

Petros' War Short Guide

Petros' War by Alki Zei

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Overview

Petros' War, according to Joan Nist, is "a novel which portrays both the indiscriminate atrocities spawned by war and the individual heroism performed by ordinary people."

For ten-year-old Petros, the day World War II began seemed to him like a festival.

Petros—with images in his mind from his many books of heroes and their deeds—decided this would be his heroic war filled with deeds of valor about which he could tell his own children. His work for the Resistance, however, did not require much heroism as he had imagined it, and liberating a dog from a German soldier and secretly painting slogans on walls did not seem dramatic. In time, however, brutality, loss of freedom, famine, depression and the death of his friends mature him and convince him that survival is the greatest heroic deed of all.

About the Author

Alki Zei was born in Athens in 1925. Her father was from Crete and her mother from Samos, where Alki lived her first childhood years. She studied in the Department of Philosophy of the University of Athens, however soon realized her artistic calling and transferred to the Athens Conservatory School of Drama and then to the Department of Scriptwriting of the Moscow Film Institute.

Although she was born in Greece, she lived outside its borders for many years due to her political beliefs. In this way, her travels as a political refugee took her to the Soviet Union from 1954 until 1964, when she returned to Greece; in 1967, however she and her family were forced to flee again with the arrival of the Colonels' Dictatorship. This time her country of exile was France and she called Paris her temporary home.

As a child, Alki Zei loved to write and even in the first classes of secondary school she began writing scripts for the puppet theater. One of the characters that she created, Cluvio, has remained the principal hero of the Athens "Barba-Mytousis" Puppet Theater. Her first "official" steps into the literary world began in September 1944, with the publication of a short story in the magazine *Nea Foni* (New Voice); her stay in the Soviet Union delayed the publication of some of her works as books. The novel *To Kaplani Tis Vitrinas* was first published in 1963, whilst the second, *O Megalos Peripatos Tou Petrou* (Petros' War) was released in 1971, when she had already fled from Greece because of the Colonel's Dictatorship, and settled in Paris. *To Kaplani Tis Vitrinas* was inspired by her first childhood years in Samos and it is almost autobiographical.

After the dictatorship, Alki Zei returned to Greece where she lived with her husband and her two children. Many more of her children's books, the best-selling adult novel *I Aravoniastikia Tou Achillea* (1987), and Greek translations of several books have been published since her return to Greece. Alki Zei's husband, film director Giorgos Sevastikoglou, passed away in 1991.

Zei travels through time in her writings, setting her books in Greece during important historical periods that have taken place over the last fifty years. She then embellishes her stories with biographical elements and thus, by combining these two elements with her particular perspective on the events and situations, creates a world that is familiar and understandable to its reader. It is these cleverly combined techniques that have allowed Zei to give her books the international flavor and human dimension that is confirmed through the success that they have had and their countless translations into a myriad of languages. *Petros' War* has been translated into at least thirty languages since it was first published.

Alki Zei has been awarded several notable awards: the Mildred L. Batchelder Award for the best foreign children's book translated into English for *To Kaplani Tis Vitrinas* (Wildcat under Glass) in 1968, *O Megalos Peripatos Tou Petrou* (Petros' War) in 1973 and *Konta Stis Ragies* (The Sound of Dragon's Feet) in 1979. Furthermore *To Theatro*

Gia Paidia (*The Theater for Children*) received the State Award for Children's Literature in 1992.

Like Petros, the protagonist of *Petros' War*, Alki Zei lived in Athens during World War II. Although her father wished to keep her and her sister sheltered at home, her mother insisted that they experience the realities of the occupation, and work with the Resistance. In recalling her experiences during the Second World War, the author says: My father would, if he could, keep me and my sister at home, without letting us out in the streets, where all the atrocities were happening, until the day our country should be free again. He thought that in that way he was protecting us also from any danger. On the other hand, our mother wanted us to be aware of all. It was she who emboldened us to take part in the Resistance, taking us to underground meetings. I am grateful to her for all that experience.

Setting

Petros' War is set in Athens during the Nazi Occupation. Zei has succeeded in shifting the emphasis of her novels away from historical events themselves and towards the way in which people reacted to such events. Thus, characters are the main focus of the novel, and the setting is just a backdrop to the development of the characters and their reactions to the events at hand.

For example, important events of the war and the Resistance are described and commented upon parenthetically throughout the novel. Collectively, however, these episodes shape and create the realistic atmosphere of the novel.

