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Girl On A Plane



Synopsis

Bahrain, 1970. After a summer spent with her family, fifteen-year-old Anna is flying back to boarding school in England when her plane is hijacked by Palestinian terrorists and taken to the Jordanian desert. Demands are issued. If they are not met, the terrorists will blow up the plane, killing all hostages. The heat becomes unbearable; food and water supplies dwindle. All alone, Anna begins to face the possibility that she may never see her family again. Inspired by true events in the author's life, this is a story about ordinary people facing agonizing horror with courage and resilience. Includes Q&A with the author.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

An Essay From Miriam Moss - The Author's Personal Story Behind The Book Girl on a Plane is the heart-pounding, thrilling story of one girl's determination to survive in the midst of terror as her plane to boarding school is hijacked. This is a work of fiction, but with a very true story as the inspiration. Miriam Moss, the author, shares some words below as to her own personal hijacking experience, and how it inspired this incredible book.

When I mentioned to my picture book editor that my plane had been hijacked while I was traveling from the Middle East back to school in England, alone and aged fifteen, she suggested I tell the

fiction editor my story. So, armed with a few newspaper clippings from 1970, I told her what happened all those years ago: how my plane was one of three that was hijacked by Palestinian guerrillas, forced to land in the desert in Jordan, and trussed with explosives. But there's a chasm between telling a story like that verbally and writing a novel about it. Despite having written many children's books, poems, and short stories, I had never written a novel, and I wasn't sure I could "especially about such a traumatic subject that had been buried for so long. In the desert the plane's power was turned off, so there was no water or sanitation, and there was very little food and water. The seventy passengers and crew sweated in the intense daytime heat and froze in the cold desert nights, waiting to hear whether the UK prime minister, Edward Heath, would negotiate with the guerrillas. They had set an ultimatum: release Leila Khaled, a Palestinian member of the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), who had been arrested in London after a failed hijack attempt, or they would blow up the plane and all the passengers with it. The deadline ticked away. . . . Revisiting the four-day ordeal while writing the story was very difficult. To write convincingly, I had to relive every emotion: being separated from my parents, the anguish of being alone, and the intense fear of being killed. By the end of each writing day, my voice had all but disappeared, only coming back gradually during the evening as I relaxed and returned to the present. I realized early on in the writing process that the book, though based on fact, would have to be fictionalized. I could set the book in the exact location, which I revisited, and in precise historical time, which I researched, but I couldn't accurately recall from a cast of seventy what everyone looked like, wore, and said. And I had to respect the many passengers still alive today. But all that happened to me is there and is real, and by writing the book through the eyes of a fifteen-year old girl called Anna, I was able to give the story its emotional truth.

I have tried to write a nonjudgmental account of events, to show that the world is not black-and-white, but an infinitely richer and more complex gray. I have tried to understand what drives desperate people to do desperate things, and to understand the complexities of the Middle East a little better. Those who hijacked me were homeless and disenfranchised. I hope this book might help those of us who have so much understand a little better those who have so little.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book! I don't every select Young Adult / Teen books to read and review, but this one caught my attention. Most likely because it didn't have to do with fantasy and/or vampires, and the writing didn't seem to be overly juvenile. The story, loosely based on a very real episode in the author's life, takes place in 1970. During this time period, in general, passenger planes were high jacked with alarming frequency. In September 1970, 3 passenger planes were

high jacked in retaliation of and to barter for the release of high jacker who had been captured the year before. On one of these planes is Anna Miller, who left Bahrain to return to England where she goes to school. The story follows Anna's experience on the plane as it is high-jacked and set down in the Jordanian desert, and left there for 4 days while negotiations are being held in England. What makes this book so powerful is the author (who actually was on one of the planes high-jacked) is pulling from her own memory and feelings. She is able to take the reader to a place that is manifested by terror, fear, sympathy and loss. The reader is in that plane, on that desert airstrip, without air conditioning, very limited food or water, and amidst deplorable conditions. At times I was moved to tears during this book - and that hasn't happened to me for quite some time!! I almost think tagging this book as Young Adult / Teen is a disservice. While I can't gauge how some one in that age range will feel about a book that takes place over 40 years ago, in a world that is much different from today, I feel this book will not be drawn to the attention of many adults who would enjoy this as much as I have. I have not had occasion to recommend a book as highly as I do this one in quite some time. Difficult subject, but a powerful read.

Mrs. Moss has an incredible story to tell here in *Girl On A Plane* primarily because it is, quite literally her story. In 1970 the Palestinian and Israeli situation escalated beyond their individual interests and began to envelope Jordan and Syria, creating a civil war and more. September of that year was when multiple terrorist acts of highjacked airliners drew innocent civilians and the West directly into the conflict in ways that could not be ignored. This book is a fully fictionalized account of the author's personal experience as one of the hostages held on the last airplane highjacked and forced to land in the Jordanian desert. The main character, Annie, is a 15 year old girl flying alone to England and it is from her perspective that we experience everything. The fear, tension, hunger, cold, boredom and claustrophobic frustration of being cooped up in an airplane for days & nights on end. The lack of real information about the full situation had to have been terrifying and yet there is a sense of camaraderie amongst the passengers - adults and children alike. I found her account of how little things were handled particularly fascinating - the rationing of water, the treatment of the kids after they were released, but especially the bizarre way that the press was brought out to the site to photograph the hostages. I had to go pull that up on Google and sure enough those photos and videos are out there. My one quibble here is the fact that this book is intended for readers in the 12 and up age group. I think they may need some maps and a bit more context on the overall timeframe to fully grasp the situation and the fact that these issues in the Middle East aren't new today and weren't new in 1970. This is well written and should be read.

I requested this book because it's a topic I know very little about. I've studied Palestine extensively in university and the liberation of Palestine is a subject I'm very passionate about. However, the plane hijackings by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in the 1970s slipped through the cracks. The book also stood out because while it's a work of fiction, it's based on real events that the author lived through. Between the harrowing topic, complex politics and real life events this book could have been amazing but in the end fell a bit flat. I can best sum it up as alright. I totally expected more. The story begins with Anna boarding a flight to London from Bahrain. She's heading back to attend boarding school. Everything is going smoothly until the pilot announces that the plane has been hijacked by members of the PFLP. The plane is diverted to Lebanon and then to an abandoned airstrip in the Jordanian desert. There the passengers are given very little food and water, exposed to the extreme elements of the desert and are in constant fear of being killed if the British government didn't give into the demands of the hijackers. This book was written at a fast pace, although the final few chapters felt longer than necessary. I read through it in one sitting mostly due to the fact that it features short chapters and easy prose. Its style is more middle grade than young adult but due to the topic I can see why it's aimed at an older age group. What bothered me about this book was how I couldn't connect or identify with any of the characters. I read on because I wanted to know what would happen and not because I cared about Anna. Her voice fell flat and forced at times, too much like an adult and not a 15 year old. At the end of the novel I knew I should have felt more for her when she struggled to come to terms with what happened to her but I didn't. I need books with characters I can become deeply connected to. I NEED TO FEEL THEIR PAIN, FEAR, WHATEVER! Sadly, this didn't happen. With such a traumatic event such as this one, I should have felt something. I've rated this book a 3 out of 5 mainly because while I didn't connect with it, it's not a bad read. My main criticism is very subjective. I've read other reviews where people have loved the book and the characters. The topic is very interesting and one that is relevant to what is happening in the world today. If you do pick this book up, I'd love to know your thoughts!

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