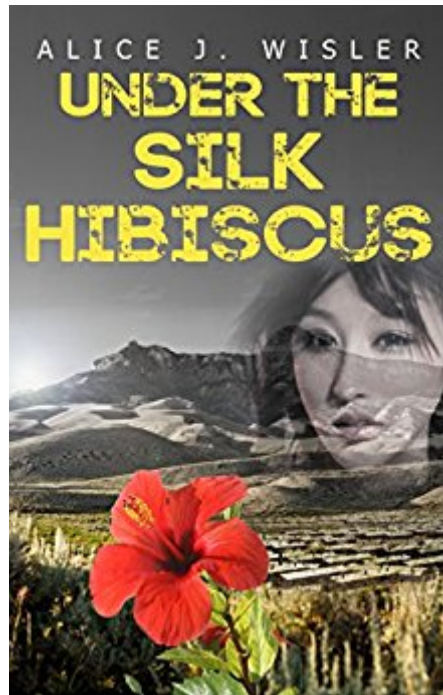




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Under The Silk Hibiscus



Synopsis

"At a time when history might be repeating itself, this story is important." ~ review
During World War Two, fifteen-year-old Nathan and his family are sent to Heart Mountain, an internment camp in Wyoming for Japanese-Americans. Nathan's one desire, along with hoping that the beautiful singer Lucy will notice him, is to protect the family's gold pocket watch, a family heirloom brought over from Japan. His attempts are noble, but the watch is stolen. Nathan's actions to get the watch returned cause more turmoil for his family. Struggling to make sense of his life in "the land of freedom," Nathan discovers truths about his family, God, forgiveness, and the girl he loves.
General Content (G) (I): Contains little or no; sexual dialogue or situations, violence, or strong language. May also contain some content of an inspirational/religious nature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wondrous and warm coming of age story set during an America out of control. Told in a style reminiscent of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, Wisler's latest novel is ultimately about trust,

betrayal, and forgiveness. Teenaged Nathan Mori is the one the family counts on after the American-Japanese family is uprooted from their comfortable life in San Jose, California. Papa is removed to another refugee camp, Mama dies after giving birth, Aunt Kozuko does the best she can, younger brother Tom struggles with the after-effects of polio, and older brother Ken works out his frustration and anger through fights and girls and taboo camp items. With few other household goods to their name besides an heirloom Nathan is charged to protect, its loss forces Nathan to face his failure, to look at how prejudicial people of European descent have become and to recognize the loss of innocence. What was the purpose of the internment camps, ultimately? To protect people of Japanese descent, or to keep potential US enemies contained? Once the war is over and the little family returns to San Jose, Nathan asks why weren't others, like those of fascist Italian descent not subjected to the same treatment? Suspicion changes people's nature, but Nathan must still be responsible for his family. With the help of the neighborhood church and a lot of faith, some truths learned, and an example of forgiveness, the Mori family battles its way back to dignity and self-sufficiency. I was especially interested in this book because I had visited the Heart Mountain site when only a small simple monument had been erected. It gave me chills to be there; the only other place I feel such a displacement is at Little Bighorn. Told in first person from Nathan's viewpoint, readers grow up along with him, face his fear, confusion, resentment, and resilience; and come to grips with his belief in himself and his heritage along the journey to adulthood, love, and forgiveness. Those who enjoy recent American history and stories of multi-generational family heritage and strength will enjoy this story.

I am not a big fan of historical fiction, but was drawn to "Under the Silk Hibiscus" by Alice Wisler. I never knew much about the Japanese-Americans who were interred during World War II. Wisler does an outstanding job of portraying how those who were kept in camps during this time must have felt and the trials they faced while locked up. Written through the eyes of a teenage boy, the novel paints, what I believe, is a very accurate portrait of what those families faced during this time in history. Although it is filled with sometimes depressing descriptions, the book leaves the reader with a sense of hope. I wanted to keep turning the pages to see how the main character's life turned out after being released from the camp with the rest of his family. I highly recommend this book.

I had read Alice J. Wisler's Rain Song for book club. I loved Under the Silk as much as that one. I just finished Under the Silk Hibiscus (Historical Fiction) and gave it 5 stars. The book is about a Japanese-American family and their struggle to endure through WW II and its aftermath. During the

war Nathan becomes the "man of the family" at the tender age of 15. The family is sent to an internment camp in Wyoming. His father is imprisoned, his mother dies in childbirth, and his older brother enlists in the Army. As the war draws to a close the girl he loves goes off to New York to pursue a singing career. The family returns to San Jose, California with little more than the clothes on their back. Gradually, however, with the help of Nathan's aunt, neighbors and the church, Nathan succeeds in keeping the family together while starting his own business. This book is about loss, but it is also about overcoming adversity and holding on to hope. When the family heirloom (a watch given to Nathan's grandfather for saving a young woman from drowning) is stolen, and Nathan steals it back, he is jailed in the camp prison. This incident tests his faith. Eventually, however, he comes to understand that one's heritage is about more than heirlooms.

I have read several novels that take place during World War II. So many I am a little tired of that genre, but Alice is my favorite author and she always knows how to bring a fresh approach to genres that I feel have run their course. *Under the Silk Hibiscus* was simply fascinating. I knew very little of the Japanese internment camps that existed in this country during World War II and I loved the depth of research that was done to bring the reader into this sad part of our history. I also found that I cared very much for Nathan and his family and I loved that Alice took us from the internment camp into Nathan's new life. She did a great job of bringing the story of Nathan's family full circle and in a most pleasing way. I loved this story because it was a story that needed to be told and Alice Wisler is just the author to tell it. I highly recommend this one.

This story is told in first person and it took me most of the first chapter to realize that the main character was not only a young person, but a male young person. I had to go back and re-read several times as I figured out where and who each person was in the story. I enjoyed the perspective of an inmate of one of the internment camps, but felt somehow something was lacking in the details. It felt good, but maybe better suited for YA reading, as it was from the perspective of a young man. I also felt like the author did not connect with how young men think totally as well. But over all, it was a good book on a topic that is not written about much.

A coming-of-age story that depicts both the hardships and the hopes of a Japanese young man (15 at the beginning) who has to spend several years in a Japanese-American war camp during World War 2. The poignant story will engross you from the very beginning. It reached out and grabbed my heart, and it's rare that I find an author with the ability to craft that kind of story. I look

forward to reading more from her.

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