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Jump to ratings and reviewsHere it is! The hugely anticipated follow-up to Gratz's NYT bestselling, critically acclaimed phenomenon REFUGEE. This is another searing and heart-pounding look at kids making their way through war. A New York Times bestseller! It's 1945, and the world is in the grip of war.Hideki lives on the island of Okinawa, near Japan. When WWII crashes onto his shores, Hideki is drafted into the Blood and Iron Student Corps to fight for the Japanese army. He is handed a grenade and a set of Don't come back until you've killed an American soldier.Ray, a young American Marine, has just landed on Okinawa. He doesn't know what to expect – or if he'll make it out alive. But jokes that the enemy is everywhere.Hideki and Ray each fight their way across the island, surviving heart-pounding ambushes and dangerous traps. But when the two of them collide in the middle of the battle, the choices they make in that instant will change everything.From the acclaimed author of Refugee comes this high-octane story of how fear can tear us apart, and how hope can tie us back together. 1446 people are currently reading.Alan Gratz is the bestselling author of a number of novels for young readers. His 2017 novel Refugee has spent more than two years on the New York Times bestseller list, and is the winner of 14 state awards. Its other accolades include the Sydney Taylor Book Award Honor, the Anne Izard Award Honor and the National Jewish Book Award, the Cybils Middle Grade Fiction Award, a Charlotte Huck Award Honor and a Malka Penn Award for Human Rights Honor. Refugee was also a Global Read Aloud Book for 2018.Alans novel Grenade debuted at number three on the New York Times bestseller list, and his most recent book, Allies, debuted at number two on the list and received four starred reviews. His other books include Prisoner B-3087, which was a YALSA Best Fiction for Young Readers pick and winner of eight state awards; Projekt 1065, a Kirkus Best Middle Grade Book of 2016 and winner of five state awards; Code of Honor, a YALSA Quick Pick for Young Readers; and Ban This Book, which was featured by Whoopi Goldberg on The View.Alan has traveled extensively to talk about his books, appearing at schools and book festivals in 39 states and a half-dozen countries, including Brazil, Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, and Switzerland, and has been a Writer in Residence at Tokyos American School in Japan, the James Thurber House in Columbus, Ohio, and the Jakarta Intercultural School in Indonesia.Alan was born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, home of the 1982 World's Fair. After a carefree but humid childhood, Alan attended the University of Tennessee, where he earned a College Scholars degree with a specialization in creative writing, and, later, a Masters degree in English education. He now lives with his family in Asheville, North Carolina, where he enjoys playing games, eating pizza, and, perhaps not too surprisingly, reading books.Displaying 1 - 30 of 1,308 reviewsFebruary 25, 2019Wow, that was epic.Grenade is a young adult historical fiction novel that takes place in Japan during world war II. It follows Ray who is a US Marine and Hideki who was forced to become a soldier. They're on different sides of the battle but what happens when they cross paths. The choices that they make might be he difference between life and death. I read Refugee, another one of Alan Gratz's books last year and absolutely loved it. Grenade was just as enjoyable as Refugee. Grenade was jarringly real, easy to read and follow and kept me on the edge of my seat. Alan Gratz is the king of cliff hangers at the end of chapters that make you want to keep reading, because of this I read it in less than two days. Grenade taught me so much about World war II and what these countries were involved through. It was really interesting and informative. Overall I absolutely loved Grenade and I definitely going to make all my friends and family read this book. 5 stars.October 22, 2018This wasnt as good as Gratzs other titles. It was hard to connect with either protagonist and a lot of the culture was over my head. Good story though, and Im sure very interesting for middle school children, but I definitely didnt feel as passionate about this one as I did with Refugee.October 30, 2018Grenade is a heart-racing historical fiction novel centered on the island of Okinawa during World War II. It is written from alternating perspectives: (1) Fourteen year old Hideki is from the island of Okinawa. He is part of the Blood and Iron Student Corps that is fighting with Japan. He was handed two grenades as he heads off across the island in hopes of stopping the Americans. (2) Ray is a fairly young (we know hes at least 18) American Marine who just landed at Okinawa. Hes heading across the island in hopes of conquering Japan. In one stunning moment, both stories collide and Hidekis and Rays worlds are forever changed.There were some horrors you couldnt fight and couldnt change. The real courage was just in enduring them.Yet another excellent historical fiction book by Alan Gratz that examines World War II and provides much-needed empathy on all sides. Get