Many realistic and authentic details of the time are described throughout the novel—some mentioned in passing, others with more emphasis. Most collectively influence and affect the lives of the young protagonist and his entourage. Examples of these discrete, yet distinct details include young women and foreign soldiers living together for survival through the cruel times of war; the authentic picture of the Greek shadow puppet show mocking the current political wartime situation; the portrayal of the family (especially the father) crouched around the radio trying to listen to broadcasts by foreign radio stations; the black market situation; the Jewish holocaust; the taped windows and dark houses; the cold and hunger; food rations; the slogan-painted walls; the homeless children of Omonoia Square.

It should be noted here that these details are entirely authentic and that this can be confirmed through factual archives of the time. The images of the family and "home" which are important to the more personal setting of Petros' War are also very realistic.

These include depictions of the family at the dinner table, parental and sibling arguments, as well as Petro's grandfather playing solitaire under the light. The concept of the home, although not perfect (if it were then it would not be realistic), symbolizes and reflects warmth and safety. Whatever the problems, whatever the state of affairs, the home is the place where the protagonist of the novel feels safe. The home and his family create a wall around Petros, who does not fully comprehend the nature of war until it begins to knock on his door.

Even then, when he sees that his Uncle Angelos is wounded and did not return on a white horse, and that his grandfather pretends to be starving in order to eat more food, he remains virtually unaffected by the seriousness of the situation. It is not until he experiences personal loss through the death of his friends that he comes to realize the significance and horror of war. The setting, therefore, and the environment in which the protagonist lives protects both him and the reader from the true horrors of war.

Ultimately, Petros—and the reader—have been enlightened enough through discrete hints and details to understand the full gravity of the situation.

Social Sensitivity

Petros' War gives a clear account of war and the reaction of a child to such a brutal situation. It is interesting to note how this book can be used to discuss the horrors of war through childlike eyes. The theme that perhaps a child will not truly understand the consequences of war until he has experienced death at close proximity is notable.

Young Petros sees war, at the beginning, as something heroic, like something that he reads about in his books. He tries to imagine what he shall tell his children some day in the future. He hopes that he will have many exciting stories to tell them, and at first he winces at the fact that all he can admit to is saving a dog from a German and painting slogans on walls. Eventually, however, he comes to realize that perhaps survival is the most heroic deed of all. In conjunction with this, Zei portrays the levels to which people go in times of war in order to survive; here Grandfather's playhunger acts come into mind as well as Sotiris's grandmother's "burial" by the wall of the cemetery. Petros' War also portrays how sometimes children do not realize that parents are not as strong as they seem to be in everyday life, and that their heroism is something that is personal. A hero does not mean that the parent or relative shall go out to war and slay the enemy in order to return home on a white horse. The ultimate heroic act of such an adult is that he or she shall return safely home to protect his or her children and be able to give them the food and shelter they deserve. The book gives rise to many different issues, but most important of all is the child's reaction and ultimate understanding of the irrational and unjust concept of war. War is not heroic and it is not a game. It means death, suffering, hunger, and loss. These concepts are all clearly portrayed in a sometimes playful, yet mostly serious, fashion in Petros' War.

Literary Qualities

In an assessment of Greek fiction for young readers, Meni Kanatsouli wrote: Zei provides a model of developing narrative methods in Greek children's fiction.

She uses an impersonal narrator; one who is not identical with the writer but who nonetheless stands apart from the imaginary personages of the novel. In *Petros' War*, the narrator remains completely outside the action; all that matters is that he observe the facts from different points of view according to the different characters involved, who share their opinions with each other.

The straightforward, linear narrative held in the impersonal third person is oddly enough highly individual, where the presence of the narrator is distinct as are feelings and humor. In addition, the thirdperson narration corresponds directly to the internal viewpoint of the protagonist as the narrator describes events only as seen through Petros and along with his thoughts and ideas. Regarding the creation and natural portrayal of dialogue between the characters, the author herself has said: "What I tried to do was to make my heroes speak for themselves, so that they would talk just as they would to each other at the ages that they are supposed to be. Without my experience or my age affecting them in the slightest."

The work of Alki Zei can further be characterized by its cinematic imagery through which action and dialogue scenes are clearly visualized. This is acute in the account of Drossoula's death. The use of dialogue between Petros and Drossoula before her death as well as the turn from the familiar third-person narration into the unfamiliar which confuses Petros into asking whether the surrounding people are talking about him creates the perfect scene. The sudden switch from the familiar omniscient narrator to a simple third person narrator is so acute that even the fictional Petros gets confused within his textual world. Zei's ease in highlighting metafiction within her novels is only one of her many literary attributes.

The focus upon role-playing, scene structure and flashbacks aid the historical events to form a cinematic backdrop to the protagonist's search for heroism and maturity.

This cinematic imagery can further be linked to instances when the action in the novel moves as if it has been set on fast-forward.

