully connect with them. While reading, I was all too aware that the characters and events were fictional, and the many attempts to force some kind of meaning onto the soldier doll seemed heavy-handed. It was hard to believe that every owner of the doll would have had such strong feelings towards such a forgettable object. That said, I did enjoy the ending of the novel, particularly the way the soldier doll's tumultuous history was revealed to Elizabeth, and the final decisions made in regards to its ownership. If the rest of the novel was unsatisfying, the ending was worth getting to, and I'm glad I kept reading.

Many thanks to Jennifer Gold and Second Story Press for providing a copy of Soldier Doll in exchange for an honest review.

Publisher: Second Story Press

Rating: 2 stars | ★★☆☆☆

Review cross-posted to Paperback'd

Olivia says

This story follows a doll that travels continents, time, and the world. The story flows together so beautifully that it seems real. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE TISSUES ON HAND BECAUSE THIS MADE ME CRY SO MANY TIMES.

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

It's 2007, and Elizabeth Bryant, 15, isn't really happy about having to move from Vancouver to Toronto, leaving behind her friends, her school and everything familiar. But, her dad is in the military, so there was no choice. When Elizabeth finds a little wooden doll painted like a soldier, she decides to buy it for her day's

birthday, just before he is deployed to Afghanistan. Who knows, maybe it will bring him so luck.

By chance, Elizabeth also meets Evan working in a used book store and there is clearly instant attraction. When the soldier doll comes up, Evan finds Elizabeth a book of poems, including one called Soldier Doll by poet Margaret Merriweather. The doll, Evan tells her, has been missing for almost 100 years. This sparks a research journey to find out if Elizabeth's \$2.00 garage sale find is the real missing doll.

In between Elizabeth's story are chapters that trace the history of the soldier doll. the doll was made by Margaret Merriweather's father after her mother died in the early part of the 20th century. In 1918, just as WWI is ending, Margaret's fiancé joins the army and is sent to Flanders. Before he leaves, she gives him the doll for good luck and to remember her.

The doll shows up again in Berlin, Germany in 1939, when a Jewish shop owner tells his daughter Hanna how the little soldier doll came into his possession. That night, the Nazi's went through their neighborhood, destroying business's and rounding up the men and boys. Naturally, Hanna quickly gives her father the doll to carry with him, hoping it will bring good luck.

As the doll's journey continues, it ends up in Vietnam and Iraq and it won't take long before you begin to wonder if the soldier doll is a good luck talisman, or if it brings the worst luck in the world to the current owner.

This is an interesting story and I kept wondering how all these loose ends would be connected and tied together. Well, author Jennifer Gold does do it, and very cleverly.

I kind of liked this story, even if it did feel a little contrived at times and I felt the writing was a bit dull and tedious. I also had a small problem with the 1939 part, because it reads too much like Kristalnacht which was in 1938. Granted the Nazis went around destroying the property of Jewish people all the time and arresting them, but the description too similar and it through my reading off a bit.

I actually think I would have preferred just a story about the Soldier Doll and how it ended up in so many different places. Elizabeth's story, though interesting, wasn't terribly compelling to me.

Still I would recommend this to anyone who likes historical fiction, particularly if it's war-related.

Rebecca says

Teenage Elizabeth has just moved to Toronto when she sees the little soldier doll at a yard sale, and buys it for her father, who is shipping off to Afghanistan soon. She then discovers that there's a famous poem about a soldier doll from WWI, and wonders if hers could possibly be the doll that went missing. Meanwhile, the narrative follows young Meg in 1918, who gave the doll to her fiance, then follows the doll's wanderings through WWII, Vietnam, and more.

I'm unclear about two things with this book: who the intended audience is, and what the point of the book is. Re audience, Elizabeth's typical teen tale will appeal to one audience, but the narrative also follows a girl getting engaged and having a bloody miscarriage, adult male soldiers in combat, a little girl in a concentration camp, etc. At the very least, I think this would require a high school reader, and maybe even an

adult reader. For instance, I can't see many boys, who might enjoy the war stories, enjoying reading about teen romantic traumas and graphic miscarriages. They also are unlikely to pick up a book with "doll" in the title, and I think that would also put off high school girls who might either be offended thinking that it was a coy reference to women in the military, or just consider dolls babyish.

Re the point, all I could conclude was that war stinks and will always stink, and neither a soldier doll nor the innocence it represents has any effect on that. So...I must be missing something?

Otherwise, the story is well written and the characters are distinct and sympathetic, and the worlds are well-built. The structure reminded me of 'Hitty: Her First Hundred Years,' the famous book about the life of a doll, and other stories that follow objects through different adventures, though there are no happy stories here.

Pinky says

Before I start this review, I am going to rant a little bit. I know, I rant a lot but this is something that I want to talk about. One of the things that I am super confused about is the fact that there are so many kids who find their parents embarrassing. I mean sure, my mom might dance and sing and make everything awkward. Sure my mom does weird things and although it may be embarrassing, I find it hilarious and she makes me laugh. But half of the time, a lot of kids find their parents embarrassing for the most weirdest reasons. To a point where if they were to go to school, they wouldn't want to be seen with their parents. I'm not saying that everyone is like this but I just don't understand why a lot of people feel embarrassed because of their parents. I used to be friends with a girl who walked two meters ahead of her mom and made it look like they were complete strangers because of the fact that it was embarrassing to walk with her parent. Why is it embarrassing? When I was younger, my mom would walk me to school and I never found it embarrassing. I was thankful for the company and it was fun. I just didn't understand...

