



[Home](#) > My Friend, the Enemy

My Friend, the Enemy

Books Reviewed:

[My Friend, the Enemy](#) [1]

Issue:

[202](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Janet Fisher](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

A really good cover by Steve Rawlings will draw the reader, especially boys, into this exciting adventure set in north-east England in 1941. Peter sees a German bomber crash right in front of him, and also sees a parachute descending over the nearby woods. He meets Kim at the scene, a girl who has been evacuated to her aunt's nearby and they discover that Peter's father is in the desert army in Africa and Kim's brother is flying in Africa so they have an instant bond and agree to meet later in the evening to hunt for souvenirs from the crashed plane. This proves difficult as the plane is guarded, but Peter does find a gun. In the woods where they run to hide they then find the injured airmen whose parachute Peter had seen, and decide to hide him rather than give him up, as they hoped someone would do for their father/brother in the same situation. They also believe the army sergeant's macho talk of killing him when he is found. Thus begins a series of events compounded by lies to Peter's mother, which result in an exciting denouement. The story is nicely rounded off by a letter from Erik, the German to Peter in later life.

The details and deprivations of wartime life in England are well described, giving an authentic feel to the story, and Peter is a well rounded portrait of a boy, who is bullied, but finds the courage to hide Erik, stealing food he and his mother cannot really spare.

He is suspicious of his mother's friendship with his father's boss Mr. Bennett, and of his well meaning gifts of food and help, but this melts away when Mr. Bennett helps save their house from the incendiary devices. The damp smell of the Anderson shelter, and the unappetising tripe Peter has to eat are vividly depicted, while Kim, the tomboy from a different background whose determination and support help Peter face the bullies, is a credible heroine. Dan Smith's first novel takes the reader back to those days of 1941 and will give today's reader a good understanding of the reality of living through a war.

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[1] <http://savfikn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/my-friend-the-enemy>

[2] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/202>

[3] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/janet-fisher>