It has been set in this manner to be later rewound as a flashback. There are many anticlimaxes throughout *Petros' War* which are of absolute necessity in terms of bringing about an element of surprise for the reader. The reader is often caught unaware when he or she least expects it, a tribute to Zei's strength as a storyteller.

In the depiction of scenes, along with the use of metaphors (Drossoula being compared to sunflowers, for example), colors are very important. Green, the color of hope, is the color of the paint that Petros uses to paint slogans of hope on the walls. In addition, these green painted phrases on the walls give not only the general public hope that



there is a Resistance movement working hard to save them from the enemy, but they also help Petros find his way home when he gets lost late at night in downtown Athens. The colors used are highlighted and thus paint pictures in words.

Repetition of ideas and small details is a technique that is often used to add emphasis to incidents and situations when they occur later on in the plot. Something, for example, that had not been emphasized earlier, suddenly becomes very important when it is uttered again.

Zei's novel is highly realistic. The author achieves this realism through social questioning relating to contemporary issues, respect for historical truth, the discrete portrayal of ideological messages and the placement of stress on diachronic values, aesthetic emotion, humor, and visual language. In addition, foreshadowing and sense of suspense is built up throughout the novel.

It begins when Petros, not having done his geography homework, wishes that something would happen: "Not a war, of course, like the one Uncle Angelos was talking about." This is, however, what ultimately happens. Foreshadowing is further used in the chapter relating to the man in pajamas.

He turns to the young boy and tells him that he shall see him again soon. Petros does see him again soon and is surprised that the man would have known of their future meeting. In addition to the dialogue exchanged between Petros and the man, a different narrative method is used in order to emphasize the importance of the occurrence. Although until that point, the novel is narrated in a straightforward and linear manner, in this chapter the narrative switches and changes from the "present" to the recent past. In addition, the scene in which Storm is whipped by Hunther foreshadows the hidden cruelty of the Germans, which Petros had never seen before and would see again. Hunther whips the dog suddenly in the same way that he later turns and murders Sotiris. Dream sequences are also employed as a foreshadowing technique and they create a sense of foreboding. Each of Petros' dreams precedes a terrible incident about to occur: the first sequence is followed immediately by the beginning of war whilst the second is followed, a couple of pages later, by the hunger demonstration in which Drossoula is killed.

Intertextuality is also another very distinct characteristic of this novel and especially with regard to Penelope Delta, the Greek classic children's author. Delta's books are patriotic with a historical background that, according to the translator Edward Fenton, deeply stirred the hearts and the heroism of their young Greek readers, and still do to this day. This does not mean, however, that these are the only intertextual comments. Petros' War comments on Ophelia, The Lady with the Camellias, Don Quixote, King Lear, and Selma Lagerlof's books, as well as Anna Karenina. Intertextuality helps in visually enhancing situations through the description of a past historical episode.

For example, the Nazi's entering Athens and patrolling the streets is compared to the story of Marcus Claudius Marcellus, a Roman general who entered a city and found all the people hiding in their homes, staring out of the shutters. Petros tries to find solace

and reason from books about heroes, but these cannot be real. They are not life, they must be forgotten, so Petros finally lives through the harshness of reality and sees that things are not fiction as in books. This is his life; this is his family and these are friends, not fictional heroes who enjoy killing and saving damsels in distress.

Finally, there is a distinct trace of metafiction in Petros' War: "Perhaps what was written in the storybooks wasn't just someone's imagination," perhaps it was reality, reality in fiction. And perhaps there is more reality in Petros'War than the reader realizes since it has been noted that there are many autobiographical moments throughout the novel.



Themes and Characters

The main theme of Petros' War is war, as the title itself emphasizes, and its influence on the characters' personalities. The details regarding the Nazi occupation are visible in the background and make up a fundamental element of the novel as is only logical, yet the most important element is that of the ramifications of the occupation on the characters. Zei shifts emphasis from what occurred in the war, to how people reacted and survived. One sees, for example, the changes in both adults and children as the war develops. Although at first, it seems that the adult characters become strange and weak yet the children become stronger, Petros' War 317 the reader witnesses the truth of the matter as the plot progresses: although Petros's mother seems aloof and curiously uninterested in the war, she finally shows her strength when she hides an Italian soldier in the cellar of the house; his father, who does nothing all day but listen to the radio, surprises everyone when he reveals that he is working for the resistance; his grandfather, who seems to be nothing but a quivering old man, ultimately helps his son-in-law with his Resistance work. The characters prove that they can become heroes in their own right and find their own manner of survival. Everyone changes with the war, and this is commented upon by Petros when he says that: "They were all of them different now: his mother and his father too; even he himself." Finally, what is realistic, yet is rather startling in its portrayal, are the lengths to which people will go in a time of war. This is particularly evident when Soriris and Petros carry Sotiris's dead grandmother to the cemetery and leave her sitting against one of its walls without giving her a proper burial so the family will keep receiving bread and other food coupons. Sotiris even takes her shoes off since they are now useless to her and shall most certainly be of use to him. Out of all the characters in Petros' War, only Antigone, Petros' sister, seems to have remained the same, and this is most certainly due to the fact that she is overprotected by her mother. She still wears beautiful clothes and coats, remains coquettish and goes through her romantic moods, constantly changing her mind about her latest love interest.

