



Rumors of War

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"Every era has its own refiner's fire, and World War II put general Church membership and Utah to a test," Dean Hughes explains. In *Children of the Promise*, his first historical fiction series for adults, Dean shows through the eyes of the Thomas family how LDS families were tested to the limit.

"Most people agree it was a fascinating time in world and American history. In fact, there is a charm and nostalgia about that dramatic period," says the author. Dean weaves in those aspects among the conflict in the series. The first volume, *Rumors of War* opens in 1938 with Elder Alex Thomas and his companion serving in Germany. It soon becomes obvious that he will never complete his mission. War is coming, and that will affect not only Elder Thomas but also his family back home in Salt Lake City.

Rumors of War Details

Date : Published December 1st 1997 by Shadow Mountain (first published June 14th 1997)

ISBN : 9781573451994

Author : Dean Hughes

Format : Hardcover 500 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Lds, Lds Fiction, Christianity, Fiction, Religion

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Melynna says

Let me start by saying two things:

- 1) I'm usually not a big fan of LDS fiction. It tends to be kinds dorky and a little too in-your-face spiritual. Not to mention badly written. But I liked this book. It wasn't like that at all.
- 2) I took a creative writing class from Dean Hughes, and he's totally and completely awesome. I'll try not to let that fact slant my review.

I really liked this novel. It has well developed characters and story line, and it's super clear that Hughes did his research (it's also easy to tell since he tells you in the intro). I think he did a great job of portraying real people instead of stereotypes, which goes a long way in my book. I love how the book does make you feel spiritually enlightened and does have some spiritual scenes, but you never get the feeling that if it were a movie there'd be really touching, cheesy music accompanying them. Instead it feels like how things could really happen. It makes you feel like you could honestly feel the same way. Now I'm the one getting cheesy.

Now you're asking why I only gave it four stars if I liked it so much. Here's my reason: it's not really great literature or anything. Maybe I'm being snobby, but I just can't see it being five out of five. There's some unnameable thing missing. But it's very definitely four. Maybe even four and a half. I really did like it a lot.

Emily says

I liked this whole series. As a person who is usually skeptical about any fiction published by LDS publishers, I expected to think it was dumb. It wasn't. I cried. It was a real book, not one written just to sell stuff to Mormons.

I actually had to read it. When I was at BYU I signed up for an LDS Literature class. My thought was: Really, how hard could reading a lot of Jack Weyland be? But you know what? That was a super awesome class! And we didn't even read 'Charly'.

The name 'LDS Lit' wasn't exactly what you'd think. It was not just specifically LDS published books, but books written by Mormons and books about Mormons, even those not written by Mormons. Whew. I must have read a lot that semester. This website would have been nice to have back then.

I read 'Recapitulation' by Wallace Stegner, a non-Mormon guy and a non-Mormon book. But a few of the people in the book were Mormon, I think. I don't remember. But I liked it. And then there were some others. I wish I still had my book list.

Ok, sorry..back to this book: I think one of my favorite parts was when a girl went on a date to Saltair and she rode the train. I totally support any kind of public transportation-that's why this book won me over.

Also, the author spoke in one of our class sessions. He was a nice guy, not even arrogant like he had the right to be (cuz he'd just written a great book!)

Camille says

This entire series (Children of the Promise) is about an LDS family alive during WWII. It was very captivating and I felt I was able to make a real connection with the characters in the story. Definitely a series I would recommend.

Lisa says

This is a review of the entire "Children of the Promise" series by Dean Hughes, including *Rumors of War*, *Since You Went Away*, *Far From Home*, *When We Meet Again*, and *As Long As I Have You*. I loved these books--the first (*Rumors of War*) took a few chapters to get me hooked and then I finished that one and read the rest eagerly--until I got to the last one (*As Long As I Have You*)--more about that later. These books will definitely appeal to LDS readers who enjoy historical fiction and wrestling with some of the issues that naturally arise in LDS families in or out of wartime.

