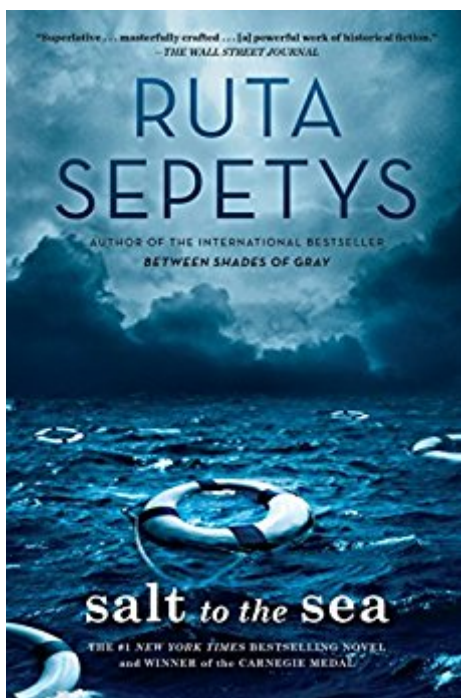


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# Salt To The Sea



## Synopsis

New York Times Bestseller and winner of the Carnegie Medal! "Masterfully crafted" — The Wall Street Journal For readers of *Between Shades of Gray* and *All the Light We Cannot See*, Ruta Sepetys returns to WWII in this epic novel that shines a light on one of the war's most devastating yet unknown tragedies. World War II is drawing to a close in East Prussia and thousands of refugees are on a desperate trek toward freedom, many with something to hide. Among them are Joana, Emilia, and Florian, whose paths converge en route to the ship that promises salvation, the *Wilhelm Gustloff*. Forced by circumstance to unite, the three find their strength, courage, and trust in each other tested with each step closer to safety. Just when it seems freedom is within their grasp, tragedy strikes. Not a country, nor culture, nor status matter as all ten thousand people—adults and children alike—aboard must fight for the same thing: survival. Told in alternating points of view and perfect for fans of Anthony Doerr's Pulitzer Prize-winning *All the Light We Cannot See*, Erik Larson's *Dead Wake*, and Elizabeth Wein's Printz Honor Book *Code Name Verity*, this masterful work of historical fiction is inspired by the real-life tragedy that was the sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff*—the greatest maritime disaster in history. As she did in *Between Shades of Gray*, Ruta Sepetys unearths a shockingly little-known casualty of a gruesome war, and proves that humanity and love can prevail, even in the darkest of hours.

Praise for *Salt to the Sea*: Featured on NPR's Morning Edition

"Superlative...masterfully crafted...[a] powerful work of historical fiction." — The Wall Street Journal

"[Sepetys is] a master of YA fiction—she once again anchors a panoramic view of epic tragedy in perspectives that feel deeply textured and immediate." — Entertainment Weekly

"Riveting...powerful...haunting." — The Washington Post

"Compelling for both adult and teenage readers." — New York Times Book Review

"Intimate, extraordinary, artfully crafted...brilliant." — Shelf Awareness

"Historical fiction at its very, very best." — The Globe and Mail

"[H]aunting, heartbreaking, hopeful and altogether gorgeous...one of the best young-adult novels to appear in a very long time." — Salt Lake Tribune

"This haunting gem of a novel begs to be remembered." — Booklist

"Artfully told and sensitively crafted...will leave readers weeping." — School Library Journal

A PW and SLJ 2016 Book of the Year

Praise for *Between Shades of Gray*: A New York Times Notable Book

A Wall Street Journal Best Children's Book

A PW, SLJ, Booklist, and Kirkus Best Book

ã â Ãçâ,,çÂ| ã â iTunes 2011 Rewind Best Teen Novel ã â Ãçâ,,çÂ| ã â A Carnegie Medal andã â William C. Morris Finalist ã â Ãçâ,,çÂ| ã â Aã â New York Timesã â and Internationalã â Bestseller ã â Ãçâ,,çÂ| ã â "Few books are beautifully written, fewer still are important; this novel is both."ãçâ -â •The Washington Post ã â Ãçâ,,çÂ| ã â "[A]n important book that deserves the widest possible readership."ãçâ -â •Booklist

