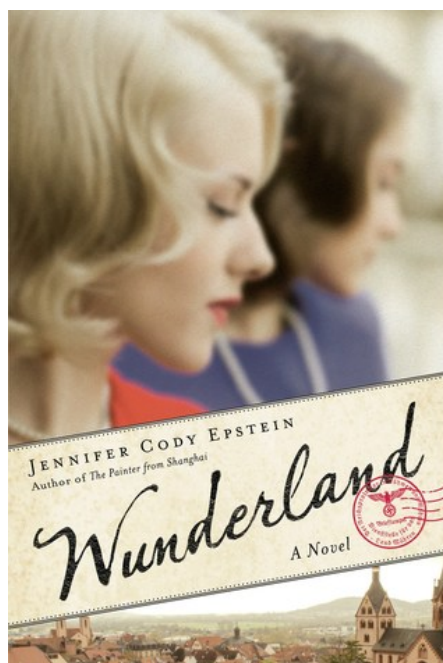




Wunderland

Jennifer Cody Epstein

Download now

Read Online ➞

Wunderland

Jennifer Cody Epstein

Wunderland Jennifer Cody Epstein

An intimate portrait of a friendship severed by history, and a sweeping saga of wartime, motherhood, and legacy by an award-winning novelist

East Village, 1989

Things had never been easy between Ava Fisher and her estranged mother Ilse. Too many questions hovered between them: Who was Ava's father? Where had Ilse been during the war? Why had she left her only child in a German orphanage during the war's final months? But now Ilse's ashes have arrived from Germany, and with them, a trove of unsent letters addressed to someone else unknown to Ava: Renate Bauer, a childhood friend. As her mother's letters unfurl a dark past, Ava spirals deep into the shocking history of a woman she never truly knew.

Berlin, 1933

As the Nazi party tightens its grip on the city, Ilse and Renate find their friendship under siege--and Ilse's increasing involvement in the Hitler Youth movement leaves them on opposing sides of the gathering storm. Then the Nuremberg Laws force Renate to confront a long-buried past, and a catastrophic betrayal is set in motion...

An unflinching exploration of Nazi Germany and its legacy, *Wunderland* is at once a powerful portrait of an unspeakable crime history and a page-turning contemplation of womanhood, wartime, and just how far we might go in order to belong.

Wunderland Details

Date : Expected publication: April 23rd 2019 by Crown Publishing Group

ISBN : 9780525576907

Author : Jennifer Cody Epstein

Format : Hardcover 384 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, World War II, Holocaust, Cultural, Germany, War

 [Download Wunderland ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Wunderland ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Wunderland Jennifer Cody Epstein

From Reader Review Wunderland for online ebook

Michelle Boyer says

Phew. Most of this novel takes place in Hitler's Germany and shows how two young girls, once best friends, get entangled in war and politics. As you can imagine, this is pretty gripping and painful material at times.

There are, however, a lot of flashbacks/flash-forward moments because the author ensnares Ava (Isle's daughter) into the plot. She is struggling to find her identity while struggling to raise a teenage daughter. Humbly, I didn't think the story needed this and found the transitions between times to be, unfortunately, clunky (especially in the beginning).

The story between Ilse and Renate is the best part of the book, and really the central focus. Ilse is someone that you just have to hate by the end of the novel. I realize that things happen, people make mistakes, war changes people, fear makes people do terrible things--but I hate Ilse. Which is good because it has been awhile since I've actually hated a character this much. It means the storytelling worked!

Overall, 3.5 stars and definitely worth a read if you're interested in Nazi Germany (and especially its effects on youth!). Really glad that I picked this up.

Note: Thanks to NetGalley, the publisher, and the author for a free eARC in exchange for an honest review!

Jade says

At this point in my life I have read so many WW2-based novels and memoirs, that I'm either disappointed because the content is too overdone, or overjoyed because someone takes a new angle and delves into it to create a new story. I just finished Wunderland by Jennifer Cody Epstein and all I can say is WOW. Jennifer Cody Epstein manages to recreate several eras and places that are so close to my heart, and weave together lives in a way that you literally cannot put the book down. I'm not kidding when I say I couldn't put it down - I read Wunderland on my phone and was literally walking around the house doing chores half-heartedly with one hand while reading with the other.

Wunderland is the story of best friends Ilse and Renate in pre-war Berlin, and of Ava, Ilse's daughter, as a small child and then teen in Berlin, as a young mother and then finally as a mother to a teenager in NYC. The novel skips between times and places, but I had no problem with that: it actually helped with the plot development and intrigue. I love novels that throw readers a breadcrumb here and there, along a winding trail, making you work for the storyline rather than just sitting along for the ride.