I have read a lot of historical fiction and history about World War II, so these books were definitely my cup of tea. Hughes takes the reader through the lives of the Thomas and Stoltz families and their acquaintances, family, and friends as they deal with the impending war, the war and the "home front," and the lives of the characters for a short time after the war. He creates people whom you grow to love and care about. His research is accurate and he manages to cover or at least touch on many important aspects of the war in Europe (especially Germany and, to a lesser extent, England), D-Day, the Battle of the Bulge; in the Pacific with Pearl Harbor, the Bataan Death March and other POW and Navy/Marine experiences; and the effects of the war on civilians in the combat areas in Europe and England and back in the United States in Salt Lake City, where the Thomas family is based.

Hughes doesn't just present facts, but intertwines the lives of the characters with historical events, including the pertinent history of the LDS Church at these times and places. He also deals with major themes, such as the possible conflicts between being a Christian Latter-day Saint immersed in military culture, with the duties of a soldier. The commandment to love all of God's children is, of course, tested in a time of war. Also, we see people waiting for news of loved ones who may be in danger or, alternatively, who represent home and safety. Through the lives of his characters, Hughes explores aspects of faith, wanting to get away from the familiar and "spread your wings," parents dealing with issues of control while trying to respect their children's agency and adulthood, the new roles and attitudes of women that developed during the war, and the conflict inherent in profiting legitimately by supporting the war effort (such as manufacturing weapons or their components) and yet profiting from--well, war.

Hughes juggles the characters' lives skillfully. Although his technique of moving from one character's story to another in a new chapter or mid-chapter can sometimes be a bit of a jolt, for the most part the author's timing is good when he decides to drop one thread of the story and pick up another. I looked forward to reading these books every day, and was upset knowing that I was approaching the last book and soon would be finished with the series. Ironically, Hughes makes the parting easier, because the final book is not as engaging as the others, although it is still very good. Its main problem is that three of the characters are dealing with the same problem--the aftermath of having served in the military and the decision whether or not to share their experiences with their loved ones. In the case of two characters, the reader knows what

their experiences were. When the third finally reveals his "secret," it has been built up to the point of being anticlimactic--tormenting to him, but not a big surprise to the reader who knows anything about human nature in wartime or crisis. The reader may grow tired of having three characters whose thoughts and problems are so similar to each other. Nevertheless, I had grown to care enough about these characters and the others that I enjoyed the final book and was actually relieved to be let out of the series without the "mourning" I had anticipated.

The only other flaw I noticed in the books was a revolving door of suitors for one daughter (Bobbi), and repeated misunderstandings of or backsliding about mutual feelings, that seemed at times contrived to avoid resolving her story line too soon. One of the best aspects of the books is the continued personal development of the characters, even those whom the reader may judge too set in their ways to change, or too minor compared to other characters to command the author's attention. Hughes did a great job of developing characters, young and old, men and women, in the context of their experiences in the war or on the home front. As I wrote earlier, I loved and was engrossed in these books. I can't imagine that Hughes could do as terrific a job in his follow-up series, "The Hearts of the Children," but I am going to read them, because even if they are only two-thirds as good as "Children of the Promise" they will be worth the time.

Mandy says

Thought I'd give it a shot. My mom loves this series. We'll see...

Well, I did it. I'm not a super fan of the LDS fiction genre. It's generally super cheesy and unrealistic and preachy. But I love historical fiction, and *Rumors of War* delivered a great story. Set in the years leading up to World War II, the story details the lives of members of the fictional Thomas family. The tale switches from Alex, serving a mission in Germany, to Bobbi, engaged to the perfect man (according to her family, at least), to Wally, mixed up and angry teen and back again, and it was easy to read and get involved with the characters. The theme of the Church was tied into the lives of the characters in a realistic way- it is the undercurrent of everything they do, intrinsically woven into each thought and decision. I enjoyed this book and will definitely pick up the second.

Rachel says

I don't know why I waited so long to read this series. It's a great story that brings the events of WW2 to life. Books don't make me cry often but this one did. It's beautifully written and I look forward to reading the rest of the series.

Sara Pope says

Heart warming! You will fall in love with the characters, and won't be able to put this series down!

