

## LoveReading Reader reviews of The Aftermath by Rhidian Brook

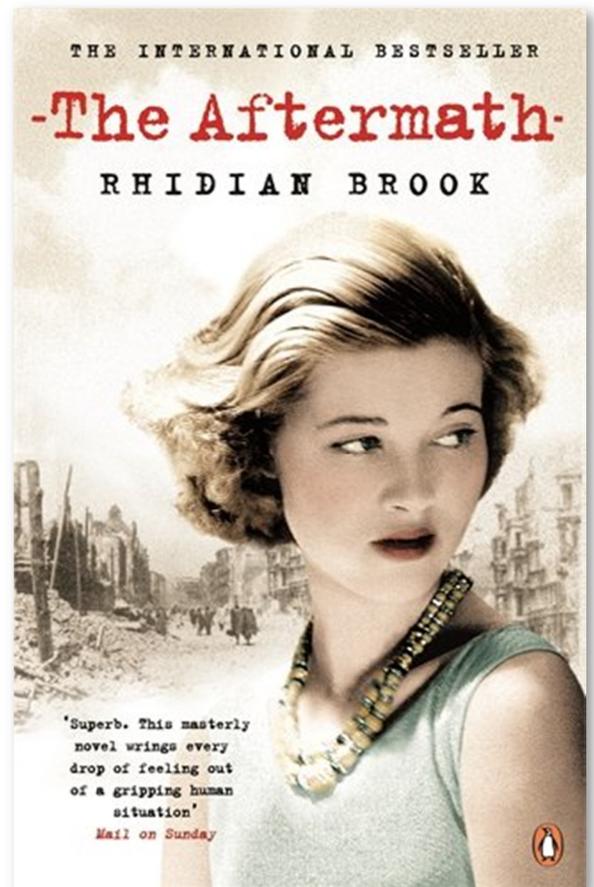
Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

### Sue Broom

*Truly beautiful writing, perceptive interaction and dialogue between the characters, thought-provoking subject matter - this novel has it all. Highly recommended.*

*I was glad to receive a book focusing on an aspect of WWII I hadn't much read about or considered. It conjures up the atmosphere of the bombed-out rubble of Hamburg and the fractured lives of those who survived the onslaught. I found I connected deeply with all the main characters and for me that was one of the book's strengths and the point of the story - empathy with the British colonel and his wife and son, with the German architect and his daughter and also with the 'feral' orphan children roaming the streets. It is a story of the power of forgiveness and how unless people are willing to forgive each other and put the past away, they will not be able to create a happy future for themselves or the next generation. Each character has his or her own reasons to want to keep the past alive and we see how each of them eventually comes to terms with their own loss. A minor point but I would have liked to see how things were resolved for the orphan children - could they all have been rescued from destitution?*

*Truly beautiful writing, perceptive interaction and dialogue between the characters (and even the minor characters are interesting), thought-provoking subject matter - this novel has it all. And an added bonus is to discover that it is based on the author's own grandfather's experience - an event in his family history to be proud of. Highly recommended.*



## **Glynis Elliott**

***When first offered the chance to review *The Aftermath* I thought the concept seemed to be an interesting one. I was wrong. It wasn't just interesting it was incandescent.*** It took me back to a period in history which I can remember asking my father as a young girl why we were flying planeloads of aid to a country which had caused an horrific war. Now I know, this novel held me in its grip and didn't let go until the very last page. I could feel the hunger of the orphans, the depression of Rachel, the proudness of Herr Lubert and overall the ruin of what was Hamburg.

## **Ruth Paterson - @ruth\_pat**

***The Aftermath is a thought provoking, sensitively written novel. It is set just after WW2 in occupied Germany. It has a good balance between fact and fiction. I really enjoyed reading it.***

*The Aftermath is a thought provoking novel. It is set just after the Second World War, in occupied Germany. I had not previously considered the aftermath from the German perspective. I have to admit to being unaware of the British requisitioning houses, improving, education and clearing the locals of any Nazi sympathies before allowing them to resume their lives, until I read this novel. Most novels I've read have concentrated on the effect in Britain and to Holocaust survivors. The book was enlightening and refreshing. The main characters all suffering in different ways from the effects of war and peace. Things are looked at from all perspectives including that of children from both sides of the fence.*

*The book is sympathetically written it highlights suffering and love the strong link between the two. The main character Lewis Morgan, a likable British Colonel, chooses to share his requisitioned house with the German occupants and staff. This was not the usual way and showed from the beginning his sympathetic character. As you read on though you find that as lovely as he is, war has estranged him from family life and prevented him from grieving for his lost son. The story develops as we meet both families as they make new friends and enemies and learn to live anew.*

*I really enjoyed reading *The Aftermath*, it was a good balance of fact and fiction. Sensitively written so you can empathise with all the characters whilst*