Jennifer Cody Epstein has amazing attention to detail, and the descriptions in the novel are brilliant. So brilliantly done that there are parts that play out in front of you, and you feel as if your eyes are glued to a window pane, unable to divert them elsewhere, as much as you want to. The depictions of Kristallnacht are so vivid and real, I actually had to breathe through the waves of nausea rolling through my body. (I had similar emotions reading Herman Wouk's War and Remembrance).

I also found that Jennifer Cody Epstein did a great job showing just how seamlessly the isolation of the Jewish people happened in Germany, and also how in general the rest of the German population just took it in their stride that people who were once their friends, neighbors, bakers, etc, were suddenly lesser humans. It never starts with the camps. It starts with a few people sowing seeds that then develop into believed truths,

and then suddenly crowds are whipped into frenzies, and eyes are blinded by hatred. I also appreciate that Wunderland doesn't sugarcoat anything: you will most definitely not like all of the characters in the novel.

I'm so glad I read this book, and recommend it to everyone. I haven't read any of Jennifer Cody Epstein's other work so I'm going to jump on that in the new year, as her writing really speaks to me. Thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for the advance copy, and to Jennifer Cody Epstein for writing such a wonderful novel!

Crumb says

A friendship destroyed by the perils of WWII. A betrayal that will take your breath away.

This book is why I read.

As a reader, there are times when I fall into that dreaded pattern of "reading just to read." Do you know what I mean? I find myself picking up the same types of stories and I feel like I'm in the movie Groundhog Day. However, there are also those precious gems that quicken your heart, put a bounce in your step, and make you fall in love with reading all over again. *This was one of them.*

Classic historical fiction, shifting back and forth between 1939 and 1989, executed with fine precision. Most often in cases of shifting timelines, I enjoy one story line over the other, however, this was an exception to the rule.

In 1939, Berlin is under attack. If you aren't bred according to "Nazi Gold Standard" than fleeing the country or going into hiding are your best chances to survive. Ilse and Renate, two teenage girls and the best of friends, cannot even begin to imagine what is in store for them. Renate never would have imagined that her best friend was capable of a betrayal so evil it will question her faith in humanity. It will question *your* faith in humanity.

Historical fiction is one of my favorite genres. WWII is often written about in a number of historical fiction novels. Although many authors write about the war, not all of them do it with the same grace and deftness of Epstein. She clearly researched the area and it paid off tremendously. When I read a work of fiction, I want to *feel* as if it is real. I want to feel invested in the characters. In this case, I not only felt that it was real, I felt as if I was experiencing the events in real time. I will definitely be reading more from Epstein. She is extremely talented and I can't wait to see what she'll write next!

Thank you to the author and publishing house for providing me with an ARC in exchange for an honest review

Helen Beglin says

I've read many works of fiction and non-fiction about the horrors of the Nazi era; but this novel added significantly to my understanding of 2 things: the increasing privations and humiliations suffered by Jews even before the full-scale holocaust AND the steps by which an ordinary, decent person (here, Ilse) could become monstrous...and emotionally stunted ever afterward. All this through an exciting page-turner of a

story! I loved the story, and I did not find the shifts in time confusing. In fact, I enjoyed reading forward in order to go back in time and discover...oh, that's where Ilse was the night of the blackout...oh, that's why mother & daughter reunion after the war was so weird. And the ending is terrific--utterly surprising and completely prepared for, dramatic and also credible in every line. It's the kind of thing that would be a mess in the hands of a less skilled writer. Here it is deeply satisfying. The final line is so perfect it made me laugh out loud.

Martie Nees Record says

Genre: Historical Fiction

Publisher: Crown Publishing

Pub. Date: April 23, 2019

Though I found "Wunderland" to be a letdown, this may be my own fault. The author, Jennifer Cody Epstein, has written for BC, HBO, and The Wall Street Journal, among other prestigious journals. Because of her credentials, maybe I was expecting something unusually good and/or different. Or, possibly my disappointment may be because historical fiction is my favorite genre. I may have simply read one too many WWII stories revolving around the Hitler Youth movement. Nevertheless surprisingly, I did not feel the empathy and rage that I should have when the persecution of the German Jews began in this novel.

