



A Horse Called Hero

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It is 1940. As the Second World War escalates and London becomes a target for German bombs, Dodo and her horse-mad little brother Wolfie are evacuated to the country, away from everything they know. After weeks of homesick loneliness, they come across an orphaned foal. They name the horse Hero for surviving against the odds and together they raise him, train him, and learn to ride. Their days are suddenly full of life and excitement again, but the shadow of war looms over their peaceful existence, and soon Hero must live up to his name...

A Horse Called Hero Details

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From Reader Review A Horse Called Hero for online ebook

Megs says

Last year I read Soldier Dog by Sam Angus and really enjoyed it. Well, maybe enjoyed isn't the right word, since I was bawling my eyes out every few pages, but for a book meant to make you cry, it was good.

Combining that with the fact that I love horses and I was excited when I got the chance to review A Horse Called Hero. Unfortunately, this one really fell short of my expectations.

I think my biggest issue was with the language Sam Angus used. It was very flowery and lyrical and I found it convoluted and difficult to follow. Especially for a middle grade book. I appreciate a good metaphor now and then, but this was a bit overboard.

I also got a bit confused with the passage of time. I thought about 6-8 months had passed, but then all of a sudden Hero was two years old and I was majorly confused.

My third complaint was that some of the events of the book seemed a bit random. Like when Hero entered the race, I thought that was going to go somewhere rather than be a stand alone event.

My favourite part of this one was the historical aspects involved with WWII and the 1940's in general. However, these weren't terribly plentiful and it wasn't even to save this book for me.

Overall, I preferred Sam Angus's Soldier Dog over this one. The language threw me off and there wasn't enough other stuff going on to save this one for me.

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

It's 1940, and British soldiers have just been evacuated from Dunkirk, but Dodo (Dorothy) Revel and her younger brother Wolfie, 8, still haven't heard from their Pa, Captain Revel. When a telegram arrives, Spud, the children's housekeeper, tells them the sad news that their Pa is missing. Later that night, however, the children overhear Spud talking to someone that seems to indicate something else about Pa.

Next thing Dodo and Wolfie know, they are being evacuated to Dulverton, North Devon. Billed with a reluctant woman whose son is off fighting, their only relief is at school with their kind teacher Miss Lamb. One day, on their way home from school, Dodo and Wolfie find a newborn foal. For Wolfie, it's a miracle. Pa had loved horses and knew a lot about them, much of which he had already taught Wolfie. Dodo and Wolfie decide to hide the foal, now named Hero for Captain Revel, with the help of a local boy named Ned.

When word breaks that Captain Revel is being charged with desertion and disobedience at Dunkirk, Mrs. Sprig decides she can't have his children living with her. Luckily, they end up with Miss Lamb and her elderly father, Rev. Lamb. There is even a place for the growing Hero there.

Life is better with the Lambs, though not at school. The whole nation is following Captain Revel's court-

martial and his children are bearing the brunt of people's anger. It is a slow process and as time goes by life gets harder, with increasing shortages and rationing. Hettie Lamb has been watching over a small herd of Exmoor ponies, which are slowly disappearing. During a particularly cold snowy winter, the ponies are rounded up, and, along with Hero, put into a pen where they can be fed. But one night, the ponies and Hero disappear. Wolfie is devastated.

When Rev. Lamb dies, Hettie is told she must move and so the three of them go to live in County Durham, a coal mining area in Northeast England. There, Dodo gives art lessons to the children of a coal mine owner, while Hettie teaches school. The war has now ended and Captain Revel is serving a two year sentence and still hoping to have his name cleared. He had always worked to improve condition for coal miners, and now, even in prison is continuing that work.

But when the truth about Ned, the boy who had helped Wolfie with Hero back in Dulverton, and the shady activities he had been bullied into doing by his father come to light, things begin to change. Is it possible the Ned holds the key to what happened to Hero?

I really enjoyed reading Sam Angus's novel *Soldier Dog* when it first came out, so I was excited to read *A Horse Called Hero*. And I wasn't disappointed, it is a very compelling, though somewhat predictable, story with lots of coincidences. What is nice about this story are the glimpses the reader gets into so many aspects of life during the war.

There are the pacifist demonstrations in Knightsbridge the children witness while out shopping with Spud. Sometimes we forget that not everyone supports war. The crowds of children and parents on Praed Street heading to Paddington Station was palpable. And although evacuation was difficult under the best of circumstances, Dodo and Wolfie's story show how absolutely capricious the whole process was. Mrs. Sprig was a horrible, narrow-minded woman with friends just like herself and wasn't able to really welcome these two scared, displaced children into her home. It makes one wonder how often that or worst happened in real life.

