



The Umbrella Mouse

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Carey Fluker Hunt](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

~~New Talent~~

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

It's 1944, the D-Day landings have just taken place and Pip the mouse is living with her parents inside an antique umbrella in a shop window in New Oxford Street, where Pip listens to stories about her Italian relatives at the umbrella museum in Gignese and dreams about spies. One night the shop is hit by a V1 rocket. Staggering from the ruins to find her umbrella - but not her family ? Pip vows to make the journey to Italy alone. Befriended by Dickin, a search and rescue dog, Pip visits St Giles, a hidden market and refuge for animals deep beneath London's streets. There she meets Hans, a German rat, and Bernard Booth, the pigeon co-ordinator of Churchill's Secret Animal Army. Bernard refuses to help Pip in her quest so she takes a top-secret message intended for the French Resistance and launches her umbrella into the Thames, heading for the open sea.

Hans and a carrier pigeon named GI Joe follow her to retrieve the message. After some hair-raising escapes, Hans and Pip arrive in France where they're captured by the animal resistance fighters of Noah's Ark, including a stag, an eagle and Madame Fourcade, their hedgehog leader. More adventures ensue, culminating in a rescue attempt on a Nacht und Nebelcamp where Madame Fourcade, Hans and others are being tortured. Pip and her accomplices risk everything to save the prisoners, and at last Pip realizes where her true loyalties lie.

Published to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the start of WWII, this fast-paced tale about courage, resistance and friendship draws on true stories of animals caught up in the conflict. There's much here to enjoy, but right from the outset readers must grapple not only with the wartime setting and information about umbrella history, but also a complex back-story about Gignese, which may deter some children.

That said, confident readers who are prepared to give the Gignese element the attention it requires will find this book engaging, and once on board the plot has plenty of twists and turns to keep them interested. Sam Usher's evocative line drawings are dotted throughout, bringing Pip's adventures to life with a deft charm and sense of integrity that add to our enjoyment of the text.

Links:

[1] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-umbrella-mouse>

[2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/236>

[3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/carey-fluker-hunt>