Heather says

I enjoy a good historical fiction that helps you get to know characters and better understand what it might have been like to live through different events in world history. This is an interesting read just before America gets involved in World War II. It's interesting to learn from the perspective of those on all sides - a family in Salt Lake City, missionaries and converts in Germany, American military units in the Philippines, Japanese Americans living in Salt Lake, and even some General Authorities.

I learned a little about the Church and perceptions of the Church during the 1930's, and thought about how some things have changed since then, but other things don't seem to ever change - the importance of family and relationships, struggles in families, uncertain futures, and hard decisions to make. I like the overlying message of standing up for good in the battle against evil in an uncertain time, and I think that message is just as applicable in our lives today.

Here are a few quotes that I liked:

"Satan is unleashing his forces against the Lord's people. And we have to stand firm (p. 24)."

"Righteous people have to stand up for what's true. Then, a better time will come. You see it in the Book of Mormon. Bad times come, and good people humble themselves, and then blessings flow (p. 72)."

"We search for peace, and we find very little. Men are aiming guns at each other right now, preparing to make war. Soon, perhaps, the only place we'll find peace is within ourselves and in Jesus Christ. We must trust that in the end, all will be well--as our favorite hymn tells us. I want you to know that you will always be my brothers and sisters. Nothing will change my heart. The day will come when we will be united again. I hope that war won't come, but if it does, trust that members of the Church all over the world will pray for you, will love you, will be waiting for the day when this darkness clears (p. 207)."

"I want to see our bright young people step forward and lead this world (p. 349)."

"Evil is trying to take over the world. That's what it comes down to. And the responsibility to stop it is going to be on our shoulders. I've been as stupid about this as anyone. I just kept thinking we could stay out of it (p. 414)."

"I guess now we'll find out what our family is made of. We've always had it too easy (p. 417)."

"The important thing is that you keep learning. We have to keep our minds going if we want to survive (p. 453)."

Overall, an interesting story - I want to see what happens next! It also has some good lessons and reminders: don't waste the talents the Lord has blessed you with, work hard, knowing who you are and be yourself, love everyone, have faith, trust in the Lord and the power of prayer. My very favorite parts of this book were sweet, humble, believing prayers that brought change and comfort and direction even in the middle of great hardship and uncertainty.

Emily says

I am going to do a general review of all 5 books in this series. I loved them and really enjoy historical fiction. I loved how each character was developed and integrated into the story perfectly so as to include many of the different aspects and perspectives of a life-changing time in history. Two thumbs up to be sure.

Terrie says

Let me start by saying that I HATE LDS fiction because it follows the formula of member meets non-member, they fall in love, non-member joins the church. BORING!

BUT this series was nothing like that. The story takes place during WWII and starts out in Sugarhouse area of Salt Lake (where I grew up) with a typical LDS family whose dad is the Bishop. These are very real characters that I grew to love. I've said before I have only read 2 books in my life where I sobbed. I cried so hard reading these books that my teenage son came to see if I was ok. Although I read them when they were first published, 10 years ago, I still think about these characters and have to remind myself that although they are my "friends" they are FICTIONAL! I love these people!

I learned so much about the war, especially the Batan Death March.

Ashlyn says

#13 Rumors of War by Dean Hughes is a fascinating story that envelopes the reader deep into the world of WW?. It is about an LDS family that has a son on a mission in Germany. Problems arise, and he is forced to come home. There are struggles as the family has children leaving to the war, children struggling at home, and many hard decisions are made. One daughter is having a hard time with engagement. Some sons are feeling like they need to serve in the war. Other kids struggle with growing up in this time period. I loved this book! It was fascinating for me to read, and I don't usually pick historical fiction as my first choice. It was a good change of genre for me. Even though it was long, it wasn't boring. It would flash from place to place as the family was moved around, and I liked that. Sometimes, there were points that I would rather stay and read about one place, but then it moved! Then in the next chapter, the exact same thing would happen again! This book was cool because it showed the struggles that came from a time not that long ago. World War II is one of the few historical subjects that interests me, so I liked that. I liked that this book was relatable. Some of the problems that the family had were similar to my own problems. I like books that make me feel things, and this book had lots of feelings! I felt sad, happy, triumphant, angry, and many others. The theme that I found for this book was that no matter where you go, there are still people in the world who love you. With everyone being split apart by war, they had to remember their family was there for them. This book is the first of a series, and I can't wait to see what happens next!

