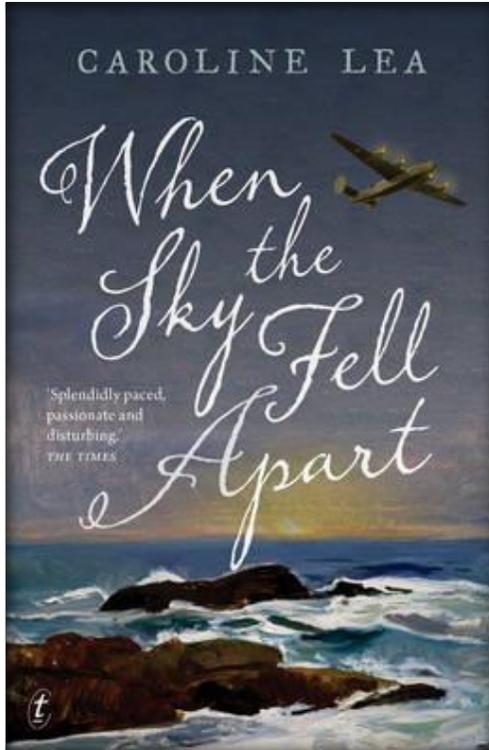


LoveReading Reader reviews of **When The Sky Fell Apart** By Caroline Lea

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



Sarah Musk

One of the best books I have read about life under an occupying army. The Channel Islands were the closest we came to being occupied - what a lucky escape we had!

This is a very well written book. If this is Caroline Lea's first novel then I will certainly be reading her next books.

The story of the German occupation of the Channel Islands is so realistic - the atmosphere of fear and menace is palpable. The danger is not just from the occupiers but from fellow islanders - people who you have known all your life are not to be trusted. The book shows what war does to people - loyalties and people's ethics are

called into question and everything that you were sure of in your life is turned on its head.

An unlikely group of people form a close bond. They are all slight outsiders set apart by illness, injury or just living their lives a bit differently. The young girl, Claudine, comes from a family abandoned by their father. She has to cope with a mother who collaborates in order to feed her family which has terrible consequences. People's bravery and strength of character are being tested all the time - the poor English doctor is in an impossible situation - unable to explain the truth of why he does what he does, unable to fight back.

As a book about what life is like under an occupation this is one of the best I have read. This was the closest the Germans came to occupying Britain - this book confirms what a lucky escape we had.

Elaine Lowe

The hardship and suffering endured by war, equally matched by acts of kindness, friendship and love.

'When the Sky Fell Apart' is beautifully written, it is the story of how the German occupation on the island of Jersey changed ordinary people's lives forever. It is about loyalty and betrayal, suspicion and gossip among people who were once friends, neighbours and even family.

It tells how different perspectives of love are tested by the brutality of war and how far a person will go to preserve or protect that love.

Hauntingly descriptive and thought provoking. I enjoyed reading this book.

Cheryl Kinney

An absorbing Read. I really enjoyed this book.

Set in World War 2 on the island of Jersey. I haven't much about this topic. This will soon change, found the topic to be fascinating.

The book begins with an horrific incident, that sets the scene for an atmospheric read. It really grabs you from the first page. The characters are very well written, I felt like I was in the story with them. It must have been so difficult to live in this situation, not being able to trust people you have known all your life.

There were many emotional parts to this book, with some parts hard to read but they are written well. The characters really make this book they are such a varied bunch who have their own qualities.

I would recommend this book to anyone such an amazing read.

You can follow Cheryl on Twitter: @cheryl_bookworm

Jane Pepler

A compelling story about Jersey under occupation by Germany in the Second World War.

This is a fascinating book about Jersey being occupied by the Germans in the Second World War. It is the story of the relationships of four main characters - Claudine, Edith, Maurice and the English doctor Tim Carter.