this one in ANY middle grade or young adult collection. I dont think it will stay on the shelves very long!For this and more #kidlit, #mglit, and #yalit book reviews, please visit my blog: The Miller Memo.Written October 25th just when finishing reading:Wow. This was really, really good. Full review to come very soon!May 13, 2025Gratz is my sans fonterate author. He is also one of the hottest middle school writers. So I am reading this to bond with my son. He writes historical fiction. This particular book is about the Battle of Okinawa. As a WW2 buff, I have to say Gratz finds a good way to mix the particular facts of this battle. It is mainly about two characters and goes back and forth. An American soldier who is struggling with the brutality of a young Okinawan who has been drafted to service. I have to admit the action moves quickly. Gratz has arrived at a winning formula. The horror of war is in full display. This may be heavy for kids younger than middle school. Then again, who knows. I probably was reading about war at that age too. While my son was reading this, I was reading Max Hastings so they go together well. I remember when I first heard about Gratzs Project 1065 it sounded like he might be taking liberties with history (I wasnt reading it, I dont know if my assumption is right). That said this seems fairly true and though theres plenty of awful happenings in this book, its probably better than a glorification of war. January 7, 2019February 7, 2023Wish they didn't kill off the best character halfway through.March 3, 2019Alan Gratz wrote on a variety of topics early in his career as a junior novelist, but wartime historical fiction is where his reputation was forged. Prisoner B-3087, Code of Honor, Projekt 1065, and Refugee all preceded Grenade, so that by the time this novel of World War II Japan arrived, a generation of young readers was eager to visit the past again with Alan Gratz. The story begins April 1, 1945 on Okinawa, a Japanese island the Allied armies must conquer before progressing to the mainland. Japan is the only Axis power still fighting, but fourteen-year-old Hideki Kaneshiro and the boys of Okinawa don't know theirs is a lost cause. They've left their families to train as soldiers of the Blood and Iron Student Corps, the last line of defense between the Imperial Japanese Army and American forces. A boy with a reputation for cowardice inherited from an ancestor centuries ago, Hideki is finally taking a stand, but the cost promises to be steep. Every boy in the Blood and Iron Student Corps is issued two grenades: one to wipe out as many American soldiers as possible, and the other to kill himself before being captured. No happy ending is anticipated for the Okinawans. For the Allies, it's time to press the advantage and end World War II, but storming Okinawa will be no less harrowing just because it may be the war's final offensive. Private Ray Majors, an American teenager, has a complicated relationship with the military. His father fought in World War I and survived, but never returned to normal. The slash scar on Ray's forearm testifies to that, as does the bitter quarrel that ensued when Ray told his father he was enlisting to fight in World War II. Now Ray and his fellow soldiers prepare to raid the Okinawa shore amid a bombardment of gunfire and grenades. When they do disembark and Operation Iceberg commences, the horror is worse than Ray could have imagined. Death is never more than a second away if a Japanese sniper gets you in his sights, and close friends are slain around Ray in rapid bursts of carnage. Big John, a veteran only a few years older than Ray, helps him cope with the shock, coaxing him to keep talking and not dwell on the graphic death in every direction. As they move deeper into Okinawa, Ray realizes there's no reliable way to evade being killed; he has to hope his luck holds out and no bullet or grenade is destined to terminate his existence. Hideki is stunned to hear that his mother and brother (named Isamu) were killed aboard a boat of Okinawan refugees en route to safety. With no way of discerning Okinawan civilians from Japanese military, the Americans shoot first and sort it out later, and now half of Hideki's family is dead. His father, untrained in combat, is no match for professional troops, and also succumbs to the Allied army. All Hideki has left is Kimiko, his older sister said to possess the power to communicate with the deceased, but Hideki doesn't know where she is. Kimiko was taken away to train as a nurse for the war, and Hideki determines to find his sister and evacuate her from Okinawa if he lives to do so. He still has his grenades, one to attack enemy soldiers and another to end his own life, if he fails to save Kimiko. Hideki and Ray are on a collision course, and Ray is having just as hard a time as Hideki in spite of his military training. Every Okinawan or American mangled by explosives or gunfire is a blood-mark on Ray's soul, a step down the path of madness. Numerous times he's come inches from grotesquely dying, but how long before the odds catch up with him? When Hideki and Ray finally meet, what will be the impact on these two teens who would rather be anywhere on earth than dispensing death in