

Rosie Nominations and Historical YA Fiction



Quick! Name one thing you know about the Crimean War! Nothing? Florence

Nightingale maybe?

Brief history lesson: The Crimean War was fought between Russia and an alliance of France and England over the declining Ottoman Empire in what is now part of the Ukraine. This war pre-dates World War I, and is often considered as the first modern war. It is also famous for Florence Nightingale who drastically improved nursing practices while caring for wounded British soldiers. Sounds exciting, right? Ok, maybe not the most promising backdrop for a YA book, but *In the Shadow of the Lamp* has enough to keep you turning pages. Molly has been framed for theft and fired from her job as a parlor maid at a fancy London home. She decides to sneak her way onto a ship headed east when she hears that Miss Nightingale is looking for nurses. Even though she doesn't have any training, Molly is headstrong and is willing to work hard. She is found out by Miss Nightingale, but her hard work and natural inclinations at nursing and caring for people proves her worthy. In fact, Molly's abilities are even a bit magical. The magical elements aren't played up too much and Molly is a likeable character as she struggles with defining her future, both professionally and personally. Whether during the Crimean War or now, trying to figure your way in the world is a timeless endeavor.

Good historical fiction can take a place and setting and bring it to life with engaging characters that you care about. *Between Shades of Gray* focuses on a young woman who faces even worse challenges than Molly and still manages to maintain her humanity.

Lina is a regular teenage girl in Lithuania in the early 40s when she is arrested in the middle of the night with her mother and little brother by the Soviet NKVD police force. They are sent off by train to different camps where every day proves a struggle to survive. Lina is an artist, and that becomes one of her saving graces. Lina also forges a friendship and tentative romance with Andrius before she is shipped off again to a camp in Siberia. This is a hard book to read because the details are very disturbing, but overall this short book was easy to read and rewarding in the end. Lina's perseverance is truly inspiring.

I love historical fiction, but the best thing about the Rosie nominations list is that it gives suggestions to all different types of readers!

Posted by sbowman on June 4, 2013

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