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

IãfÂçÃ â -ã â,,çve studied World War II for years. IãfÂçÃ â -ã â,,çve read countless books, both nonfiction and fiction, and watched a lot of documentaries. My undergrad degree is even in history. But somehow, before SALT TO THE SEA, IãfÂçÃ â -ã â,,çd only heard about the Wilhelm Gustloff once. One mention of such an immense tragedy. IãfÂçÃ â -ã â,,çm thankful to Ruta Sepetys for writing SALT TO THE SEA. I always enjoy historical fiction that introduces me to something I didnãfÂçÃ â -ã â,,çt know before, which she certainly does. But more than that, the author has such a deft, confident hand that I could sense the amount of research she did and the respect she has for the survivors and victims of the Wilhelm Gustloff. Sepetys doesnãfÂçÃ â -ã â,,çt overwhelm you with her knowledge, but inserts it subtly, weaving it into the

backstories, thoughts, and actions of the characters. *SALT TO THE SEA* is told through the eyes of four characters. Joana is Lithuanian, a nurse who always wants to help people in need, even if helping them might place herself in danger. Florian is Prussian, a boy with a pack of secrets. Emilia is Polish, a girl on the run from unspeakable horrors. Alfred is German, a member of the Kriegsmarine, and loyal to Hitler's every thought. By using characters of different nationalities and loyalties, the author is able to show the many sides of Operation Hannibal, when Germany evacuated soldiers and citizens ahead of the Red Army. The chapters in the book are short, often 2-3 pages before hopping to another character. For the first few chapters, this bugged me a bit, as I couldn't get to know anyone with such short chapters. Then I got used to it and liked the short chapters, because the sparseness was more impactful than overloading me with details would have been. *SALT TO THE SEA* is one of those rare books that I'll be thinking about for a while.

Ruta Sepetys is one of the finest writers, young adult or otherwise, writing today. Her two previous novels, *Between Shades of Gray* and *Out of the Easy*, held me enthralled through every page. Now comes *Salt to the Sea*, and it is everything and more that the others are. But a word to the wise up front...have tissues close by. There are four points of view telling the story of *Salt to the Sea*, and each is distinctive, secretive, and profound. We have Emilia, a young Polish girl of fifteen who has faced untold horrors of World War II, and is saved early on by the "knight", Florian. Florian has a major secret of his own; he is carrying something very valuable and is trying to get away to safety while simultaneously exacting revenge on those with whom he worked. Distracting Florian, however, is the young nurse, Joana, a Lithuanian who is leading a rag tag group to the safety of a ship leaving Germany now that Hitler has deemed it all right in the final months of the war. Finally, there is Alfred, a young sailor in the German navy who "writes" letters in his head to his love, Hannelore, while avoiding work and planning a dazzling future. Though these are the voices we hear, there are so many others involved and each one will wrap themselves around your heart, in particular the Shoe Poet and the Wandering Boy who are assisted in getting on the liner *Wilhelm Gustloff* along with the others. They are stunning examples of man's inhumanity to man and yet the power of hope and the determination to survive. Sepetys gives them lives that represent so many more who experienced as much trauma or even worse. So much happens that you will find yourself wanting to totally inhale this story, but make yourself slow down and feel the ache of hunger, the biting cold, the long walks, the deceptions and the triumphs. Sepetys has done her research meticulously and it

shows in every word. I cannot rate this one highly enough and I urge you to read it and remember it.

This novel highlighted a seldom-mentioned event during World War II, where against the advice of the military commander, Lieutenant Commander Wilhelm Zahn (a submariner who argued for a course in shallow waters close to shore and without lights), the ship's captain Friedrich Petersen decided to head for deep water which was known to have been cleared of mines. When he was informed by a mysterious radio message of an oncoming German minesweeper convoy, he decided to activate his ship's red and green navigation lights so as to avoid a collision in the dark, making the ship easy to spot in the night by the Russians. As the ship was a former war vessel and had been fitted with anti-aircraft guns, the Germans, in obedience to the rules of war, did not mark her as a hospital ship, no notification of her operating in a hospital capacity had been given and, as she was transporting military personnel, she did not have any protection as a hospital ship under international accords. In all, it is estimated that between 4,000 and 9,400 lives were lost while accounting for refugee travel routes and the civilian crush onto the ship before it departed port. However, due to the anti-German sentiment generated by the war, the greatest single loss of civilian life in the sinking of a vessel was discussed only briefly in Allied newspapers and almost completely forgotten. First featured on NPR's Morning Edition, this fictional novel serves as window to a time that highlighted humanity's race to escape from itself. Ruta Sepetys alternates between different perspectives in a way that makes the story visceral - you can feel the anxiety and terror of refugees as they stream towards a harbor, towards a ship that will most definitely not be able to carry all of them to safety - will they be able to board? Or will they be denied passage, cursed to wait for the advancing troops and a more certain fate?

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