The book opens with a description of Claudine's observation of the local butcher

– *Clement Hacquoil - suffering terrible burns after the Germans bomb Jersey before occupying the island with twelve thousand soldiers.*

Claudine is a young girl who is struggling to look after her depressed mother and younger brother after her father has left the island to enlist. She makes friends with Gregor, a German soldier, whom she meets on the local beach.

Edith is the island's herbalist who has previously been ostracised by the community but comes into her own once the Germans occupy the island.

Dr Carter is the English doctor who is struggling to come to terms with his past and his identity.

Maurice is a local fisherman with an invalid wife to think of.

Together, these four characters tell the story of Jersey under occupation.

The book is full of rich description of the island of Jersey and the narrative is compelling. The plot is compelling and the book is difficult to put down at times – the true sign of a good read.

This is the first book by Jersey born Caroline Lea, and hopefully there will be many more to follow.

Edel Waugh

The story is set on the Channel Island of Jersey in 1940 after the German Army invade it.

*The island quickly becomes divided, with neighbour ratting out neighbour to gain favour from the German soldiers in the hope to gain little extras from them. Danger and fear are constant companions as people try and go about their lives while following the new rules implemented by their grim new residents on the island. My favourite character was Edith, she was a remarkable character who was full of gumption, very wise, plenty of sarcastic wit when it was called for and liked by almost all, she was also an herbalist who was very much needed at this time of unease. Seeing everyone's struggle with this new way of life was interesting, everyone coped with it differently and Edith seemed to be at the centre of them all. **This is a thought provoking book, trying to imagine how people actually did cope when something like that happened made me feel slightly sick but the resilience these characters showed was inspiring.***

I recommend this to all fans of war time books. These characters are wonderful!

Linde Merrick

What an absorbing and fascinating read! Caroline Lea's novel about the arrival of the invading German troops on the rustic Channel Island of Jersey and the effect of their subsequent occupation on some of its inhabitants is finely crafted.

I found the main characters very believable and the motivations for their actions occasionally heart-breaking. Caroline's writing produced an insightful picture of life for the islanders in wartime and the "suffocating weight of occupation", without dwelling too much on the horrific. The developing friendships between the child Claudine, the herbalist Edith, the fisherman Maurice and the English doctor Tim are skillfully portrayed, with each character have a distinctive voice for their parts of the story. The plot has a closely woven texture which held my attention all the way through and the final scenes are spellbinding, bringing the action to a satisfactory climax

This debut novel is an atmospheric evocation of both the ties of people to their land and to the way in which time and pain works on their characters to turn them into different people.

Judith Waring

I loved this novel, so raw and totally captivating right from the first sentence - *I questioned what had happened? What was going on? Had this man been deliberately set on fire, or - ? And then you realise the German bombs have fallen already and this man had unfortunately been caught up in it all and so the reader is thrust immediately into the thick of the story and without any embellishment at all the horrors of WW2 in Jersey rapidly unfold.*

I loved how the individual characters are introduced into the novel all with their own battles to face and then how those lives are gradually woven together in an exceptional friendship and how they impact on, and support, each other in the face of the German invasion.

Maurice's unending love for his sick wife was emotional and well written; Carter's lack of self-esteem in the face of his father's wrath and then in the face of the Commandant's tyranny was moving and terrifying and Claudine's treatment at the hands of the German soldiers was so wrenching.

I have read other novels also set in Jersey during WW2 but they were 'romantic' stories. Caroline Lea's book deals you a heavier and more realistic hand of the realities of war with its brutality and rationing; it never shies away from laying

*bare what the Jerrais people had to deal with and overall she has created a **totally gripping novel which is a complete page turner.***

Doreen McKeown

This is a grim story, but I found it completely compelling. It is set on the island of Jersey, during WW2 when that island was under German occupation. It follows the lives of a group of islanders, all striving to survive the brutality of the Germans and the desperate conditions imposed on them by the occupation.