*understanding they may not always be correct.*

### **Sarah Musk**

***An extremely well-written book about post-war Hamburg. At first disturbing and depressing but ultimately uplifting and hopeful for the future.***

*This is a very interesting book set in 1946 in Hamburg. Rhidian Brook writes about the English occupation of Germany and their relationship with the conquered German people. It is a post-war situation I knew nothing about and found absolutely fascinating. What does it feel like to be occupied by your enemy when you fully expected to be the victors in the war.*

*In the book the psychology of a conquered people is subtly explored as is the attempts by the ordinary Germans to expiate and explain their wartime conduct. The main characters - Major Lewis and his wife are very credible in the difficulties they face in their marriage coming to terms with the loss of a child and the resentment that his wife feels in having to co-habit with those who are responsible for her pain.*

*However, as the book progresses it also shows the healing that slowly begins with the passage of time. The compassion that Major Lewis feels for the vanquished people gives the reader hope for the future. I found it an uplifting, optimistic book showing the best and the worst of the human spirit in a time of terrible loss and deprivation. Rhidian Brook is a sensitive, astute writer and I loved the book.*

### **Lynda DeFreitas**

*Inspired by a true story.*

***This book opened my eyes.*** *It made me think what it would be like to be the vanquished people after a war and how it would feel to have the victors in your country trying to sort out the innocent from the guilty. The problems it would cause if the victors shared the "spoils of war" and could not agree amongst themselves how things should go.*

*The author was inspired by his grandfather's experiences in Hamburg in 1946 and has obviously done a lot of research. The novel is set in the British Occupied Zone and the central characters, both German and British, share a house on the banks of the Elbe in the devastated city of Hamburg.*

***This immensely readable story has tension, passion, suffering, grief, enmity and forgiveness and I recommend it to you.***

### **Jane Brown**

*Well written book about the aftermath of post war Hamburg, and rebuilding a ruined city with the allies working alongside the previous enemy and the main characters living in the same house. **The author pulls from his grandfather's experience to bring this great story to the reader.***

*This book came through my door from Lovereading, whilst I was off so I devoured it in the garden over the weekend.*

*I enjoy history and the Second World War, but have not read much relating to the aftermath in Germany. This is set a year after the war has ended in the obliterated Hamburg. I fascinated with this and Hamburg became a character too as it rises from the ashes. The German people are half starved to death and living with nothing.*

*The book is beautifully written by Rhidian Brook who has based this on the author's own grandfather's experiences of being in Hamburg post war with the task of helping to rebuild it. This gives the reader a great insight in today the rebuilding of post war Germany.*

*The story concerns the awful dehumanization of war and then building it all back up again. The awful reality is that the main characters in the book share a house with the previous owners who are Germans and in all intents and purposes still feel like the enemy.*

*The author has made the characters real, which makes the book all the more enjoyable too.*

***Well recommended book this summer, and bound to be in the top ten best sellers.***

### **Diane Hinchley**

***Great novel. One I wouldn't have normally chosen but found it very interesting.*** *Writer made you feel that you were actually there whilst telling the story. Made you think about what happened after the Second World War and how the events affected all sides and different communities. **Great read and would recommend you to buy.***

**Maz Tucker - @mztucker**

***Really interesting book about a time you don't hear much about, this book has the power to make you smile and make you think. Great read.***

*I really enjoyed this book; it was about a time and place that you don't hear much about. The story will make you think and question how you would react in the characters position. It also has the power to draw you in and believe in the characters and understand why they did things the way they did.*

*A brilliant story really well told, it has made me investigate the time more. It is a great family drama told really well.*

**Kim Kirrage**

*I really enjoyed reading the book, 'The Aftermath', I thought it was a little bit confusing at the beginning but then it became clear in the course of the book. **It was a touching story and I didn't want to put it down.** I liked how it changed from one person to the next (chapter 1 and 2)*

**Val Rowe**

***A well-paced, intriguing, yet readable, novel which kept me on the edge of my seat and enabled me to visit a world which I had never encountered before.***

*When Colonel Lewis Morgan is charged with rebuilding Hamburg at the end of the Second World War, his immediate family enter a way of life which is initially challenging for them. Work and relationships become entwined in a powerful, and at times, troubling way, ensuring an emotive and impassioned plot.*

*As I began my read, I became acutely aware of how little I knew of the situation in post-war Germany and am now keen to research in greater depth about this period. I can appreciate why the author's family history inspired him to construct his own story and I think it would work splendidly as a film.*

*The skill of a writer is shown in the way that he/she is able to develop the characterisation and story-line in a natural, yet tantalising way and Brook's achieves this magnificently. My predictions were not always correct and my emotions vacillated from chapter to chapter. The culmination did not entirely satisfy me, however as I felt that too many issues were left unspoken.*

*Despite this, I would recommend this novel for its raw and compelling qualities and as a fascinating insight into this piece of history.*