Anyway, sorry about that rant, I will explain why I brought that up in this review. This book is about a girl named Elizabeth who is 15 years old. She moved away from her close friends and was super upset. Later on, she went to a garage sale and saw a soldier doll which she decided to buy. Since Elizabeth's father was going to go to Afghanistan, Elizabeth decided to give this soldier doll as a birthday gift. Later on, Elizabeth comes across a bookshop where she meets Evan. Evan and Elizabeth feel like the soldier doll might be a historical artifact and begin their research. The soldier doll has a story to tell but Elizabeth and Evan have to piece everything together.

Now, the reason why I ranted about kids being embarrassed because of their parents was because of the fact that Elizabeth kept saying that her parents were embarrassing. I mean, I know sometimes there are things that are really embarrassing that our parents do. But she says it for every single thing that her parents do. I wasn't a huge fan of Elizabeth's character. Other than her character we saw her parents who were nice, but I didn't feel emotionally connected with them. To be honest, I didn't feel emotionally connected with any of the characters. Evan was okay but I didn't really care about anything going on with him.

The relationships felt a bit rushed and cliché. Elizabeth and Evan were sweet but I didn't really care about their relationship. If they were to have broken up, my heart wouldn't have a single crack. In some points of this book, I felt like I was heartless because I didn't feel anything.

The plot was really good, it had a very unique and creative plot. It was different and I wish I read this before my history exam because it was like a fun way to review. All of the historical events were interesting and I felt so included at parts of the book because I understood the event that was taking place. Usually, I feel lost when I read historical fiction because I have a lot of questions, my friends would always laugh at me. The speed of the book was medium, I was interested to see how the book would end but when it did, I didn't know what to say.

This is what happens when I usually read a historical fiction novel:

I really wanted to like this book but I didn't feel that connection. Elizabeth was a character who was hard to relate to, I had a hard time finishing this book and it put me in a reading slump. In fact this book was due on December 21, and it's been more than 2 months! I need to return this to my school library. I read this book due to the fact that I am in a book club called White Pine, where you read a bunch of books by Canadian authors and pick which one you like best.

Although I wasn't a huge fan of this book, I recommend it to those who like historical fiction.

Cassandra says

09/02/16

Still not over the fact that this is Jennifer Gold's debut novel! I will definitely be reading more from her. [Read my full review here](#)

Very interesting and a quick read! Full review to come c:

Becky says

Soldier Doll is a message-driven novel with an interesting premise. Towards the end of World War I (1918), Margaret Merriweather, an English woman, gives her fiancé a wooden doll. This is a doll that her own father made for her when she's a child. She paints a soldier's uniform on him. She gives him as a good luck charm, a way he can carry her with him wherever he goes. After he dies, Margaret is inspired to write a poem. This poem becomes famous. The doll itself is gone forever. Or so everyone thought. Soldier Doll follows the adventures of this wooden soldier with the baby-face. The framework for all the stories is his being discovered in Toronto in 2007 by a teen girl, Elizabeth. Elizabeth is buying her dad a DOLL for his birthday. Her dad is a soldier preparing to go to Afghanistan. A moping Elizabeth ventures into a used bookstore and discovers the poem-book by Merriweather. She's convinced she's found THE DOLL from the poem. She and her Dad team up to see if this is so... (view spoiler)

The chapters alternate between the 2007 story and the doll's adventures in the past beginning with World War I. The doll also heads to other wars: World War II, Vietnam, and the Iraq War. His ownership is passed along many times. I should clarify that readers don't get the perspective of the doll at any time. It remains just an object. What readers do get are glimpses of various soldiers from various countries. It captures scenes from life on the front.

War. War. War. That is the focus of *Soldier Doll*. Why do nations go to war? Why do men go to war? What is the point of it all? Those are the questions asked openly and honestly in Jennifer Gold's *Soldier Doll*. It is an anti-war novel, as you might imagine.

I found the 2007 story to be awkward. I found the past stories to be much better. The past sections were written in past tense. The 2007 story was written in very awkward present tense. It was third person present.

Steve R says

An imaginative series of engaging stories dealing with the small wooden doll of the title which begins as a memento from a girl to her fiance as he leaves for World War I. When the soldier is killed, the doll is recovered by a German soldier who eventually it passes to a younger man in a concentration camp during World War II only to have the doll find its way to an American GI in the Vietnam War. A young girl buys the doll at a garage sale in the beginning of the novel and gives it to her father who then leaves for the war in Afghanistan, in which he is killed. Through intrepid research, she brings the doll back to its original owner, who never married, in England. Poignantly written, it is really a collection of the five or six short stories involving each of the different doll owner's attitudes to war and their personal involvement in going to kill for their country. The doll motif is a bit artificial, but the stories of the variant reactions to war are thoughtful and engaging, particularly the American boy's decision to volunteer to go to Vietnam.

Enid Wray says

As I read the book, I tried to put myself in the mind of a 10 - 14 year old who might well be reading about a lot of this content for the very first time. How would I react to the story? How would I react to the content? I decided that there was an appropriate balance between trying to depict the horrors of war, and the changing nature of war over time, and the need to not devastate the reader. The book is graphic enough for the younger reader to paint the necessary mental images, without rendering them frozen with fear or anxiety. What really struck me was the way that the story kept coming back to hit certain notes: fear, uncertainty, hope, our shared common humanity, the importance of compassion and random acts of kindness, the heavy burden of sorrow, and survivor guilt, to mention the most important ones. I also appreciated the way various Chapters - various individual stories - addressed different aspects of war. The storylines opened up the possibility for rich discussions about the ways in which we, collectively as an international community, have approached issues of war, and where that has led us to.
