



Dear Ellen Bee: A Civil War Scrapbook Of Two Union Spies

Mary E. Lyons

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"...I've put all the papers in order by date, so you'll have a story. Not just an ordinary tale about the Civil War which freed our people from slavery. Most folks think rifles and cannons put down the Southern rebellion. No, this scrapbook tells of Ellen Bee, two spies who won the war with softer weapons..."

In a fictional format that recalls the scrapbooks kept by women in the nineteenth century, Mary E. Lyons and Muriel M. Branch piece together the true story of Ellen Bee -- the code name used by two extraordinary women who courageously undermined the highest level of the Confederacy.

Elizabeth Van Lew -- Miss Bet -- was a wealthy white woman at the pinnacle of Richmond society, different from her socialite friends only in her deep abhorrence of slavery. Mary Elizabeth Bowser -- Liza -- was the daughter of two of the Van Lew family's freed slaves who had decided to stay on at the Church Hill mansion as paid and respected servants. As the strong-willed Liza matured, she grew to resent Miss Bet's well-intended "plans" for her life. The two constantly chafed as the Civil War flared around Richmond and Miss Bet was driven deeper into efforts to help the Union cause. Soon she found herself called upon to enlist the help of her beloved Liza when she saw an opportunity to plant a spy in the heart of the Confederate camp. And with Liza willing to risk the dangers of posing as a slave, so began a chain of communication that supplied the Union generals with vital information in their conduct of war.

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From Reader Review Dear Ellen Bee: A Civil War Scrapbook Of Two Union Spies for online ebook

Sheryl says

A good book in history. Provides great input into the lives of slaves.

Hannah Mead says

A fascinating insight into the spying life of the famous Miss Van Lew and the diverse characters that helped her. As a Civil War fan I thoroughly enjoyed learning more about the turbulent historical times of the 1850s and 60s. I also really enjoyed the character of Liza - I found a kindred spirit in her independent ways. :D

Stacy says

I am a yankee, married to a confederate rebel! Therefore, I could relate to this book. I do not know if I would have been as courageous as either Miss Bet or Liza, but I would have definitely sided with them. And the difference between Miss Bet and I is that I don't think I would have stayed there in the South after the war. Hard to say, however, when that would have been the only home I'd known. After all, isn't that why all Southerners love the South? It's all they know...(I'm getting myself into trouble!) I'd like to think that I'm not quite as bad as Miss Bet, in having things done her way---I sure hope not! But I enjoyed this format---items collected into a 'scrapbook'. I like things that make books unique. And all the Civil War memorabilia was fun to see. Cute book.

Pat says

This is a MG/YA re-telling/scrapbook of two female spies during the war.

I picked it up because I am teaching *The Killer Angels*. I often judge a book by my anxiousness to read it. I always picked this book to read first among the many books in my nightstand stack.

A freed slave, Eliza, and her former mistress, Bet Van Loew are the fact based characters upon which the story is written. It is a swift, but appropriate ride through the tumultuous Civil War in Virginia. The scrapbook pieces are authentic: a ticket, a checkerboard, drawings; the research is solid-the story is told through letters and journal entries. It was lightly satisfying.

However, I don't think I would have had the interest if not for teaching a Civil War novel. It's great as a light companion to Civil War study...if you're a Civil War history buff, this would be a fun read.

Cheryl says

An interesting story based on real people and actual events. The problem for me is that I never developed any real empathy or concern for the two main characters. They were both stubborn and headstrong--and the events around them didn't seem to change that at all. The scrapbook bits and clips were very interesting though.

Ashley Sparks says

This was such a cool book. It included pictures and secret codes. Written in a diary like form, this book is sure to capture the young reader's mind and keep them engaged in the story. The thing that I liked about this book was that although it was about two girls, boys could relate to it as well. This was used a book for my literature circles lesson for PTLs.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

Based on the true accounts of two women, one a freed black and the other white, who spied for the Union in Richmond, Virginia, during the Civil War.

Chelsea says

I loved reading this with a group of 4th grade (almost 5th grade) girls. They really got into the spy stuff. My only regret is we didn't get to work on inventing our own codes because we spent so much time having awesome student led discussions.

Michelle says

My daughter found this book for me at the library and she was very proud of herself for finding a book on a subject that I love. The book was stated for ages 10-14, but I found a couple things in the content to actually be for a bit older kids (a discussion about the girls "monthlies" and a comment about "being nervous on her wedding night"). Personally I think the book can be enjoyed by any age.

Jeanie says

I really liked this book. Becky (my 9 yo) found this for me in the library. Its a quick read and very interesting. I really like the civil war times.

Aishe says

Really great book. Made me want to learn more about the actual women upon whom the book is based. Excellent read for middle school students through adults. I love the diary form, it really works. Could be a great curricular book as well.

Melanie says

I am only half way through but really like it already! update when i am done!!

J says

A good story for a glimpse into the civilian side of the civil war.

Maren2014 says

I read this book for my 7th Grade English class to get ready for the Civil War. It was a great story and gave me a fantastic overview of how slaves were treated and how much freed slaves valued their freedom. I have to write a book report about it and it is easier to write because I understood this book unlike other books. The layout is unique and a great way to learn. I defiantly recommend this book for ages 12 annd over!

Connie says

Loved this book! Great format, the characters personalities came to life with feelings! A great way to learn history and not even know you are!