### **Linda Hill**

***A book that disturbs and entertains in equal measure, 'The Aftermath' is a novel to be taken seriously.***

*'The Aftermath' is set in post war Berlin as the 'victors' fight over the spoils of war and Germany is brought to her knees. The British military Morgan family move in to a requisitioned house belonging to Herr Lubert, but instead of evicting him, Colonel Lewis Morgan allows Lubert and his daughter to remain in the house.*

*The plot is somewhat predictable and unsurprising, but this is not a criticism of the novel, rather an appreciation of how gripping and skilful Brook's writing is as the reader is gripped by what is happening. Really well researched, the setting and events give a depth that shocks and disturbs, providing an insight into a period of history most of us will barely have considered. Tragedy, patriotism, relationships and emotion are intensely crafted themes that make reading 'The Aftermath' an experience really worth having.*

*I found I had to read this book in short bursts as it affects the emotions of the reader and makes them question their understanding of human nature, war and history.*

### **Clair Chaytors**

***An interesting take on an almost forgotten period of history...***

*The historical element of 'The Aftermath' was not one of my usual reading subjects but I was drawn to the complicated web of relationships in this book. Rhidian has brought the discussion of Britain's re-building of Germany directly after the war to the fore and I found myself learning about this otherwise overlooked period of history.*

*It was a tough read at times in terms of the uncomfortable attitudes and opinions of both the British and the German people but Rhidian cleverly forces you as a reader to view the horrendous situation from either side in order to understand the prejudice at that period in time. The character of Lewis was beautifully drawn and he was a breath of fresh air in this stifled environment. Lewis is a man with ideas way before his time and you can feel his*

*determination to do what is 'right' even in the many faces of adversity and challenges which he faces; he represents the hope in the bleakest of times.*

*My only slight criticism was the ending of the story. I don't feel there was any closure. I know there couldn't have been a practical solution given the extraordinary circumstances but I would have liked to have found out what became of the characters after the final revelations. However, a good read which perhaps would have been better as a film...*

### **Doreen McKeown**

*This story is set in post-war Germany. Lewis Morgan, one of the main characters, is a colonel in the British Army. He is stationed in Hamburg, where his assignment is to organise the re-building of the infrastructure of the city which has been virtually reduced to rubble during the war. The story begins with the reconciliation of Lewis with his wife Rachael and young son Edmund, after a separation of several years.*

*But Lewis and Rachael are both mourning the loss of a beloved family member in an air raid in Britain and they are miles apart emotionally, with Rachael unable to forgive the Germans, while Lewis seems full of compassion for their ex enemies. Rachael's attitude is further fuelled when she discovers that Lewis has chosen to share their requisitioned house with the previous owners, a German architect and his daughter, themselves suffering the loss of a wife/mother. In this uneasy atmosphere the couple are unable to find any common ground, and seek diversions elsewhere, until a dramatic event occurs which changes their lives and attitudes.*

*For the most part I enjoyed this book. **I've read many accounts of life in Britain in the aftermath of the war, but very few which conveyed the horrors suffered by the civilian population in Germany, and this book painted that particular picture with horrible clarity.** The characters were all well drawn and I found myself in complete sympathy with them all, German and English. There were a couple of situations which stretched my credibility too far and I thought could have been better developed, but on the whole I found it an engrossing read, and certainly a memorable one."*

### **Judith Smith - twitter @jedziah**

***A very moving book, full of hope against a background of suffering.***

*Can you imagine going into a city that your country and allies bombed flat to co-ordinate clearing rubble and bodies? Set in Hamburg at the end of the second world war Rhidian Brook's very moving book describes the 'aftermath' of how people were trying to rebuild their lives and homes, form relationships and bring some form of order to chaos. **A compelling book bringing alive things you never knew - a must read for everyone!***

### **Kath Martin**

*This is one of those books that I may have overlooked in the bookstore. I thought the cover was dull and the blurb uninspiring, so it was a real surprise to find I engaged with this story from page one. **I found the characters so well portrayed and the story unfolding so beautifully that I was immediately hooked.** We read so many stories about 'what happened in the war' but this held the promise of being somewhat different. I was drawn into the different lives, and taken through so many different feelings - sorrow, regret, fear, hope - it gave me a new understanding of how it feels to come out the other side of a conflict such as this. **I found it very moving. Please read it.***

### **Diana Stray**

*Set in 1946 in the aftermath of WWII the book paints a very evocative picture of the wrecked city of Hamburg. Obviously a great deal of impressive research has gone into the writing of this book. It feels authentic and portrays a real sense of the situation in Germany at this time. I had never considered how displaced people were in Germany after the war. It was horrific to read about, it was well portrayed and well written.*

*However, historical detail apart, I felt the author was less successful with his characters. Sadly I just didn't get much of a feel for them or engage with them. I found the book hard going! **I am glad I read it as I did get an appreciation of what life after the war was like but I can't say I enjoyed it.***