*We meet Maurice, a young man trying to care for his terminally ill wife; Claudine, a naive 12 year old, who suffers abuse at the hands of the enemy; Edith, the island herbalist and Dr. Carter, the only doctor left on the island, who is struggling to look after the population against tremendous odds, whilst battling his own demons. Their lives are thrown together and they eventually resort to desperate measures to seek freedom. Although this is a work of fiction which by the author's own admission contains some 'poetic licence', it does paint a very real picture of what life was like for the Channel Islanders during that terrible period in their history. **I found it an excellent read and a truly memorable one.***

Melanie Chadwick

*The German occupation of Jersey through the experiences of a range of islanders. **I really cared what happened to these characters, they were very well drawn and I loved the interweaving of their stories.***

Claudine is ten and the book opens as she is trying to shield her kid brother from seeing the local butcher burning from one of the German bombs that herald the start of the German occupation of Jersey. So, a very dramatic start leads on to the story of the butcher's recovery.

The English doctor tries to do his best for his patients, but is haunted by feelings of cowardice both in the past in the personal life he has run away from, and with his own 'collaboration' with the commandant, even though this is under duress.

Claudine is lonely as her mother has not been the same since her father left to join the fighting and she makes friends with a German soldier, Gregor, who is very kind to her. She also has traumatic encounters with another soldier which makes her determined to leave the island.

Edith is the fearless woman who is great with herbal medicines and tries to look after everyone. Maurice's wife has a debilitating terminal disease and he is desperately trying to save her from a cruel fate under the Nazis. The fates of all these people become linked and the book's finale is their plan to escape Jersey and head for England.

Les Wood

A book with a loose historical/romantic (in its most loose sense) slant??

This one is difficult to review for me as it's simply not my type of book.

*However, being positive, it is **well written and highly descriptive** although, not knowing Jersey, I cannot comment on the validity of the geography although am aware of their underground hospital used in the war (the writer does confirm that the geography 'moved' at times to suit the story).*

To me there are a lot of unanswered questions as a result of characters not being fleshed out enough; some seem to have 'walk on parts' as one reads. Others fail to fulfil their promise; not becoming as sufficiently involved, menacing or threatening as they could have been. Timescales confuse as they jump about and make the whole work unsatisfying. Retribution and any dénouement is left for the reader to determine themselves. Sorry but it's not one for me.

Karen McIntosh

***I enjoyed this historical tale of life in the Channel Islands during the Nazi Occupation.** As a lover of history I appreciated how Caroline Lea managed to make the story relevant and more real. I tells of a strong people finding a way to keep surviving against the odds.*

Lisa Redmond

Caroline Lea's beautiful debut is set on the island of Jersey during the brutal period of Nazi occupation. A group of people are brought together by circumstances during this time of hunger, fear and violence. There is ten year old Claudine, Edith the so called witch, Fisherman Maurice, English doctor Carter and Gregor a German soldier. As each story is revealed, overlaps and comes together the characters come to rely on each other and to gain strength from their friendship, strength enough to stand up to the terrifying regime they

*live under. So little is written about the Channel Islands during the war and this book though peopled by fictional characters is a stark reminder of the harsh realities that Channel Islanders endured during the Second World War. **At times heart breaking at times uplifting this is a beautifully written book with vivid characters and a tense and nerve wracking atmosphere. The descriptions are poetic and the plotting superb. This is a perfect choice for book clubs everywhere.***

Suzanne Millar

Great read...couldn't put it down.

Brilliant debut novel by Caroline Lea.

Sensitively written with great prose and descriptions.

A fascinating look into a little know chapter of World War 2 history. Set in Jersey during Nazi occupation in the 1940s. Loved the characters.

Can't wait for Caroline's next novel.

5 star read

Keith Currie

This is an excellent novel which focuses on the human cost of war in an unfamiliar setting. It grips from the beginning and explores the effects of war on a fascinating range of sympathetic characters.