Okinawa? Ban This Book, a novel by Alan Gratz released the year before Grenade, is spectacular. The story crackles with intensity as Amy Anne Ollinger resists book-banning at her elementary school, so I was excited by what Alan Gratz might do in Grenade. How much more excruciating could the action be under wartime conditions? Curiously, Grenade isn't nearly as electric as Ban This Book. The action feels distant, with more telling than showing. Perhaps this is deliberate, to sanitize war for suitable reading by preteens, but surely at least the intensity level of Ban This Book could have been equaled. Grenade doesn't leave the indelible impression I expected, and the story feels about average, but it offers historical details I wasn't aware of, particularly about Okinawa. I wouldn't have nominated Grenade for any major awards, but it's a decent novel that reminds us how war degrades men into monsters, and that healing begins as soon as the last shot is fired. I'd like to read more of Alan Gratz's historical fiction.July 10, 2018Grateful to @scholasticinc for this free book!./5 for this moving novel by #AlanGratz. As with all of Gratzs historical novels, I was on the edge of my seat for the entire book, I was deeply connected to the characters and I learned about history! The Battle of Okinawa, one of the final battles of WWII before the atomic bomb dropped on Japan, is not anything I have ever studied in depth. It was heart-wrenching to learn how Okinawans were treated as pawns in a larger war. There is nothing pretty about war and Gratz portrays that fact from both the young American soldier perspective (Ray) and the even younger Okinawan civilian (Hideki). Gratz includes a 6 page authors note at the end that gives further context for the Battle of Okinawa, as well as mainland Japanese attitudes toward the Okinawans. Bottom line: like most things, its complicated. I cant wait for my Gratz-obsessed students to read this in the fall. Must-buy book, of course. Grades 4+..#bookstagram #book #reading #bibliophile #booklover #bookaholic #bookmeet #bookstagram #librarian #librarianofinstagram #librarianofollowlibrarians #librariansofinstagram #booklove #booktography #bookstagramfeature #bookish #bookaddict #bookworldgiams #bookmerd #loveareading #instabook #futureoodylibs #ISTEIbis #TLChat September 23, 2019Trigger warnings: war, death, death of a family member, racism, indoctrination, racial slurs, explosions, gun violence, blood. I read Alan Gratz's Refugee last year and it absolutely blew me away. I was hoping this one would be just as incredible. I didn't love it QUITE as much, but I was still hooked from start to finish. It's great to see a story set during WWII that deals with the Pacific theatre of war because overwhelmingly, novels set during WWII deal with the European theatre. I knew very little about the fight for Okinawa and the fact that the Okinawan population were caught between their Japanese colonisers and the American invaders, so this was an educational reading experience as much as anything else. I did kiiiiind of feel like Ray's perspective wasn't necessary in the story, but I guess it gave the opportunity to present both sides of things?? On the whole, this was an incredibly fast paced read and I'm very glad I picked it up. 2019 audience-young-adult bipoc-narrator January 21, 2019I had high expectations for this book after having thoroughly enjoyed Alan Gratz's "Refugee." This book did not disappoint; however, because the book is about an incredibly violent battle of WWII, there were graphic scenes that served to help readers to understand the terror that occurred on the tiny island of Okinawa. Readers first meet Hideki at his school as his island is being bombed at 2am by American troops. Hideki and his Okinawan classmates are being graduated and sent to war, as the inevitable American invasion is impending. Young Hideki and his classmates are given 2 grenades to use in the battle: one for Americans and one for taking their own lives. At this point, readers will bristle, wondering with the Japanese army is asking young people to take their lives, but as the book progresses, like Hideki's own knowledge of what's happening around him, readers could understand that the Japanese army never intended to win Okinawa. They planned on slowing down the Americans. Readers see that all of these young people were not given a choice. They were trained into monsters because of their fear, and as a result, millions of young people lost their lives during WWII. It causes one to ponder who makes the decision to go to war and who makes the sacrifice...it's certainly not the same people.This was a powerful story about a battle I knew little about. The empathy one feels for Hideki and his fellow Okinawans goes beyond their civilian sacrifice and speaks to Japan's takeover of the island hundreds of years ago. This is a must-read for WWII history buffs, historical fiction fans, war story lovers, and books about soldiers and grisly battles. It will not disappoint. December 3, 2021There were some horrors you couldn't fight and couldn't change. The real courage was just in enduring them. Fear isn't a weakness. Anyone who's never been afraid is a fool. These two quotes best represent the