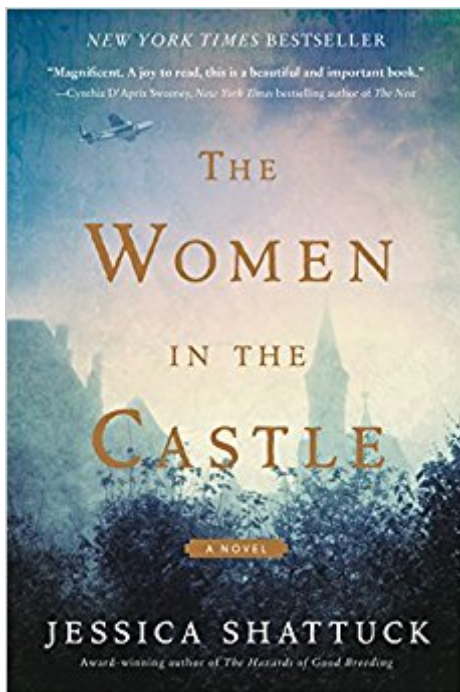


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# The Women In The Castle: A Novel



## Synopsis

INSTANT NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER "Moving . . . surprises and devastates." *New York Times Book Review* "A masterful epic." *People magazine* "Mesmerizing . . . *The Women in the Castle* stands tall among the literature that reveals new truths about one of history's most tragic eras." *USA Today* Three women, haunted by the past and the secrets they hold Set at the end of World War II, in a crumbling Bavarian castle that once played host to all of German high society, a powerful and propulsive story of three widows whose lives and fates become intertwined an affecting, shocking, and ultimately redemptive novel from the author of the New York Times Notable Book *The Hazards of Good Breeding*. Amid the ashes of Nazi Germany's defeat, Marianne von Lingenfels returns to the once-grand castle of her husband's ancestors, an imposing stone fortress now fallen into ruin following years of war. The widow of a resister murdered in the failed July 20, 1944, plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler, Marianne plans to uphold the promise she made to her husband's brave conspirators: to find and protect their wives, her fellow resistance widows. First Marianne rescues six-year-old Martin, the son of her dearest childhood friend, from a Nazi reeducation home. Together, they make their way across the smoldering wreckage of their homeland to Berlin, where Martin's mother, the beautiful and naive Benita, has fallen into the hands of occupying Red Army soldiers. Then she locates Ania, another resister's wife, and her two boys, now refugees languishing in one of the many camps that house the millions displaced by the war. As Marianne assembles this makeshift family from the ruins of her husband's resistance movement, she is certain their shared pain and circumstances will hold them together. But she quickly discovers that the black-and-white, highly principled world of her privileged past has become infinitely more complicated, filled with secrets and dark passions that threaten to tear them apart. Eventually, all three women must come to terms with the choices that have defined their lives before, during, and after the war each with their own unique share of challenges. Written with the devastating emotional power of *The Nightingale*, *Sarah's Key*, and *The Light Between Oceans*, Jessica Shattuck's evocative and utterly enthralling novel offers a fresh perspective on one of the most tumultuous periods in history. Combining piercing social insight and vivid historical atmosphere, *The Women in the Castle* is a dramatic yet nuanced portrait of war and its repercussions that explores what it means to survive, love, and, ultimately, to forgive in the wake of unimaginable hardship.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of April 2017: Much of the buzz touting Jessica Shattuck's WWII novel, *The Women in the Castle*, likens it to Kristin Hannah's wildly popular, *The Nightingale*. It's an apt comparison—both feature brave women overcoming nearly unfathomable obstacles. But their association actually made me hesitant to pick it up. Surely the well of enthusiasm for Nazi-related dramas has to be running dry, and if it hasn't, then an author really needs to “bring it.” Well, that well is still brimming as it turns out, and Ms. Shattuck certainly does. The women referred to in the title are widows of three conspirators involved in the assassination attempt on Hitler. Marianne von Lingens, whose moneyed pedigree has protected her from the more unsavory punishments of the war, has been tasked with locating the other resistance widows, and ensuring their safety. But she is no superhero. Along with the naïve Benita and inscrutable Ania, they represent the everyday, ordinary Germans swept up in the extraordinary, who survived as best they could when the right thing to do wasn't always clear (or even an option). If you're curious about what it was like to be a typical citizen during this time—if you struggle to comprehend how a society could become a breeding ground for Hitler's brand of evil, *The Women in the Castle* offers some insight. It also draws some chilling parallels to things brewing in the political climate today. Jessica Shattuck has provided a worthy addition to the canon of great WWII literature, one that answers why the appetite for this genre has not abated: In many ways, we still haven't learned the lessons that history has to teach us. --Erin Kodicek, *The Book Review*

“If you love historical fiction, this is your must-read book: It’s captivating, fascinating, and incredibly faithful to the events as they happened, and Jessica Shattuck reveals an entirely new side of what it’s like to be a woman in wartime.”

(Newsweek) “Moving . . . Shattuck’s achievement is beyond unfolding a plot that surprises and devastates is in her subtle exploration of what a moral righteousness looks like in the aftermath of the war, when communities and lives must be rebuilt, together.”

