

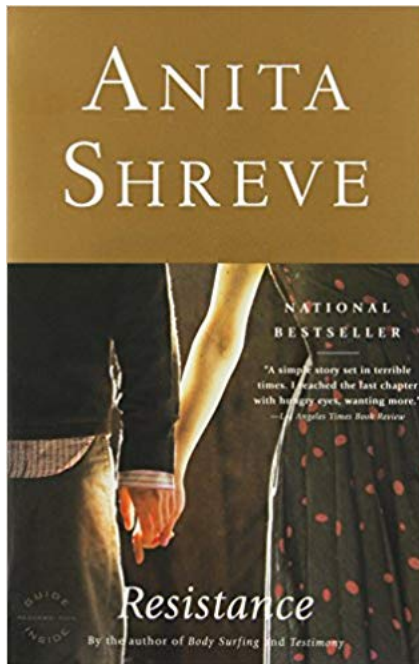
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FEAR, LOVE COLLIDE IN WARTIME BELGIUM

Nancy McAllister, For The Dispatch

Resistance portrays a Belgian village and its inhabitants during the Nazi occupation of World War II. Anita Shreve's novel also is the story of Claire Daussois, a Belgian woman, and Lt. Ted Brice, an American pilot whose plane has been shot down near the village.

Claire and her husband, Henri, are part of the Resistance movement. Secretly they house refugees in a tiny, hidden attic room of their farmhouse, part of a network of underground stops that transports refugees across the French border to safety and freedom.

After a crash landing, Brice is rescued by a brave schoolboy, Jean, who wants desperately to redeem himself because of his father's reputation as a German

collaborator. Jean, who has heard that Claire is part of the Resistance, goes to her for help. Claire nurses the pilot in the attic room.

The village is thrown into chaos when a clumsy attack on three German guards takes place. Fierce and merciless, the Germans convert their losses into horrifying equations. The death of one German equals the deaths of many villagers. Shreve brings to life the gut-wrenching fears that permeated the war. Who could be trusted? Who might talk when tortured? Who might collaborate?

Because of the reprisals, Claire's husband is forced to leave the farmhouse. Claire must also hide in the attic room when the farmhouse is raided by German soldiers. In these desperate circumstances, she and the American pilot fall in love. The hopelessness of their love is obvious, but the two cannot ignore the searing emotion and passion that has been thrust upon them. Will this be their final chance at human intimacy and love? Is it right to be happy amid the onslaught of human suffering by which they are surrounded? The ending is a jolting reminder of the effects of war on subsequent generations.

Shreve has written a powerful account of the war and its impact on the people of Belgium. In beautiful, unpretentious language the author embarks on a complex journey exploring the human spirit. Shrewdly, Shreve allows each of her characters to take a piece of the story and cast his or her own experience on what has happened. The whole is like a gemstone held beneath the light - every angle, every plane glimmering with its own version of the tale. A less-skilled writer might fall prey to sentimentality and righteousness, but Shreve sails past these dangerous crags with ease.

In *Resistance*, passion is heightened, courage is found, commitment is tested. Suspense, story and character are mastered. The result - from its grasp of the darkness of war to its acute understanding of love and an unexpected eroticism - will send shivers up and down readers' spines.

Nancy McAllister is a Columbus member of the National Book Critics Circle.
Fiction

Resistance is a novel by Anita Shreve (Little, Brown, \$21.95).