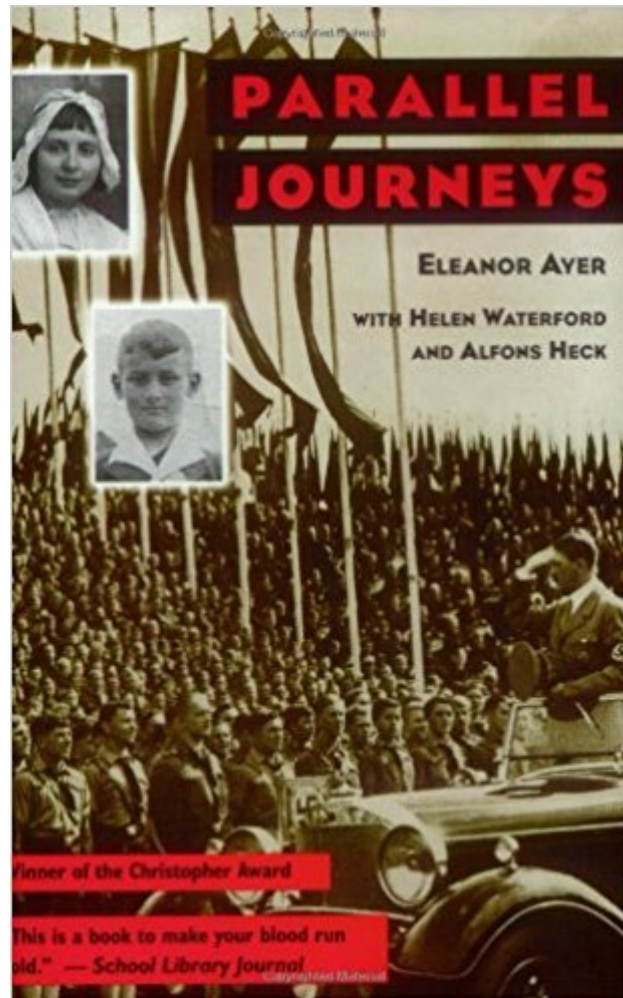




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# Parallel Journeys



## Synopsis

She was a young German Jew. He was an ardent member of the Hitler Youth. This is the story of their parallel journey through World War II. Helen Waterford and Alfons Heck were born just a few miles from each other in the German Rhineland. But their lives took radically different courses: Helen's to the Auschwitz extermination camp; Alfons to a high rank in the Hitler Youth. While Helen was hiding in Amsterdam, Alfons was a fanatic believer in Hitler's "master race." While she was crammed in a cattle car bound for the death camp Auschwitz, he was a teenage commander of frontline troops, ready to fight and die for the glory of Hitler and the Fatherland. This book tells both of their stories, side-by-side, in an overwhelming account of the nightmare that was WWII. The riveting stories of these two remarkable people must stand as a powerful lesson to us all.

## Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 91 customer reviews

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> [Education & Reference](#) > [History](#) > [Holocaust](#) #64 in [Books > Children's Books](#) >  
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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Ayer juxtaposes the stories of two WWII youths, one a German Jew and the other a Hitler Youth, excerpted from their published memoirs. "Weak execution undermines the premise of the volume," said PW. Ages 10-up. (Mar.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 7 Up? This is a book to make your blood run cold. Through Ayer's narrative and excerpts from Heck's memoirs, *A Child of Hitler* and *The Burden of Hitler's Legacy*, readers learn how Alfons changed from a loving, wholesome boy to a "Nazi devil" (even the Germans called the elite Hitler

Youth by that name). It is frightening to see how easily young people can be swayed, and readers learn just how it happened. Alternating chapters reveal Helen Waterford's story through excerpts from her book, *Commitment to the Dead*, and Ayer's background material. Fleeing with her fiancée to Amsterdam after Kristallnacht, Helen was again caught in the Nazi noose and struggled to survive. As her plight grew more desperate, Alfons rose higher and higher in the Hitler Youth. Eventually, when he and his ragged corps faced annihilation by the Russians, he realized how Hitler had sacrificed his "children." When Alfons and Helen met in the U.S. 40 years after the war, they found that they shared a common purpose: to help young people understand that peace and compassion are possible between individuals, and on a larger scale as well. Their first-person accounts are interwoven with Ayer's words so seamlessly that readers are unaware of the intrusion of a third person. She is an excellent biographer, capturing nuances of her subjects' characters and personality traits. A fascinating work.?

Marcia W. Posner, Holocaust Memorial and Educational Center of Nassau County, Glen Cove, NY

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An excellent way for my 8 year old to gain insight into WWII in Europe. Anne Frank is the standard, but this takes the subject to the next level by enabling empathy and understanding of both sides of this terrible time through the eyes of children she could relate with. This book is truly a gift for anyone that would like to prepare their children with an understanding of what human beings are capable of doing to each other and how the terrible governments can evolve without being challenged.

So sad that I hadn't read more books like these, until last year. While going through an extremely abusive divorce I started reading books on the Holocaust reading about how much pain, suffering, excruciating torture both mentally and physically children and adults went through. I became very aware of how much worse my life and two sons could have been! We seemed to have it very brutal, but nothing could ever come close to these true sad stories. Well written and sadly true.

Excellent and important book. The story follows the journey of 2 very different Germans during WW2, a Jewish girl, and an aryan boy who grows up to become a Nazi soldier. The history and viewpoints were very insightful, and I learned some things about the war that I did not know. It is difficult to comprehend the suffering that was endured by the Jews of that time, but it is also enlightening to see that the German people suffered as well; albeit not to the degree that those who were sent to concentration camps/death camps....which not only included Jews, but Germans,

Jehovah's Witnesses, gypsies and many elderly/handicapped people. I found it hard to read when the suffering was described, but I also found it impossible to put down. Well done. All students need to read this book. May we NEVER forget the horrors from WW2.

This is a true story from WWII. Follows the lives of a young German Nazi youth who was enlisted at about age 9 or 10 and a young Jewish girl who was taken to a concentration camp. As adults they met, wrote this book, did a speaking circuit. Very interesting.

This is a good first read for people trying to wrap their minds around the Holocaust and WWII in the European theater. It follows the separate journeys of a Hitler Youth and a newlywed Jewish woman. The author ties the two journeys together with historical narration that helps the reader understand the events. At the end of the book, both the erstwhile Hitler Youth and the Jewish woman meet and work to educate the world about Hitler and his enactment of the Final Solution. The information covered in this book lays a foundation for WWII and the Holocaust.

The only WW2 book I ever read was "diary of anne frank".... which is great for the point of view that it was, but this storyline is incredible...reading side by side the lives of a boy and girl caught up in all that.... I really liked getting a chance to be exposed to the boy's tale of growing up under the Nazi influence, I would normally of never read a book if it was just about him and Nazi youth etc, not my interest...I was more interested in the girls story of life in prison camps, but when they are put together it makes for a page turning read...I just cannot get over how she went from prison camps to American junior high school ! She is an amazing person to function normally in society... and the boy...I sympathize with him, that's all he was taught....

thank you

Amazing novel about the lives of two completely different individuals duringand affected by WWII and the Holocaust. Provides a basis for understanding and compassion for both individuals as well as knowledge about the events during the time period. Highly recommended.

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