STARRED REVIEW

Dogs Don't Cry
John F. Andrews
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Dog's Don't Cry, part of John F. Andrews' Novels of the Great War series, is an inventively told historical novel set in WWI France.

The story follows teen siblings Genevieve and Marcel and their dog Abby as they evacuate their village during the German advance, trying to reach Paris and a barely-known cousin. Complicating matters is Genevieve's pneumonia, making her travelling potentially fatal.

With alternating chapters told from the perspectives of Genevieve, Marcel, and Abby, the novel delves into these characters. Fifteen-year-old Marcel is angry: at Genevieve, whose illness makes her the center of attention, and at the Germans for killing his father, a member of the elite military Chasseurs. Trained by his father, he berates himself for feeling afraid during tense situations, although he handles himself well.

Marcel calls 13-year-old Genevieve "cootie," which is hurtful. "Cootie. Cootie. Cootie," she thinks. "Cootie's are disgusting. Lice. Insects that crawl on your skin, in your hair…That's what cooties are. That's what Marcel thinks of me." Readers will sympathize with her desperate struggle to live.

Abby's viewpoint is much lighter. She calls the kitchen "the room of heavenly smells" and constantly looks for balls to play with. Yet she can be serious. She helps comfort Marcel and Genevieve during their perilous journey and as she previously lived with their cousin Henri, tries to guide them to his home when they reach Paris. On the trip, she picks up various stray dogs, who follow along.

The novel is filled with action and suspense, from airplanes shooting at civilians to deserting French soldiers attempting to loot abandoned towns. It skillfully captures the feel of the time, with details of cars, medical treatments, and war atrocities, creating a powerful sense of life then, especially for civilians. Abby's humor balances the story's pathos with playfulness, and character development, especially Marcel's, is authentic and moving.

With rich characters and a unique perspective that explores lesser-known aspects of WWI, *Dogs Don't Cry* is a powerful, entertaining read.

Also available in hardcover and ebook.