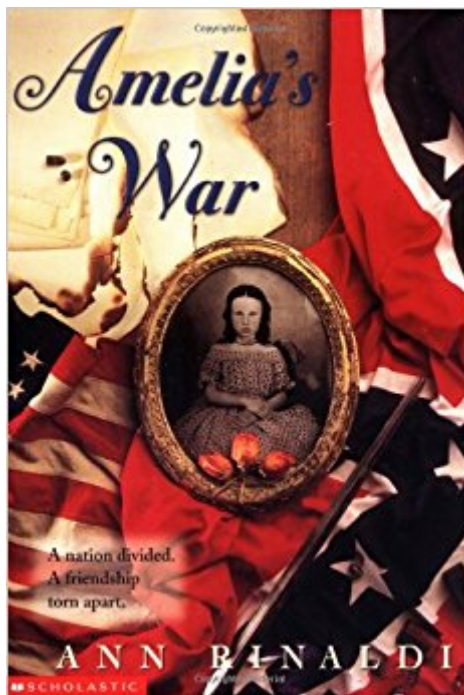


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# Amelia's War



## Synopsis

A riveting middle-grade Civil War drama by acclaimed author, Ann Rinaldi. Based on a true incident. As the Civil War rages, Amelia's Maryland town is beset by divisions. Even she and her best friend Josh disagree. Amelia vows not to take sides, until the Confederate troops march into town...led by Josh's uncle.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this novel inspired by the Confederate ransom of Hagerstown, Md., Rinaldi's (The Coffin Quilt) backdrop is as compelling as ever, but the narrator's undeveloped character lessens its intensity. The story begins in 1861, as 11-year-old Amelia Grafton relates the Civil War's impact on her sharply divided yet tightly linked town: "Mama and I were Southerners, but not Rebels. We were for the Union, but not the Yankees. You have to be from Maryland to understand it." When Amelia's actions inadvertently contribute to the demise of her friend's father, a Confederate-sympathizing newspaperman, and his printing press, Amelia vows to remain neutral which, unfortunately, translates as a rather passive recounting of events through most of the novel. Among the book's strengths are some riveting characters both real (Generals Lee and Custer make cameo appearances) and imagined (e.g., the fictional Jinny Pearl shoots a Rebel soldier after he attempts to rape her and disguises herself as a man to enlist). The pace picks up in the last quarter of the novel when, in 1864, Confederate General McCausland threatens to burn Hagerstown unless its citizens pay an astronomical ransom, and Amelia must finally choose sides. However, readers will likely find the unfolding of Amelia's outfoxing of the general implausible (she applies white paint to

alter the ransom order) and may not stay with the book long enough to witness the highly personal price of this war. Ages 10-14. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 6-8-Rinaldi writes about the Civil War through the eyes of Amelia Grafton, a young teen living in Hagerstown, MD. The story takes place over a period of three years, and readers learn of the townspeople's struggles as they are forced to split in their loyalties and deal with young men enlisting and families losing their most prized possessions. Amelia, a Yankee sympathizer, wants to make a difference by participating in the war effort in other ways besides preparing food and helping the wounded, the traditional duties assumed by women. In an exciting show of ingenuity and bravery, she devises a plan to trick a Confederate officer and save her town from being burned to the ground. While Amelia's character lacks the depth required to make a connection with most readers, the story gives an excellent sense of what it was like to live in an area so affected by this war. Carrie Lynn Cooper, Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

great product, great value, great seller!!

Great story of life during the civil war. Made you feel like you were right there and seeing life through Amelia's eyes. Real civil war events in the story. Loved the book. The book arrived in a timely manner.

Perfect!