The story goes back and forth in time from 1933 to 1989. In 1933, we are in Berlin and meet two preteen and then teenage female best friends. In 1986, we are in the East Village and we meet the grown daughter of one of the Berlin friends who is estranged from her mother. The daughter has no idea who her father is and her mother is still mum on the subject. There is some suspense as to her paternal parentage. Could she be the daughter of a nameless Nazi? Was her mom part of the breeding program wherein German women were impregnated to produce children of alleged Aryan purity? Unfortunately, the writing is underwhelming, making the reader not invested in the question. I do believe that Cody Epstein does a good job in catching the dynamics of female teenage friendships (competition for a boy's interest) as well as mother/daughter relationships (always knowing how to push each other's buttons). But, this insight into relations is not enough to hold the reader's interest long enough to care about the characters.

I received this Advance Review Copy (ARC) novel from the publisher at no cost in exchange for an honest review.

Find all my book reviews at:

Goodreads: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/list...>

Leave Me Alone I am Reading & Reviewing: <https://books6259.wordpress.com/>

Twitter: Martie's Book: <https://twitter.com/NeesRecord>

Deborah J. Nobles says

Books set in Europe before and during World War II will always attract my attention. Renate and Ilse are best friends in the years leading up to Nazi rule in Germany. This story does a remarkable job of showing how difficult times can be made worse by choosing or not choosing a certain path. Sometimes terrible events occur because someone stands by and lets things happen. Narrated by Renate, Ilse, and Ava, Ilse's daughter,

we follow their lives over a period of more than fifty years. Their struggle to understand each other and deal with the past is sweet, sad, and horrifying. I was touched by their search for peace and redemption.

This book was provided by NetGalley. The opinions expressed are entirely my own.

Chris says

"Wunderland is a beautiful and haunting and utterly magnificent novel: a wrenching tale of friendship and betrayal in Nazi Germany. It's also a page-turner that kept me reading until two in the morning one night and three in the morning the next. It's that good."

Tammy says

The beginning of Wunderland is clunky but persevere as it improves greatly afterwards. It starts with fragmented scenes from the main characters lives beginning in 1989, switches to another character in 1933, back to the initial character in 1977 and onto yet another character in 1937. This would be fine if a discernible connection existed at this point but it didn't. I wasn't quite sure what to make of it but as I continued to read the connections eventually became apparent.

Essentially a story about a friendship in Berlin during the rise of the Nazi party, Isle throws herself into the movement while Renate is unable to follow suit. The narrative moves back and forth through time from Berlin to NYC; there is a question of paternity along with betrayal, lies and living with guilt. The complicity of ordinary Germans is chilling especially when one considers nationalism in today's world.

Donna Hines says

A family torn apart not knowing who the paternal father is of Ava leads to a historical conquest to determine the truths.

Ava Fisher and her estranged mother Ilse have a story to tell. The answer is in the details during the War in which Germany was invaded and taken over by Nazi's.

A trove of letters have turned up unsent to a family friend of Ava's known as Renate.

Could Renate hold the key to unlock this mystery of who is Ava's real father?

Womanhood and Wartime is at the helm and ready for discussion in this fascinating new read.

Thank you to Jennifer Cody Epstein , her publisher, NetGalley, and Aldiko for this ARC in exchange for this honest review.

Karenmelk says

After reading sooooo many books on WWII Germany, I wasn't sure there was an angle I haven't read about yet.....but WUNDERLAND surprised me with just such a new perspective. Ilsa and Renate are best friends and normal teenagers in the late 1930s while Nazism gradually takes hold of society around them. While I have read before of Krystallnacht (the Night of Broken Glass), and of kids joining the Hitler Youth

groups, I haven't really read anything THIS GOOD about the actual event. For example, the scenes where Renate watches Nazi youth destroy a synagogue, and brutalize the people on the street, were so compelling. The author slowly builds the story line during that terrible day, and it really made me pause and think, "yes, while all this vandalism was going on, what DID the average German literally walking on the street, or riding on the trolley, really think about what was going on?" The scene set on the streetcar was so compelling, I read it several times because I hadn't read anything like that before. (Spoiler Alert: I'm STILL pissed at that old lady!) Another scene that gripped me was when some young Hitler Youth thugs attack certain people in Renate and Ilsa's neighborhood - the writing was so vivid that I once again realized, this is how it really was throughout that terrible time. One can feel the anguish of one of the main characters, who learns very quickly she is caught up in something beyond what she is prepared to imagine. The sad lesson, of course, is that when faced with that realization, this character chooses to deceive herself and thus adds her contribution to the average German's response to what helped the Nazis set up their murderous regime.