themes of bravery and resilience. The two main characters endure one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific during World War 2, neither one of them a true adult yet. Alan Gratz does a very good job emphasizing throughout the book that wars are fought by boys, not men. Also, Gratzs use of imagery truly paints the picture of this story perfectly; it feels as though I am watching a war movie instead of reading a book. Another thing that is great is that Gratz adds historically accurate representations of how Japanese youth are taught to fight for their country during this time period. I love the intertwining stories of Hideki and Ray because you're constantly wanting to know more about both characters which kept me interested until the very last page. Lastly, the ending of this book is so satisfying, definitely one of the best endings out of all the books I have read.March 5, 2019Grenade, by Alan Gratz is an amazing book! I would recommend this book to everyone who likes Alan Gratz's other books and who likes war books. This book is sad, anticipating and energizing! It makes you think, whats going to happen next? It's about a boy who is in the heart of the WW2 war with Japan and America fighting for justice and revenge. His mission is to get out safely, find his sister and family and survive. My favorite part is when he meets his sister again because it's sad and happy at the same time! I finished this book a day ago and I don't have any regrets on this book!October 31, 2022Grenade is a moderately long, action-packed, historical fiction book written by the same author as Allies, Refugee, Code of Honor, and Ground Zero, Alan Gratz. Like most of Alan Gratzs books, this is not a book youll want to put down. The book is about how Okinawa is at war with America during WWII, and how America plans elaborate ways to invade Okinawa and advance the line further back. While this is happening, Okinawa makes plans of their own to rebut against whatever the Americans have planned. The whole book switches between the characters, Hideki and Ray, with the perspectives from both. They are fighting the same war, just for different sides. This book starts in Okinawa with the character Hideki Kaneshiro. He is a 14 year old boy from Okinawa. Hideki strongly believes that his ancestors spirit lives in him. He believes that he is a coward, because one of his ancestors was said to be a coward, and that ancestors spirit haunts Hideki. Ray is the second character that is introduced in the book. He is an 18 year old kid from Nebraska. Ray is a young Marine from America and doesnt know what to expect from the war. He is very nervous at this time of the book. He left home to get away from his father, who came back from WWI an angry, raging man.I found Grenade to be very enjoyable. It was a shorter book but still had lots of action. This is a good depiction of WWII. I can tell Alan Gratz studied the subject very well. Grenade was a mix of descriptions, realistic, serious, slightly humorous, sad, and thrilling to say the least. I liked the character development, and how you really get to know the characters. I also like the way that these people in the book are written as people, not just characters. The only thing I would say that I disliked about the book is that some parts fit together too well. Meaning that it felt like it was fiction, not real life. Even though this is a fiction book, I would like for it to have some more realism. If you are someone who likes history books, action books, war books or any kind of thriller book youll love this book. You would especially love this book if you have read and enjoyed any other of Alan Gratzs books. The way Alan Gratz makes you feel like you are on the battlefield with the characters is awesome.January 25, 2019This was one of my favorite books I have read in a long time. The plot was action packed from start to end. Though predictable, the ending is quite fitting. I look forward to reading more books from this author. March 13, 2019I'd give this one a 3.5. It took me quite a long time to get into it, but I continue to be impressed with Alan Gratz's willingness to tackle topics and parts of history that others have not. Perhaps part of the problem for me was that I didn't feel as though I knew the two protagonists very well before they were thrust into life-threatening situations. Since the narrative moves back and forth between the two, Hideki Kaneshiro, a young Okinawan boy who has been conscripted into the Imperial Japanese Army along with his classmates, and Ray Majors, a young American Marine who has just landed on the island near the end of the war (WWII), readers can quickly see that both youngsters are afraid and have quite a lot in common. Hideki and his classmates have been given two grenades, one to kill their enemies, and one to kill themselves. Hideki is desperate to find his sister, a nursing student, while Ray is just hoping to survive this conflict. Ray has come to the war with baggage from his home life and his relationship with his father, but he hasn't lost his human side yet. He begins collecting family photographs from the dead he encounters as a sort of sign of respect for them. But he and Hideki meet at the end of the first half