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# An Elephant In The Garden



## Synopsis

Lizzie and Karl's mother is a zoo keeper; the family has become attached to an orphaned elephant named Marlene, who will be destroyed as a precautionary measure so she and the other animals don't run wild should the zoo be hit by bombs. The family persuades the zoo director to let Marlene stay in their garden instead. When the city is bombed, the family flees with thousands of others, but how can they walk the same route when they have an elephant in tow, and keep themselves safe? Along the way, they meet Peter, a Canadian navigator who risks his own capture to save the family. As Michael Morpurgo writes in an author's note, *An Elephant in the Garden* is inspired by historical truths, and by his admiration for elephants, "the noblest and wisest and most sensitive of all creatures." Here is a story that brings together an unlikely group of survivors whose faith in kindness and love proves the best weapon of all.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (89 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

## Customer Reviews

Reason for Reading: I like the author and would simply read anything he wrote. This story set during WWII is from a perspective which I don't read much of, that of the everyday German family. I have read books from the German perspective but usually they are hiding Jews and that would be the focus of the story. *An Elephant in the Garden* does not really explore the War itself very much, outside of what this middle class pacifist family would know from the propaganda they were fed.

Before the war actually starts they have had a heated argument with their closest relatives who have said they never want to see them again as they believe Hitler will be good for the country and our family, living in Dresden think he is a madman. War starts and Papi is called to active duty, sent to fight in France and later in Russia. Mutti has gotten herself a job working at the local zoo which is a walkable distance from their home. With this background, we enter the main theme of the book as the Allies are winning, drawing nearer to the cities, and then Dresden is bombed to a pile of ash. Mutti, Karl and Elizabeth leave the city as many refugees do as they have the Americans coming from one side and the Russians from the other and no one wants to suffer at the hands of the Russians. So they all head towards the Americans, but Mutti feels she must bring Marlene with her, a very sad, grieving baby elephant whose mother died several months ago. Mutti has known her since she was born. Marlene has been living in their garden overnights and has become a part of the family. It is a hard journey for any refugee as they trudge for weeks through the snow, rationing a dwindling supply of food, with the Russians ever present at their back but with an elephant along this brings added elements both bad and good.

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