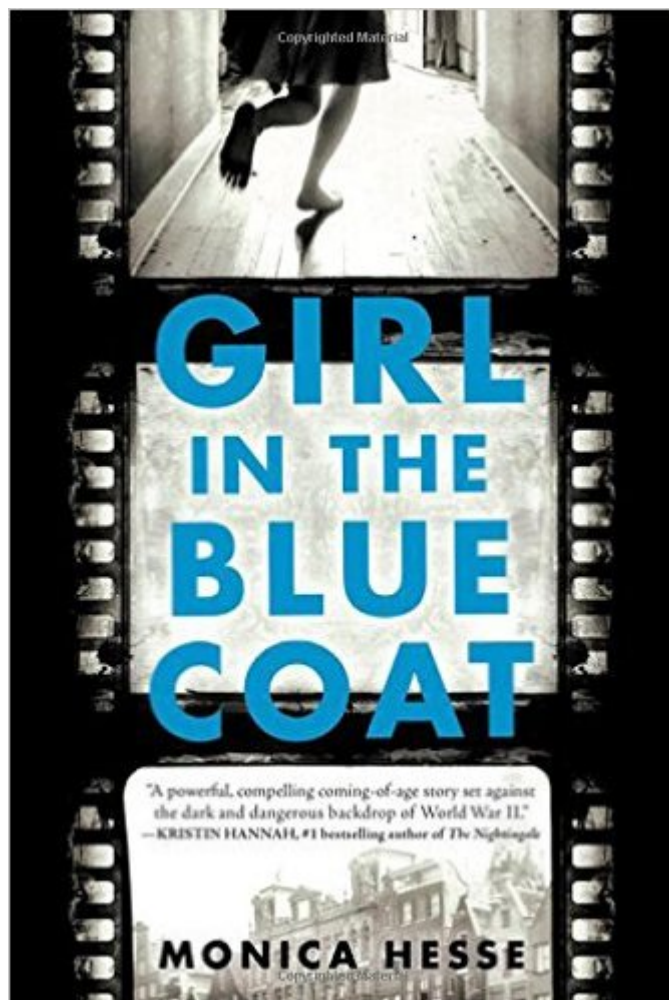


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# Girl In The Blue Coat



## Synopsis

An unforgettable story of bravery, grief, and love in impossible times"Girl in the Blue Coat is a powerful, compelling coming-of-age story set against the dark and dangerous backdrop of World War II. It's an important and page-turning look at the choices all of us--including young adults--have to make in wartime. A beautiful combination of heartbreak, loss, young love, and hope." -Kristin Hannah, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *The Nightingale*"A tapestry of guilt and acceptance, growing responsibility, and reluctant heroism, Hanneke's coming-of-age under heartbreaking circumstances is a jarring reminder of how war consumes and transforms the passions of ordinary life. Every devastating moment of this beautiful novel is both poignant and powerful, and every word feels true." -Elizabeth Wein, New York Times bestselling author of *Code Name Verity*Amsterdam, 1943. Hanneke spends her days procuring and delivering sought-after black market goods to paying customers, her nights hiding the true nature of her work from her concerned parents, and every waking moment mourning her boyfriend, who was killed on the Dutch front lines when the Germans invaded. She likes to think of her illegal work as a small act of rebellion.On a routine delivery, a client asks Hanneke for help. Expecting to hear that Mrs. Janssen wants meat or kerosene, Hanneke is shocked by the older woman's frantic plea to find a person--a Jewish teenager Mrs. Janssen had been hiding, who has vanished without a trace from a secret room. Hanneke initially wants nothing to do with such dangerous work, but is ultimately drawn into a web of mysteries and stunning revelations that lead her into the heart of the resistance, open her eyes to the horrors of the Nazi war machine, and compel her to take desperate action.Beautifully written, intricately plotted, and meticulously researched, *Girl in the Blue Coat* is an extraordinary, gripping novel from a bright new voice.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

\* 4.5 stars \* non-spoiler review \*This story of choices and flukes and wartime resistance is well suited in subject, tone and approach for adolescents. Author Monica Hesse treats both her readers and her characters with respect. She clearly expects readers to make inferences, reflect on situations, and make connections. Her teen and young adult characters are imperfect yet resolute. Pacing is swift and the plot is nimble, while having several largely believable twists and surprises. Timing is a bit compressed, but this is forgivable because it heightens the intensity of the story. The protagonist, Hanneke, is finely drawn, and poignant without pathos. Early in the story, she describes herself as follows: "I used to be a careless person, and look where it got me. Now I transport black market goods, but only because it feeds me and my family. I flirt with German soldiers, but only because it saves me. Finding a missing girl does nothing at all." Hesse crafted this story prompted by a visit to Amsterdam, followed by research into what life was like there during its occupation during WWII by Germany, and the mass deportations that followed. She has crafted a story that is taut and suspenseful in a way that is respectful to those whose lives were changed or shattered by the events of WWII. I appreciated Hesse's afterword about her research and the historical components of this story, some of which may come as a surprise, even if you are relatively familiar with wartime events in the Netherlands. She also names several excellent memoirs in her acknowledgements.

If elements of Monica Hesse's "Girl in the Blue Coat" seem somewhat familiar, then you have read "The Diary of Anne Frank". Narrated in the first person, "Girl in the Blue Coat" reflects events from the perspective of Hanneke, a sixteen-year old Dutch girl who delivers black market goods for her employer, a mortician. "Survival first, survival only". Following the death of her boyfriend Bas on the front lines, these words are now Hanneke's war motto. Her employer Mr. Kreuk, a mortician, operates a shopping service for those who can afford to pay. "I don't think Mr. Kreuk considers morals when he chooses who to sell to. If they can pay, they can buy". Although illegal, Hanneke rationalizes their activity. "We're really trying to reorganize a system that has come to make no sense in a country that has come to make no sense". When an elderly woman and customer asks Hanneke to help locate Mirjam, a Jewish girl she has been hiding in her home. Hanneke reluctantly agrees to do so. "In a world I cannot

solve, this is a small piece I can handle. Hanneke had encouraged Bas to join the army; she is driven as much by guilt as she is by altruism. I've become obsessed with finding Mirjam. It seems fair and right. Saving one life after destroying another. As she delves further into Mirjam's story and the attempt to locate her begins to involve others, Bas' older brother Ollie draws a reluctant Hanneke into the Dutch resistance movement. This war is a race against how many people we can save, and whether we can do it faster than the Nazis can take them. The characters in *Girl in the Blue Coat* did not have great appeal for me. Nevertheless, their emotions and reactions to various events were very realistic. Hanneke was focused on self-preservation.

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