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# Soldier Boys



## Synopsis

Spencer Morgan And Dieter Hedrick Are On Opposite Sides Of The War And Fighting For The Same Thing. At the age of fifteen, Dieter's blind devotion gets him promoted from Hitler Youth into the German army. Dieter's determined to prove his allegiance and bravery all costs. Spence, just sixteen, drops out of his Utah high school to begin training as a paratrooper. He's seen how boys who weren't much in high school can come home heroes, and Spence wants to prove to his friends and family that he really can be something. Their worst fear was that the war would end too soon -- that they wouldn't get the chance to prove themselves. But when they finally see the action they were hoping for, it's like nothing they could have ever imagined.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

The premise of Hughes's (Family Pose) novel, the disillusionment of two idealistic boys one American, the other German who idealistically insist on hurrying into battle during WWII, proves more compelling than the somewhat uneven plotting and character development. The author effectively portrays the motivations of Hitler Youth leader Dieter, from his nascent aspirations at 10 to the brainwashed zealotry in the name of Hitler that leads him to lobby to be sent into combat at the age of 15. However, the back story describing the motivation of 17-year-old Spence, a Utah Mormon who joins the Airborne paratroopers to prove his toughness to the folks back home

(especially one disinterested girl), feels cursory. The pace of the narrative quickens as the boys each experience the gut-wrenching and haphazard realities of war that challenge their starry-eyed, patriotic notions. Though some readers will find a few passages overblown (e.g., "None of this seemed like the stuff Spence had seen in the movies") and Spence's religious epiphany which leads to his rather convenient connection to Dieter implausible, others will appreciate this realistically harrowing depiction of the pointlessness of war. Ages 10-14. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gr 7-9-Parallel stories follow teenagers Spence Morgan, a farm boy from Utah, and Dieter Hedrick, a farm boy from Bavaria. Stirred by complex feelings of patriotism and adolescent insecurities, both young men find themselves fighting for their respective countries in World War II. The first part of the story follows Spence from his small-town life to the rigors of basic training as a paratrooper; Dieter has left his family in order to supervise other Hitler youth, digging trenches on the German border. Then suddenly, both teens are thrust into the chaos and carnage of the Battle of the Bulge. Dieter has his eyes opened somewhat by a disillusioned and embittered corporal in his unit. Spence learns of war's truths when his best friend dies. The novel comes alive in these final chapters, capturing the soldiers' struggles to stay warm and to overcome their fear, and the battle scenes place readers in the center of the action. Hughes doesn't flinch from describing the devastating effect of a bullet. *Soldier Boys* rises above the clichés of standard World War II stories and serves as a reminder that wars are often fought by young people like those we see every day in our libraries. Todd Morning, Schaumburg Township Public Library, IL Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Dean Hughes's *Soldier Boys* is one of a set of war time stories that he has written. *Soldier Boys* is a story set in the World War II era and is about two young boys that are eager to be involved in the war. Dieter is a Bavarian farm boy that is a devoted member of the German Hitler Youth and Spencer is an American farm boy from Utah that drops out of school and convinces his parents to sign his papers so that he can enter into the service early. Both boys have great pride in wanting to serve their country in taking down the evil opposition, not knowing the trials and tribulations that lay ahead for them both. The book follows both boys through their training and movement into the battlefields showing their emotions and actions as they descend into the reality of war. Throughout the story both boys overcome obstacles all the while sticking to their beliefs and promises that lead to a heart wrenching turn of events at the end of the story. This book is well

written and reflects what I perceive the war was really like. For Example, young American boys wanted to go to war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and Hitler brainwashed the youth of Germany convincing them they were defending their homeland against aggressors trying to restrain the Germans economy and wellbeing. Once the boys are involved in the war they lose the glamorous view of war and come to the grim reality of war, losing friends and comrades along the way. They both also come to terms with what battles are really like, with the strategies, actions of the soldiers involved, the reality of how lives are taken in battle, and the aftermath of battles fought. By the end of the book it shows how the boys are impacted by the war, how the death of a soldier in battle affects the family and his community, and the challenges that the surviving soldier faces after returning from battle. Soldier Boys was well written and I would recommend it to anyone over the age of twelve that is interested in World War II history. It gives a chronological account of the boys' lives over the time period of the war. It gives the reader background on how the families felt about the war and their boys going off to war. It shows the expectations of the boys through training and their assignments that they had to undertake to allow them to get to the front lines. The story shows the unexpected situations that happen in battle that are cultivated from the hatred of the soldiers that they are fighting against. It shows how the soldiers that live have to deal with things that happened that were out of their control, things that should have never happened. The fact that soldiers who die being heroes sometimes don't get all of the recognition that they deserve. It is an enjoyable story of history, pride, and the reality of war.

I liked to read this book. The easy way to make me understand the war itself, the feelings and thoughts of the soldiers who fought in this conflict. I liked the end of the book, it made me cry, sorry but it was true. I recommend this book to everyone who likes to read about war. I gave 5 stars because the book made me think about all of the people who died in the war.

nice reading and always a surprise in every book

Bought it for my classroom library. My boys into historical fiction like it, and the story is told from two different perspectives which I think is important.

Really loved this book from beginning to end ! Loved how we were able to see the perspective of two different soldiers from separate sides and how they saw the war differently in their eyes  
wonderful book !!

This book is incredibly moving and heart-wrenching. The structure was very interesting and really made the story richer and more vivid. The story is told from the perspective of two boys during World War II -- one German and one American. It is amazing to see how much your environment and upbringing fundamentally impact the way you view the world. Although the two characters ultimately come to see the world in a way that is more similar, their completely opposing viewpoints make the book really interesting. A great YA book, a great historical fiction book, and a great "war" book. I would highly recommend.

Well it is a good topic but it ends too early. And Spence still has a story to continue. And Dieter still is in the tent. You call that an ending. And to leave someone hanging like that and not tell the reader that the character doesn't come home safely. WHAT is that!!!!

This is a story of two soldiers in World War II, one American and one German. They both have empathetic qualities and Dean Hughes does a good job portraying their views of the war from two different sides. I found this book quite moving at the end.

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