of the book, and he dies. What works well here is how Hideki is changed by this brief encounter, feeling as though Ray's ghost is following him as he continues on. I was also shocked by how the Okinawans were basically sacrificed by the Japanese military on the island, who were using them as shields as well as some of the propaganda that had been spread as to how the American forces could be expected to treat them. I ended up liking the book and learning things that I had not known about these final days of the war, but I still felt as though I never really knew Hideki or Ray and lacked some historical context. character-building community compassion December 7, 2018A good novel about WWII on Okinawa Japan. A young man who is a member of a youth military corps is trying to survive with friends and family a battle for Okinawa between the Americans and Japan. The Japanese soldiers are under severe stress and willing to kill the residents at the drop of a hat. They have warned them the Americans are devils who will poison them with tainted food and water if they accept help. The boy does accept help from the Americans but has trouble too. Nothing is clear and safety is tenuous. The only thing he has to protect himself and his family is a grenade that he was given in school. But should he use it? And whom should he use it on? A pretty good book but I was disappointed that it was not as good as Refugee, the author's last novel which won several awards. adventure-books books-for-work boys Cindy Mitchell *Kiss the Book*September 6, 2018Grenade by Alan Gratz, 288 pages. Scholastic, October 2018. $17.Language: PG (8 swears, 0 f); Mature Content: G; Violence: PG-13 (many deaths)BUYING ADVISORY: MS, HS - ESSENTIALAUDIENCE APPEAL: HIGHHideki and his family live a poor but loving life on Okinawa in 1945. The Japanese army has taken control, making life more difficult, but Hideki's mother and little brother were evacuated. Ray is a young American eager to help in the fight against Hitler, but instead finds himself on a small Japanese island. Hideki and the other boys in his school class are handed two grenades; they are ordered to use one to kill and American and then the second to kill their self. He is desperate to flee south to find his sister and along the way he keeps stumbling into soldiers both American and Japanese. Gratz has the power to expose a narrative, extract the important and poignant parts of the story, and show the world a piece of history in a way that cuts into your heart. His historical fiction books are masterpieces of details and emotion.Cindy, Middle School Librarian high-school middle-schoolOctober 14, 2018Alan Gratz, writer of phenomenal historical fiction, has done it again with Grenade. And like Refugee, this one is appropriate for middle grade students as well as the YA crowd. Told from the perspective of a fresh-faced Marine and a 14 year old Okinawan conscripted to serve in the Imperial Japanese Army, readers gain insight into the fears and triumphs of both young men as well as learn much about the invasion of Okinawa by both the Americans and the Japanese. Ray and Hideki demonstrate bravery in the face of great danger and struggle to hold onto their compassionate side as they fight for their countries. Highly recommended for grades 5 and up. Librarians, teachers, and parents need not worry about graphic descriptions of war atrocities as Gratz keeps these fairly low key. And while the term Jap is used throughout the book, Gratz includes a disclaimer at the beginning and the end stating its use was clearly to give authenticity to the time period and the term should not be used in everyday speech.historical-fiction middle-grades yaDecember 16, 2018Being brave doesn't mean not being scared. It means overcoming your fear to do what you have to do. Alan Gratz, GrenadeAlan Gratz's Grenade is an amazing book. It's about a young Okinawan boy named Hideki who is drafted to the Blood and Iron Student Corps and is sent on the battle field with only two grenades. Another young adult who is in the book is Ray who is a American marine. They both have to survive the battle field with ambushes, traps, and more. My favorite part is where Hideki brings peace to his families curse of fear. I would totally recommend this book to any one that I know. I absolutely love this book for it's heart wrenching and warming parts.September 8, 2018The mark of truly great historical fiction lies in being able to educate readers about massively important events from human history while creating characters you feel so deeply for that your heart races for them and the tears flow. As usual, Alan Gratz does not disappoint! October 8, 2018By alternating between the voice of Ray, a young American Marine, and Hideki, a 14 year old Okinawan school boy, Gratz tells both sides of a brutal WW II story. With paradoxically lyrical language, Alan Gratz presents the senseless violence and horror of war with stark and strenghtforward candor.historical-fiction middle-readers my-recommendations November 4, 2018I'm a little unhappy with Mr. Gratz because I kept waiting for something to happen (which I won't divulge) and it didn't. What a sad but interesting portrayal of the Battle of Okinawa. October 15, 2018gooooooo