However, Angus draws a lovely picture of the relationship between Wolfie and Captain Revel in the letters exchanged throughout the war, much of which was advice on caring for a horse. Wolfie's hero worship of his father is touching, never flailing even when the circumstances surrounding Captain Revel's arrest are revealed. Captain Revel was clearly a very compassionate character and it is one of the best fiction father/son relationships I've ever read.

The reader also learns so much about what life was like for coal miners and the pit ponies, as they were called. These horses pulled tons of coal out of the mine each day, never seeing daylight once they were deep in the mine. The men and horses labored under dangerous conditions and that was what Captain Revel was working to change.

Two things did bother me - we never find out how old Dodo is, only that she is older than Wolfie. And a map showing the relationship of London, North Devon and County Durham would have been nice (maps are almost always nice in historical fiction).

But, in the end, the novel really asks the readers to consider what makes a hero. For that, it is a novel well worth reading.

This book is recommended for readers 9+, but probably better for 11+
This book was purchased for my personal library

This review was originally published at The Children's War

Anna says

I was really disappointed. It sounded like such a good book, but I wasn't able to get into the story. It was just BAM! all of the sudden you're in this story and you have no idea what's really going on. I like books that make sure you know who everyone is and why they are there, so maybe if this book was written better I could have enjoyed it.

Olivia says

This book!!! Everything about it is wonderful. And it is so refreshing because there is no romance! Through the point of view of Dodie and Wolfie, siblings, you have feel of wartime England. They are proud of their father, but there is a mystery behind his imprisonment that they hear whispered about. They are evacuated into the country. There....they meet Hero!

I'm not a huge horse lover. I mean I like horses, but not in the way some people do!! So when I first read this I was a little incredulous. Yes, Hero has a big part in this story, but it isn't all about him. You have the story of Dodie and Wolfie and their father. Their friendship with the Reverend and his daughter is very sweet. This is more than a horse story. It has depth, meaning, and makes you want to never stop reading.

The last few chapters kept me on my seat. It was amazing. All the fear and worry put into those scenes. The emotions of Wolfie as he is trapped...and of Dodie as she believes him dead. Oh, just writing this makes me want to read it again!

Abigail Stutzman says

good book I enjoyed reading it.

This was a great book about a wolfie and his sister dodo and an amazing horse named hero their father is off fighting in the war. they are sent to the country, a safer place for children away from the war. a few days after arriving in the country wolfie has a horse, a foal whose mother died. it was the horse he always wanted a grey and silver horse named hero. their father was under arrest for a crime he didn't really commit. Wolfie and dodo suffer from people judging them because of fo their father's so-called crimes. they live with hettie and her father, they have wild moor ponies but they keep going missing. when they move the horses into a nearby abandoned farm with hero they all go missing.

a year or so later wolfie goes down into a mine with a friend to see if hero is there working pulling coal carts. When he does find hero there is an explosion and Wolfie, hero and jo (his friend) barely make it out. and his father with the help of some witnesses that were found was released and set free.

Addy McConville says

Dodo and Wolfie are two young siblings that live with their housekeeper Spud. Their mom died when they were young and their dad is out fighting in World War II. They live in the city of London. London is now under war. When they go outside they have to wear a gas mask. London is very dirty and there are many homeless people. Many children are leaving to go to the country.

Wolfie is his nickname, his real name is Wolfgang. Wolfie is a little hopeful eight-year-old boy. One day he hopes that he will own a gray horse just like his father's horse. His father's horse's name is Captain. Wolfie looks up to his father and wants to be like him someday. Dodo is her nickname, her real name is Dorothy. Dodo is Wolfie's older sister. She misses her father very much and is always afraid of something happening to him.

One day when Dodo and Wolfie were walking home they saw some man write something on the sidewalk in chalk. Once they reached the man they saw that the chalk read: PARIS SURRENDERED. When Dodo reads this her heart drops. All she thinks of is where is Pa why is he not home yet.

A few days later they receive a letter that says their father has gone missing. After this letter came Spud decides that she should send Dodo and Wolfie to the country with the other kids. Dodo does not want to leave. She is afraid that Pa will come home and she will be in the country. All Wolfie can think about is that there are horses in the country.

A few days have gone by, and Dodo and Wolfie are on the train to the country. They are not the only children on the train. The train is almost packed with children. When they get to the country there are many families there to pick out a child. Before they left Spud told Dodo not to let them separate her from Wolfie. Many people came up to Dodo and asked if she wanted to go with them. She said "If you want me you must take him to." They were the only children left. The woman in charge was not allowed to leave until all the children are gone. There was one lady left, but she did not want two children. The woman in charge had to convince her to take Dodo and Wolfie. The woman in charge finally convinced Mrs. Sprig to take the children.