Matt Sabey says

This series is great! I love hearing WWII from a mormon perspective. Not all Nazi's are evil, and not all Americans are good. This was a fun, compelling book. I looked forward to cleaning the house because I could listen to it as I cleaned.

Kelsey says

I place Dean Hughes at the top of authors within the Latter-Day Saint community. His characters are believable and leave the reader craving to read more. Children of the Promise is his best work. I wasn't as thrilled by it's sequel series, Hearts of the Children.

Angela says

I can't even count how many times I've read this series and I still love it every time. This time I listened to the audiobook and thought it was well done. Sad to discover that my other very favorite WWII historical fiction series isn't available on audiobook from the library anymore. :(

Ingrid Lola says

When I was in 8th grade, for a school project I had the chance to interview Dean Hughes about his research on World War II, and talk to him about his "Children of the Promise" series - which follows a Salt Lake family throughout the war, on the homefront and the battlefield - and his novel "Soldier Boys" about a Mormon kid's experience on Omaha Beach on D-Day.

Rebecca says

I loved how much this series teaches about the history of World War II

Christina says

The Thomas family is about to face WW2. Alex, a missionary in Germany, loves the German people. Bobbie breaks off her engagement and joins the military as a nurse. Wally chooses to join the Air Corps as an escape from responsibilities of life, and is captured as a POW.

The entire series is well researched and in depth. He does a good job of placing characters in many of the important events of the war (sometimes he's even a little too obvious about it). The characters are multi-faceted and develop well as the series goes on.

Ashtynne Degroff says

The plot for this story goes like this: Elder Thomas is currently on his mission in Germany. One day, Alex Thomas and his companion were out looking for people, who were interested in their church. They came across a particular apartment building on the street and they knocked on a particular door. Then, they met a family, who didn't really know anything about the church. Their name was the Stoltz's. Back at Salt Lake

City, Alex's brother Wally was on a date with his girlfriend and he was getting golf balls from a lake. Alex was trying to get away from Germany because there was a bunch of war and bombing going on, so Alex tried everything he could, and eventually, he was able to make it home. Back at Germany, the Stoltz knew that they were not safe, so they decided to run away from home and left with none of their belongings. Then, Wally decides that he wants to join the air corps and he goes to the Philippines. Then, Japan attacks and takes Wally and his group and they get captured. Then Bobbi, Alex's sister decides that she wants to be a nurse in the army. Alex also decides that he will go and be apart of the army, also.

The one character that I picked to do a report about was Wally because at the beginning of the book, he is very ignorant and not a very good person, but the experiences that he has while he is in war is incredible and he is able to live through it all with the strength of the lord. He was also starved to death and he somehow survived it all with the lord's help. He then was becoming a more humble person in every way possible.

Many died on the road and Wally almost did himself! He got to a camp, where they were to work all of the time, nonstop!

Some things that I like about this book are all of the ups and downs that the Thomas family had to face as a family. Also, I like all of the choices that the family makes, no matter how easy or hard they may seem to be. It is an amazing book full of excitement, worry, compassion, and nurture. I don't really have anything bad to say about the book. It was much too good to put down all the time. I can't wait to read all of the other books in the series!

Cordell says

This is by far the best book of the series, book 1. The whole series is Historical Fiction about an LDS (Mormon) Family. Vol 1 and 2 tell a story about this family during WWII, and tie it into the histroy of the LDS chuch. By book 3 the story has taken on its own life about seperation and love and longing and dropped much of the historical fiction part. So if your reading to get LDS history that part kind of dies out but the story is still compelling and wonderful.

Shay says

I have now read this book three times and it never gets old. I usually don't read a lot of LDS fiction novels because some of them can be so cheesy!! But The Children of the Promise series is definitely an exception. Yes, it has romance but it isn't overly done and it's all very well written. The characters remind me of people I know in my life and they're all extremely likeable...except for Kellerman of course...I love learning about history and reading this book helped me learn a lot about WWII but it also has different aspects such as religion, courage, and faith. Overall, it's a wonderful book.
