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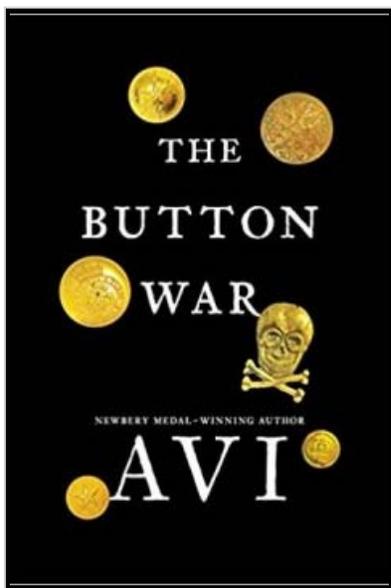


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The Button War

A Tale of the Great War

by Avi

Price: \$16.99(Hardcover)

Published: June 12, 2018



Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher: Renowned, award-winning author Avi pens a stark, unflinching tale of ordinary boys living in wartime as tensions — and desperations — mount among them. Twelve-year-old Patryk knows little of the world beyond his tiny Polish village; the Russians have occupied the land for as long as anyone can remember, but otherwise life is unremarkable. Patryk and his friends entertain themselves by coming up with dares — some more harmful than others — until the Germans drop a bomb on the schoolhouse and the Great War comes crashing in. As control of the village falls from one nation to another, Jurek, the ringleader of these friends, devises the best dare yet: whichever boy steals the finest military button will be king. But as sneaking buttons from uniforms hanging to dry progresses to looting the bodies of dead soldiers — and as Jurek's obsession with being king escalates — Patryk begins to wonder whether their "button war" is still just a game. When devastation reaches their doorstep, the lines between the button war and the real war blur, especially for the increasingly callous Jurek. Master of historical fiction Avi delivers a fierce account of the boys of one war-torn village who are determined to prove themselves with a simple dare that spins disastrously out of control.

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About The Author

Avi

Avi is one of the most celebrated authors writing for children today, having received two *Boston Globe-Horn Book Awards*, a *Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction*, a *Christopher Award*, a *Newbery Medal*, and two *Newbery Honors*. He lives in Colorado.

Release Info

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What We Say

Avi rarely fails to satisfy on the level of pure storytelling and this fable-like novel about young boys in a small Polish village is no exception. Like most of their parents, the group of five or so lads are indifferent or ignorant or simply unable to pay much attention to the outside world of 1914, which is approaching world war. They barely know what's over the next hill, much less geopolitics. What they do know is that the Russian soldiers in their midst are getting ready to leave.

Unintentionally, it proves the perfect time to launch a "dare." Jurek is always looking for ways to lord it over the others and his latest scheme is irresistible: steal a button from the uniform of a Russian soldier and whomever gets the "best" button (fancier uniforms have fancier buttons) wins and gets to be king. Twelve year old Patryk is maybe Jurek's best friend. But Jurek can be a pain and Patryk spends half his time trying to talk everyone out of Jurek's schemes and the other half of the time trying to win them. Avi captures well the foolish dynamic of children, where a simple dare becomes an unendurable taunt and you simply HAVE to do something stupid you really know you shouldn't. War isn't creeping closer so much as rushing in. First an aeroplane (a thing the boys have never seen or really even imagined) drops a bomb on their school. Later, soldiers beat one of the boys near to death for daring to take a button and then things get worse and worse and worse. "The Button War" echoes "The Chocolate War" and "Lord Of The Flies" as violence grows and the insanity keeps pace. Simple but grim, it has an unrelenting tone that lets you know from the start things won't turn out well. While adults might feel the finale is a tad forced (Avi has done better), it has an elemental power and kids who haven't read or seen other similar descents into nightmare may be gobsmacked. A solid entry. -- Michael Giltz

What Others Say

Told from Patryk's point of view, the novel captures the ways that war can forever alter a child's sense of order, morality, and security in the world. Strongly visual scenes, including the smoky forest after battle, the soldiers marching in perfect formation, and a chilling final image of Jurek, will long resonate in readers' minds. —Publishers Weekly (starred review)

"Reminiscent of *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Lord of the Flies*, Avi's *The Button War* is an important and honest book that crowns no heroes. Instead, it shines a light on how easily we believe what we want to believe, confusing dictators for leaders and ignoring our own best selves in the process. If children are to understand the world's problems, they need to face them—and their own motives—with clear eyes and open minds. The *Button War* will help them do that. But it is a cautionary tale that will surely provoke introspection in readers of *all* ages and help us see how to evolve beyond our primitive thirst for power and glory." —Lauren E. Wolk, author of *Wolf Hollow*, a Newbery Honor Book, and *Beyond the Bright Sea*

Avi has written a compelling and tautly constructed book that is a portal to grappling with the complexity of the human instinct to compete. Highly recommended. —School Library Journal

Although some readers will simply hang on the drama of Avi's simple and unnervingly tense plot, most will recognize this as a powerful anti-war allegory...The final scene in which "winner" Jurek crows in triumph that he's "Jurek the Brave! King of everything!" over a ruined and emptying village hauntingly exposes the universal vacuity of bullies and their enablers, whether in middle-school hallways or on a battlefield. —Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

The award-winning Avi has turned in another solid performance, bringing history alive with a clever plot, a powerful, anti-war theme, and characters as memorable as his story. —Booklist

Fans of *The Lord of the Flies* and readers ready to plumb ambiguity will respond to the dark themes...Bleakly demonstrates that war, no matter its scale, is devastating. —Kirkus Reviews

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