If you think you've read all there is to know about this time period, give this book a go - you will probably finish it in two days because you will be so hooked.

Oh! Some reviewers say they had trouble with the format of the narrative going back and forth during different time periods - I had ZERO trouble with that. In fact, I liked how this style built tension and added to the compassion I felt for certain characters. For example, when I first read why one character didn't love or even feel close to her mother, in the 1970s, I was on her side, but then learning the background of her mom during flashbacks to the 1930s challenged my dislike and caused me to rethink the relationship.

Finally, I have to say that part of the story is based in 1970s New York City, and the descriptions of the East Village / Tompkins Square Park area are so different than that area is today - I found this to be an added treasure to the story.

Dan Radovich says

To be honest, I may not have read WUNDERLAND if I had not seen the 5 Star from an author friend. I did not want to read 'another WWII novel', but THANK YOU for this wonderful work Jennifer Cody Epstein. She tackles the question of 'How can a person change from loving their neighbor to total hate of a friend, all because of a national movement?' The lives and relationships of the women in this story, brilliantly written by Epstein, are a reflection of life then and now. I was up until early morning reading this in one sitting, it is that kind of story. The rise of Hitler and his Nazi terror regime are common knowledge, seeing that through her characters lives is told in captivating prose by Epstein. Be prepared, you may also be up all night.

Yolanda says

Thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for allowing me to read and review this book.
I loved this book about the war and what it took to survive
It explores friendship and I loved the ending I wasn't expecting

Bev Walkling says

Thanks to Crown Publishing and #NetGalley for allowing me to read this book in exchange for an honest

review.

I first gained access to this book in September of 2018 but I didn't finish reading it until late November. There were a number of reasons for that - some of them personal and other obligations getting in the way but I also found it a difficult book to read. The story is set in multiple time periods and moves back and forth between them. I was first drawn to reading it because of the WW2 theme which typically fascinates me but the early parts of the book just didn't resonate with me. It wasn't that the book was badly written. It was well-written, but when one of your main characters joins the BDM (Bund Deutscher Mädel, abbreviated as BDM) and becomes thoroughly indoctrinated in the Nazi ideology you know that she is not going to be a particularly likeable character. The story focuses on the friendship between Ilsie, her Jewish friend Renate and Ilsie's daughter Ava.

Ava spent part of her early years in a German orphanage but was later claimed by her mother who had survived the war in spite of indicators that made that seem unlikely. Her relationship with her mother has always been fraught with angst and a feeling of distance and this came across in the author's writing. When the story begins Ava is a young mother herself and seems to be constantly in a state of struggle with her surroundings, her daughter and her mother. When she learns of her mother's death and receives a batch of letters written to a woman she has never heard of it sets off the movement between time periods as we gradually get to see the bigger picture of what it was like for Ilsie and Renate as the war was beginning and how that ultimately affected Ava.

The parts of the story that gripped me the most were those that focused on Renate and her experience first of all discovering that she was considered to be Jewish although she had no prior inkling of that and then seeing how the growing hatred of people who had once been her friends caused her life to change. The author clearly put a great effort into researching the time period and what it was like for the average German growing up as well as those who were subject to persecution. Life wasn't easy for either of them and watching Ilsie's decline from being a best friend to a distant stranger is an important thing for the reader to see as it could easily happen in our current era of stigmatization. It is also eye-opening to see the damage that was caused to her daughter as a result of this.

The further along I progressed in the book, the more gripping I found it to be. It had some twists and turns that I wasn't expecting and a sense of irony that was palpable. Although I struggled with liking Ilsie and Ava which held me back in my reading, the book was well worth persevering to the end. I would recommend it to those interested in learning more about this time period.

Karen Kay says

I couldn't get into this book. Abandoned at 10%.
DNF - no rating

R says

This was a very well written historical fiction that focused on the youth of Hitler's Germany (1933-1939)...and what it meant to those no longer accepted by their birth country and the consequences felt by all.

Renate and Ilse were best friends until it was discovered that Renate's father was Jewish -a fact her parents kept from her. The author effectively demonstrated the isolation and hatred shown toward her and Jewish

students by their teachers and classmates. They were no longer looked upon as a friend, a student, or even a person. They were dehumanized. This type of behavior happened to adults and children alike. Many of the historical fiction books I read focused on adults with children as secondary characters. Wunderland explored Hitler's influence on Germany's youth and this component made it an exceptional read. Highly recommended.