They were living with Mrs. Sprig, and going to school, but they were not happy. Until one day Wolfie was told to open the gate at the old pasture. He had to open the gate, because the knacker's cart was coming. (A knacker's cart is when a horse gets old and dies, it is what you carry the horse with.) When he got to the pasture he was looking for the horse. When he finally found her he realized that she just had a baby. The foal was grey with dark almond eyes. When the men got there with the cart, they were going to shoot the foal. They were going to shoot him because they thought he would not survive. Wolfie stopped them. He said "This is my horse." The men said "Really he doesn't even have a name." Wolfie said "Yes he does, his name is Hero."

Wolfie managed to hide Hero in the barn, and give him milk. One morning a letter came from Spud. The letter said that said Pa was home safe, but he had more work to do. The children were very excited that Pa was home, but did not know why he had more work to do.

After many days. The paper came and had Pa's picture on the front. It said that Pa ran away from the war, and disobeyed his commands. This is when Mrs. Sprig decided to get rid of the children. Miss. Lamb was now taking care of the children, along with her father. Miss Lamb is their teacher. Her father was a priest. Luckily Hero was allowed to come with.

Many months have passed and the judge decided that Pa will have to go to jail for two years. He will also have to do community service. This made Dodo relieved when she found out. She was relieved because one of the punishments was death.

Hero and the children were growing fast. They have not seen their father for many years, but they do write very often. Miss. Lamb has many horses of her own, but sadly a lot of them have been stolen. One sad day

came and Father Lamb died. This was very sad to the children because he was like a father to them. A few weeks later Hero was stolen. Wolfie was heart broken. A few more weeks have passed and Miss Lamb found out that she can not afford their house anymore. They move into Miss Lamb's uncle's house. Wolfie is fourteen years old now. All hope is lost for him. Will he ever find Hero? Will they ever see Spud or their father again? What will happen to Miss Lamb?

This book was a little hard to get into. After you get into it, it is a good book. I enjoyed it because of all the action. I also liked it because Wolfie and I share the same love and passion for horses. I would recommend this to anyone who likes historical fiction. Also to anyone who likes action.

George flaherty says

An amazing book

This book was absolutely amazing, nearly bringing me to tears at times, and i would definitely recommend it to anyone

Mia Roybal says

Really great book! It had a couple of unexpected turns but was a really heart-warming book overall :)

Stacy says

I'm not much of a horse book person, and I think the jacket gave away too much of the story, but this was a decent emotional ride.

Catherine says

There is a lot of sadness in this book. For those horse-lovers among us, Scout's demise is dreadful. The author clearly loves horses and that knowledge and passion shines through. In terms of the war setting, it does what many children's books try to do and covers issues of prejudice, mob-mentality and the evacuation experiences of children while also shoe-horning in historic facts and details. A lot of this is done well and convincingly, but sometimes you feel it slipping into that trap of putting into the characters' mouths views or insights that they would be unlikely to have had at the time. For example, the Devon resident who articulates that the Allies will probably try to trick Hitler into thinking the invasion of Europe will take place near Calais while all the time intending to land at Normandy. Overall, though, this tells a good tale and the relationship between Wolfie and Hero is portrayed beautifully.

Hayley says

I enjoyed the soft melancholy of most of this book, but after a credibility stretching coincidence, it unfortunately turns to melodrama. With a plot and tone somewhat reminiscent of The Railway Children, I think this will have appeal to kids who enjoy quieter historical and/or animal stories. I thought the mixing in of real life with fiction was really well done and I appreciated the author's note at the end.

A few issues I had with the ARC, which may well be sorted out by the time the book is published: we are never told how old Dodo is and only learn Wolfie's age some way into the story. This made it hard to picture the kids. I was also really confused about Ned Jervis - when we first meet him, the fact that he has white hair made me think he was an old man, but he's later referred to as a boy and a lad. Down in the mine, it says that Hero is being 'led' in the stables - but apparently not by anyone. I also felt the blurb on the back of the book gave away way too much of the story.

Issues that probably won't be sorted out before publication - too much going on in the plot, and the huge coincidence towards the end that just pitched the book in the wrong direction. I felt the fire should have been the climax and then Pa could have been released after that.