Anyone visiting Jersey today will immediately notice the ruins of the German fortifications, both above and below ground. Tourists make a point of visiting many of these and there are many guide books describing the occupation during the Second World War. What is missing however are the human stories, the cost of being a citizen of the only part of the British Isles to be occupied by the Germans during the war. What is clear right from the start of this wonderful novel is the feeling of abandonment experienced by the people of Jersey following British armed withdrawal (given the anodyne label of demilitarisation). This did not stop German bombings and subsequent brutality and the rule of fear, all carefully explored in their various facets in the novel.

This is an excellent book which I thoroughly enjoyed. I have family connections with the island of Jersey and have long been interested in the German occupation. However, this book gave me insights into matters I had not thought about. The reader comes to care deeply about the central characters. The novel

is a reminder of the various levels of suffering caused by war and a testament to the resilience of the human spirit.

Ruth Paterson

This novel is a moving and highly descriptive portrait of life for a few people living on Jersey at the time of the German Occupation.

This novel is a moving and highly descriptive portrait of life for a few people living on Jersey at the time of the German Occupation. Life is seen from the point of view of a ten year old girl, Claudine, an English Doctor, Carter, a fisherman, Maurice, and the Island's herbalist, Edith. They are unlikely comrades but through varying circumstances they become friends and allies.

The book begins with a stark description through the eyes and in particular the nose of Claudine, as a man literally burns on the beach. The description and "action" move quite swiftly from person to person, so it took me a while to get into the story and get a real feel for the characters. However, once I got through the first few chapters I was hooked.

'When The Sky Fell Apart' is full of emotive topics. Prior to reading I knew little about the occupation of Jersey. I find myself intrigued to learn more about the traditions and lifestyles referred to that had to undergo so many changes in this period.

You can follow Ruth on Twitter: @ruth_pat

Phylippa Smithson

Undemanding yet engaging story of life under German occupation in WW2 Jersey.

The story follows the lives of various characters that comprise a community of villagers united in the impact of having to submit to the Germans having been abandoned by the English during WW2.

This is an interesting observation of the fear, deceit, nervousness and the devastating brutality of living under enemy occupation.

What was so powerful was the way in which the invaders enter the lives of real people living real life issues including marital breakdown, child bullying, terminal illnesses and mental health. It also provides an overwhelming sense of comfort at how people can and do unite in times of hardship.

With very well written prose, this is a super debut novel.

Kathryn Whitfield

Beautifully written, heartbreaking story about love, friendship and survival.

I really enjoyed this story, it is set in 1940s Jersey when German troops came to occupy the land during WW2. The main characters for me are Claudine, Edith, Maurice and Dr Carter. I felt story was heartbreaking at times especially the descriptions of how cruel the German troops were and how witnessing these events Claudine was forced to grow up quickly and how Edith and Dr Carter by helping others meant they could not always help themselves.

I enjoyed the authors descriptions of Jersey and how she tied these with the mood of her characters. I felt she depicted the horrors of war really well and I felt the fear and desperation of her characters.

I would recommend this to anyone who enjoys stories about people's survival of WW2.

You can follow Kathryn on Twitter: @kathreenieA

Lynne Rapson

A moving story set in Jersey during the German occupation, showing how ordinary lives are affected by historical events.

Convincing cast of characters. This book is the story of a small group of interlinked characters and their lives during the German occupation of Jersey in WW2. It is not an easy time for any of them. Claudine is a young girl somewhat detached from her family. Edith is the local herbalist, a woman consulted but also feared. Maurice is a fisherman with a disabled wife whom he adores. Dr Carter is English and has stayed on Jersey despite being able to leave, because he has a huge secret. Their lives cross as they all try to exist under a regime which is sometimes brutal and is always threatening. It is excellently written and highlights the difficult conditions for the ordinary inhabitants as they attempt to live their everyday lives. I found it very moving and frightening, yet there was still an element of hope running through even when things seemed impossible. It shows how people react when they are scared and starved of food, succour and relief. I hope the author writes more books of this calibre. Recommended.