(New York Times Book Review) “A masterful epic.” (People Magazine) “A poignant, World War II page-turner.” (Marie Claire) “Offers a mesmerizing new look at the aftermath of the war . . . with insight and empathy, *The Women in the Castle* stands tall among the literature that reveals new truths about one of history’s most tragic eras.” (USA Today) “If you’re a historical fiction fan, this will be your new favorite novel of 2017. It’s so emotionally powerful there’s a chance the literary-induced chills will stay with you well into summer.” (Redbook Magazine, 20 Books By Women You Must Read This Spring) “Fans of *The Nightingale* and other classic World War II stories will fall in love with this compelling new perspective on women at war.” (Helen Simonson, New York Times bestselling author of *The Summer Before the War* and *Major Pettigrew’s Last Stand*) “Riveting and emotional, *The Women in the Castle* is a WWII story like you’ve never seen before.” (Bustle) “For your friend who loves a good war drama. About a woman who plays castle with other war widows across Germany post WWII.” (The Skimm) “A virtuoso of time and place, Jessica Shattuck has created a heart-smashingly good story that will change the way you look at current events, and leave you asking, ‘What would I do if I were in these characters’ shoes?’ Powerful and prescient, an important book everyone should read.” (Jamie Ford, New York Times bestselling author of *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* and *Songs of Willow Frost*) “A must-read!” (New York Post) “A vivid and gripping tale of endurance in the wake of World War II. . . . The writing is magnificent, as is Shattuck’s ability to render unimaginable circumstances with tremendous clarity and compassion. A joy to read, this is a beautiful and important book.” (Cynthia D’Aprix Sweeney, New York Times bestselling author of *The Nest*) “I couldn’t put Jessica Shattuck’s gorgeous novel down, an intricate and intimate portrait of the lives of three women whose fates draw them together in WWII Germany. A wonderful, wonderful read.” (Janice Y.K. Lee, New York Times bestselling author of *The Piano Teacher* and *The Expatriates*) “Vivid and beautifully written . . . With extraordinary skill, knowledge, and insight, Jessica Shattuck transports us to Germany in the aftermath of World War II

and into the lives of three powerfully drawn and memorable women. Compelling and very satisfying. — (Jill McCorkle, New York Times bestselling author of *Life After Life*) — “The reader is fully immersed in the experiences of these women, the choices they make, and the burdens they carry. . . . a rich, potent, fluently written tale of endurance and survival. — (Booklist (starred review)) — “Well-researched . . . Shattuck manages to be both morally tough-minded and remarkably empathetic. — (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)

"The Women in the Castle" by Jessica Shattuck, is — an engrossing novel — about three German women after WWII — and it includes — all the usual Big Themes of right/wrong, guilt/innocence, revenge/forgiveness. — — Marianne, Benita, and Ania, are the surviving wives of men who participated in the July 20, 1944, failed assassination attempt on Hitler (aka as Operation Valkyrie). Marianne, the strongest and the leader, promised to take care of the wives and children of the would-be assassins (all executed). In a rustic "castle" in northern Germany, the three very different women, with very different backgrounds and war-time experiences, band together to protect their children and each other in the chaotic days following the defeat of the Nazis. I won't outline to plot except to say that the story is immediately interesting, and provides suspense and mystery as it unfolds over the course of several years. As a piece of historical fiction I learned some things I hadn't known. For example, just after the war and before the Cold War got into full-swing, there was a "Sprunkammer" or a "denazification council" that assigned Germans (including ex-Nazis) to groups based on their "guilt" and they were officially sanctioned accordingly. Shattuck's novel is well-researched and it spun me off on several illuminating Wikipedia trails. One big question the novel asks is, can you love someone without knowing or caring what atrocities they may have committed in the past? Can one truly have a fresh start? Can it be deserved? Walking down the street in Germany after the war, what kinds of suspicions would one harbor? Did that man execute Jewish children? Did that woman rat out her neighbor? It's a fascinating time and place in history. I also HIGHLY recommend: "City of Women" by David Gillham, and "Skeletons at the Feast" by Chris Bohjalian.

I read a lot of this period, generally from the Jewish point a view, when Hitler forged the world war II for world dominance. I rarely have read from the Germans prospective, those who were against Hitler's insane view. The effect the invasion had on these three women and how they dealt with it was pretty amazing. I liked this book and would recommend it.

I read a lot of WWII books-both fiction & nonfiction. I enjoyed *The Women in the Castle* which is really a study concerning how the war affected the lives of Germans & their children in the years after it was over. The three main women are all well delineated and differentiated characters who bring individual perspectives to bear upon their common experiences of fear, violence and loss. Yet, they also each demonstrate the resilience of the human spirit and the need to have hope of a better future for their children. Everyone in the book possesses flaws which serve to underscore their fundamental humanity as they strive to not only survive in a post apocalyptic landscape, but to arise Phoenix-like from the devastation of their prewar lives.

Well done story of WWII Germany during and after the war. The main characters are women who had husbands executed for conspiring to kill Hitler. How the war unfolded for them was a different focus than I have read before. Setting is around an old castle in the countryside. The women all have different stories and personalities that are developed very fully.

Wow book. It delves into the lives of women struggling just to get by while raising their children during WWII in Germany. It offers the story of three women collectively living together but never really knowing what makes one another tick. Personal experiences and conflicting ideologies become hidden in a world where fear and uncertainty has taken control.

If you have studied the war, the why's and how's, this book might answer more unanswered questions, especially those of how the German survivors, Resisters and Nazis alike, faced Germany after the war. I have many because my father and his family did just that. Eventually, you come to realize people did what they could to move on.

*The Women in the Castle* is a unique story of three women and their children who live together in a castle when WW II is ending. Each woman has their story. The horror they endured and the guilt of living in Hitler's Germany is well described. The characters are so believable. I loved this book and highly recommend it.

A beautifully written novel that deals with very difficult questions. How do we cope with evil in the world? What does it mean to forgive but not forget? Is that even possible? How are true friendships formed? What life lessons do we actually teach our children? With WWII and the horrors of Nazism

as the groundwork for these questions, the author weaves an unforgettable story of survival that is inspiring, profound and realistic.

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