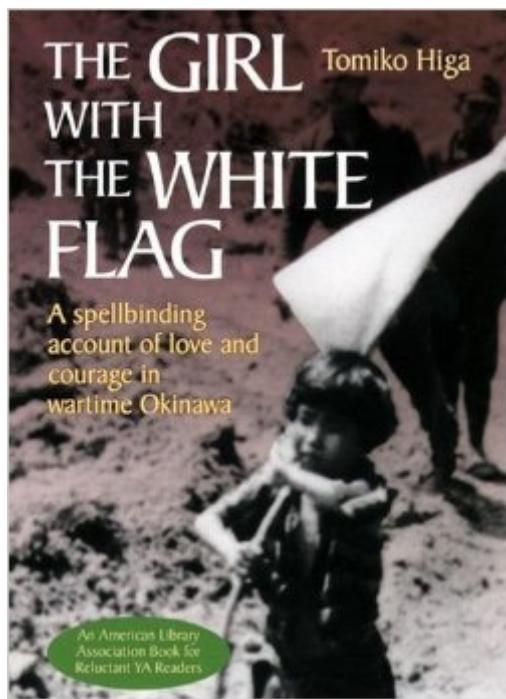


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# The Girl With The White Flag



## Synopsis

New York Newsday called this memoir of a warhood childhood in Japan "one of the saddest and yet most uplifting books about childhood you will ever encounter." Separated from her family in the confusion and horror of World War II, seven-year-old Tomiko Higa struggles to survive on the battlefield of Okinawa, Japan. There, as some of the fiercest fighting of the war rages around her, she must live alone, with nothing to fall back on but her own wits and daring. Fleeing from encroaching enemy forces, searching desperately for her lost sisters, taking scraps of food from the knapsacks of dead soldiers, risking death at every turn, Tomiko somehow finds the strength and courage to survive. Many years later she decided to tell this story. Originally intended for juvenile readers, it is sure to move adults as well, because it is such a vivid portrait of the unintended civilian casualties of any war.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is the only book that I have read cover to cover literally ten times. I have the book basically memorized. I first read it several year ago in my middle school years. Once I started reading I could not put it down! I will always have a copy of it in my house hold and it is in my top three books list. This a story about a young girl about six years of age whom is amidst WWII in Japan. When her father leaves to go fight in the war the young lady along with her fellow sisters and brother to find safety. Along the way she some how get seperated from her family and is left alone for months dodging bullets, bombs and surviving by finding abandoned gardens and eating out of dead soldiers knapsacks. Her adventure takes her from running from a crazy soldier to a hole in the ground where

she finds an old couple who take care of her until the young girl is forced to march around a warfront in the brightnes of day in front of American soldiers marching with a white flag in her hand. No written report could possibly do this book it's justice. You have to read and live the tale yourself.

I moved to Okinawa in 1991 when my parents were both stationed at Kadena Air Force Base. I was eight years old at the time and not long after arriving, I happened to check this book out of the school library. To assume that children cannot understand or appriciate the meaning of war and the hardships that it entails is insulting to their intellegence. I loved this book, and I treasure the signed copy I got in 1993 when Higa-san held a signing at Camp Lester. Like "Sadako and The Thousand Paper Cranes" this book, narrated by a child, makes the popularly forgotten Pacific Campaign of WWII assessable to children who will then become socially responsible adults. It does not do to shelter children from the injustice of the world. The book is only mildly graphic, the narrative is heart breaking, and it deserves a place in school libraries right next to Sadako, "Number the Stars" and "Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl"

How a young girl of 7 years can survive on her own on the battlefields of war-torn Okinawa, 1945, is absolutely astonishing. As a history teacher in Okinawa, Japan, I have run accross a wide array of materials concerning the Battle of Okinawa, but no other book so vividly details the human side of the struggle from the viewpoint of civilian Okinawans. This is a heart-warming story of triumph in the midst of great tragedy. I often encourage my students to place themselves in the "shoes" of those whom we are studying, to go beyond just facts and figures and identify with the real people who experienced history. Tomiko Higa takes the reader directly to the Battle of Okinawa through the eyes of a child.

This is an incredible memoir of Mrs. Tomiko Higa's experience as a 7 year-old during the Battle of Okinawa in the spring of 1944. At the end of the battle, after emerging from a cave with a piece of white loincloth attached to a stick, she was photographed by an American soldier. Roughly 40 years later, she accidentally spotted the photo in a bookstore. Reluctant to come forward and identify herself at first, she finally did so after reading several false accounts about the identity of the little girl. The book is short, only 127 pages, and a fast read. It is also poignant--the prose is clean, the descriptions frank and insightful, the story inspiring. Mrs. Higa begins by telling of her life in Shuri, the ancient capital of the Ryukyu Kingdom known today as Okinawa. She progresses to the landing of the American forces at Kadena, her consequent hiding in air-raid shelters, and then her moving

from cave to cave with her siblings to escape the fighting. She eventually becomes separated from them and has to survive the battle on her own. Where a child of 7 gains such strength and smarts is really beyond one's imagination and the manner in which Mrs. Higa describes her experience is what makes this book so worth reading.

but is no relation. And found I enjoyed it more than I thought I would. There are many mentions in the customer reviews about it being middle school or young adolescent lit, so I was a little leery. And it is in a way, because the episodes in her life are just presented the way she remembered them. There is no tying it back to a larger political idea, no closure of narrative like one expect in an adult novel, and often "characters" in her story walk away never to be seen from or heard from again. So, in that way, if you are expecting an adult account with deep reflections, ramifications both political and social, and prescriptions and condemnations, then you need to read another book. But Higa's account was refreshing in that way that children are. She presents everything without guile or over-analysis. You feel the visceral experience with her as she climbs over the wasteland that her country becomes. She never sugar-coats anything because there is no need to when just presented factually. You feel her need, understand her young judgements, and are just charmed by her plucky character. In today's multicultural educational system, this book would be a good addition to any history of WWII.

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