Elena Totz says

I read the book a horse called Hero. This book takes place in London back when World War 2 was going on. There were two kids named Dodo and Wolfie. They were siblings and they were evacuated to another country because of what was happening in their area. They were all alone for months, wondering the streets. Dodo and Wolfie didn't even know where they were. Somebody had just dropped them off on the streets. After wondering for weeks they come across a horse who looked like it has been through a lot. They named the horse Hero since it looks to be struggling and has been through a lot. A few months later, Hero has adapted to Dodo and Wolfie's family. They count on Hero and Hero counts on them. They get through stuff all together. Hero has to live up to his name. Is he a hero? Does he save Dodo and Wolfie from being attacked?

I loved this book so so so much!!!! It tells a story of how animals and humans support each other. They come together and get through the hard times. I think that this book is amazing! I recommend this book to middle schoolers because it can get violent at some points. I almost cried because of what happened in this book. I give this book 5 stars.

Bekah Booklover says

Warning - Contains spoilers!!!!

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Even though I am horse crazy, I probably would not have picked this book up as it seemed to be for younger readers. However, my 8 year old brother bought it from a book sale at school, and I took to reading a couple of chapters to him every night. I was sceptical at first, I thought it was going to turn out too similar to a Michael Morpurgo book, but I was pleasantly surprised. I think this book would be suitable for adults and children alike - it teaches people about the aftermath of war, as well as the actual war period, and takes you on a rollercoaster of emotions - Scout's death was particularly hard for me to read through considering I am a major horse lover. The only reasons it doesn't get five stars are:

- A lot of repetition, I know it's a children's book but I found the amount of repetition in some places tedious.
- The ending was too abrupt, most of the book is spent waiting for Dodo and Wolfie's father to be released from prison, and when he finally does arrive, it's like BAM! The End. Also, the issue with the Jervis' stealing Hettie and Wolfie's ponies is never truly resolved.
- Okay, if you have read the book then you know it was very predictable this was going to happen... Father Lamb's death. We could see that he was a frail, ill old man, and was obviously going to die at some point, but it was so abrupt. It goes from describing a beautiful morning in the countryside one second to 'Father Lamb had died in the night' - don't break it to us too gently then!
- I would have liked to know more about Dodo and Wolfie's mother.
- The final thing, and this is just me being fussy - how old is Dodo???? Her age is never referred to during the book which really annoyed me. All we know is that she is older than Wolfie. The story takes place over about 8 years I think? So we see Wolfie going from 8 to 16, I guess Dodo went from about 12 to 20, but I really don't know. It's just a little thing that really bugged me, I feel like I can relate to a character better if I know how old they are.

Overall though, this was a really good book, and even if you aren't horse mad you should give it a go.

Ms. Yingling says

Wolfie and Dodo live in London under the care of housekeeper Spud while their father is off fighting in WWII. He was awarded medals during WWI, but is reported as missing at about the same time as bombings in London increase, so Spud sends Wolfie and Dodo out to the country. They end up in the care of Mrs. Sprig, whose son is off fighting and who is not thrilled to have two small children with her. Wolfie's father is fond of horses (he still has a cavalry unit), so Wolfie is thrilled when he finds an abandoned colt. When Wolfie's father turns up and is put on trial for desertion, Mrs. Sprig throws the children out. Luckily, school teacher Hettie Lamb and her minister take in the children and allow them to care for the horse, Hero. Children at school are mean, and Wolfie and Dodo are very worried about their father, who could be put to death if found guilty. Luckily, he is only sent to hard labor, and the children are allowed to stay with the lambs for a while. However, Hero is stolen, along with other horses, Rev. Lamb dies, and the children are sent to work. Wolfie ends up in the mines, where conditions are horrible. Things will get worse for the children before they get better, even after the end of the war.

Strengths: Soldier Dog was quite a good war book, and this had some good details about the battles that the father was in. More and more readers are interested in horses, and there are fewer books about children being

sent out of London than there were in years past. I can't think of anything addressing the conditions in coal mines, so that's a nice touch. Fabulous cover.

Weaknesses: This was so, so sad. Just when you think things can't get worse, they do. This is more of a homefront book than a war book, so I'm not exactly sure that it will be something my readers of war stories will like. Debating.

Avery says

This was an amazing story!! Wolfie, Dodo, and Hero are all amazing heroes (and heroine). Hero and Wolfie begin their journey in the country, when Wolfie finds Hero, his mother had passed away while giving birth. Hero and Wolfie have many amazing adventures until one day (SPOILER ALERT) Hero is stolen and Wolfie is heartbroken. Years later, after Dodo and Wofie's father is released from prison (he was accused of deserting while fighting in WWII) Wolfie finds Hero in a coal mine and they barley escape with their lives.

This is a fantastic story that I would recommend to anyone who loves adventure.