This is a very compelling historical fiction novel based on the actual historical event of General McCausland, C.S.A. demanding two hundred thousand dollars in ransom from the town of Hagerstown, Maryland. By happenstance, a tenth of that amount was written on the actual order delivered to the town officials and the town was spared. The story is told in the first person from the point of view of Amelia, a young girl whose father is the treasurer of the town. She's also best friends with the son of the newspaper owner who happens to have Southern leanings. The story opens with her telling him a story that ends up getting the press smashed, after all, tensions are high during this period of U.S. history. This makes Amelia determined to stay uninvolved from the war, although, she admires her brother's sweetheart for having the gumption to dress up like a boy

and go off and fight in the war as a soldier. With great historical detail and fascinating writing, the author takes us through the entire history of the war and we become personally involved with Amelia's inner struggle of when to get involved in the activities taking place all around her. I literally gasped at the ending. And I'm sure all the reader's will, as well. Having read other books by Ann Rinaldi, I do notice some of her trademarks in the novel. Mainly, that the characters are all very strong and have resentments that seem rather severe, at times. However, this didn't detract from the book. And I found it to be a compelling read, all around.

I can count on Ann Rinaldi for two things: good writing and historical accuracy. This is the first Rinaldi book I've read for three years--since I hit my 20's--and she hasn't lost her sparkle to me, even though I no longer qualify for the youth computers at the library. I don't envy writing about and for adolescents, it's a complicated period of life and Rinaldi always creates that friction with the parents and children that can hit a youth right where they are, even if, as in this book, the events happened 150 years ago. It is a mark of Rinaldi's talent and dedication that she could make teens from 2008 identify with teens from 1864. Rinaldi did the Hagerstown ransom proud, along with Amelia Grafton, and all the well-researched folk of Hagerstown. And she satisfied my craving for civil war history, which she always does. There are two criticisms I have on this book. One, I had difficulty following the time periods of the book, and I had to pay attention to the dates guarding the chapter's title, because everything made that much more sense when I did. I think the lazy reader (i.e. myself) would have profited had she prefaced time jumps and reversals with paragraphs, not with bored, old numbers. Two, towards the end of the book Amelia made some huge changes in self without the necessary huge factor brought in to jolt her to that change in her ideals about the war. I think the plot would have been more accurate to Amelia's character if she had maintained her opinion on the war, her need for neutrality. Her actions do not necessarily constitute "doing something for the war" as much as "doing something for Amelia." I think it would have been a tighter, seemingly less contrived story if Rinaldi had been steadier with Amelia.

*Amelia's War*, a historical fiction novel by Ann Rinaldi, takes place in Hagerstown, Maryland, at small town caught in the middle between the Confederacy and the Union in the year 1862. Amelia Grafton is the 13-year-old daughter of a staunch Union man, and is determined to stay neutral and not take part in the war going on around her. Mr. Dechart, the father of Amelia's friend Josh, is arrested after he publishes an article with southern leanings in his newspaper. Because he learned of the story he wrote about from Amelia, Amelia decides to not interfere with anything related to all

the chaos anymore. Less than a year later, Jinny Pearl, Amelia's older brother Wesley's girlfriend, decides to disguise herself as a man and runs away to join the army. All around her, Amelia's friends and family are making decisions and joining in the war, be it in the army or helping out at hospitals. Amelia hasn't made it her war, like everyone else has. Jinny tells her "It isn't your time yet, that's all... when the time comes, you'll know it." Amelia's War is a fabulously accurate account of the American Civil War and how its wake took a toll on the people of Hagerstown. Rinaldi's vivid snapshot passages bring the compelling tale alive with the characters and surroundings that shape Amelia's life. "There he sat in a place of honor, all gussied up in his new cavalry uniform with the sash around his waist, the sword, and the hat turned up on one side with a feather. And those shiny boots..." Amelia's War is an intriguing story of "danger and menace, loyalty and love, during a war in which not all the casualties are on the battlefield, and some of the deepest wounds are invisible." When the final chapter is read and the answer to how Hagerstown got away with paying a lesser ransom to General McCausland without even knowing it is realized, Rinaldi's work seems nearly perfect in its conclusion.

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