

It Was Their War, Too

An Interview with Author Teresa R. Funke

Q. Why are you interested in the stories of women and children from World War II?

A. I was a history major in college. Like a lot of people, I was always interested in the dramatic battle stories of WWII. But when I was writing my first novel, *Remember Wake*, it occurred to me to ask the wives and mothers what they had experienced during the war, too. What I found was that while the women's and children's stories are often less sensational, they are just as interesting and meaningful.

Q. What is the Home-Front Heroes series?

A. This is a book series for middle-grade readers (37th grade) about real children in World War II. The stories tell what it was like to be an American kid during the biggest war in history. While WWII wasn't fought on American soil, the children here lived the realities of war every day--food rationing, war bond drives, victory gardens, fathers and brothers going off to fight. Some of our children even worked in war factories, survived the bombing of Pearl Harbor and were interned in relocation camps!

Q. How are the stories of World War II relevant to today's kids?

A. Besides the great history lessons they offer, these stories model the character traits we want our young people to embrace. During World War II, everyone in our entire country came together to win the war. Men, women and children all made huge contributions - and sacrifices. Their stories have a lot to teach us about what it means to be a good citizen. Other positive character traits embodied in their stories include responsibility, integrity and tolerance.

Q. How can children learn more about their own family's history?

A. I love teaching kids to interview their parents, grandparents and neighbors to learn more about history. Armed with just a pad of paper and a pencil (and maybe a tape recorder if they have one), kids can sit down for half an hour with a grown-up and ask questions that reveal amazing experiences. Everyone has stories to tell. And kids benefit from a greater understanding of their family and a more personal view of history.

Q. You are now asking both men and women to record their own WWII stories on your website. Why is this important?

A. I've often been asked why I keep writing fiction set in WWII. It's because I keep coming across wonderful stories. The breadth of that war is astounding. Seventy million people in 50 countries participated in WWII. That's almost 70 million stories we haven't heard. The World War II generation is fast passing from us. It's my goal and passion to try and save as many of their memories as I can. Today's kids are learning very little about this critical time in our history, and I'm hoping my website can serve as a repository to help them find out more.