Along with the theme of war, courage and heroism are also main elements of the novel. These are not only brought into the plot through the theme of war, but also through the literary technique of intertextuality. Petros imagines reality through a fictional world filled with literary images of heroes of times gone by, heroes from Penelope Delta's classic Greek children's books. These books were characterized by their courageous protagonists and Penelope Delta's strong ideas about patriotism and the homeland. It should be noted that Penelope Delta committed suicide when the Second World War began because she could not come to terms with the idea that her homeland, her greatest love, was being defiled by war. With images from Delta's books in his mind, Petros tells himself that there is no heroism in his family and this discomforts him terribly. In commenting about his grandfather, "Petros couldn't remember ever having read about a hero who shouted 'I'm starving!'" and when mentioning his mother, he is so shocked with her aloofness and disinterest in the war that he asks himself if she is Greek or not, for a Greek would never be so unpatriotic. His only hope for family heroism lies in his Uncle Angelos, who is away at war, and he thus trades fiction for



reality and pushes his thoughts of legendary/fictional heroes to one side, imagining his heroic and courageous uncle instead. Unfortunately, this dream is thwarted as well when he comes to realize that his uncle's only heroic act was to return home safely and in one piece.

Once this occurs, he no longer wants to read his favorite books and decides to live reality as it is. Early in the novel, Petros also attempts to call to mind heroes of ancient times and compare their actions to his own while simultaneously trying to be like them.

However, all this comes to pass once he begins to live in reality. As he begins to understand the true consequences of death and war, as well as the importance of resistance and survival, his heroism and bravery comes to light. Heroism, however, is not only important to Petros, it is also important to other characters of the novel. The characters have their own heroes to look up to: Antigone goes through a chain of them, Petros worships Iannis as well as Achilles and had worshipped Uncle Angelos in the past, whilst Grandfather adores the "Great 318 Petros' War Antigone." What one also comes to realize toward the closure of the book, is that these characters are heroes in their own right.

"Freedom or Death" is one of the slogans painted on banners and written on flyers; it is the belief of the Resistance. Only Petros has reservations about it and what it truly means and he rightfully questions it when Drossoula is shot dead during one of the demonstrations: "If it had been death, then how could it be freedom?" Death is often portrayed within the novel, as it is an indisputable accompaniment to war.

Although Petros becomes familiar with death from the first page of the book when his cricket dies, he is deeply disturbed by Drossoula's death. What he comes to realize, however, is that "Someone was always taking someone's place" and that life goes on and does not stand still. What remains are memories, held by those who decide it is important to remember.

The characters of Petros' War react to the setting and themes of the book. They evolve and mature within this environment of complex situations. Each character is individual and unique. The main character of the Petros' War is none other than Petros himself. It is through his innocent eyes that the plot unfolds. This young boy's obsession and intense wish for adulthood and maturity is carried through the entire novel. His development from a ten year old into a fourteen year old is slowly highlighted as the plot evolves. "If Petros weren't so young, he would have shown them what true heroism was." This quote is just one out of a series of such comments which emphasize the young boy's obsession with growing up. When Petros is caught in a "blocko," he is fixated on the distressing thought that if he dies there, he will never be grown up and will remain a boy forever. The thought of staying young forever upsets him more than the thought of dying. By the end of the book, however, one believes that the young boy, with all the experiences that he has been through, is much older than a fourteen year old. He is, as he proclaims "a grown man." In the beginning, he does not understand what is so interesting about "their" war for, as a young boy, he sees the war as belonging to the adults. It is not his war and he continues to live his life until small episodes begin to



build up and affect his character until he finally develops into a grown man. He has matured.

His sister, Antigone, however, seems to be in a world of her own and seems to be the only character to remain the same as she was "prewar." She is a spoiled and protected young teenage girl, interested in boys, and coquettish. Her character remains unchanged throughout the novel.

Although Father's character is pretty nondescript, other than mention towards the end of the book that he is helping the Resistance, Mother's character is more complex.

She is very independent and dynamic as well as a true matriarchal character. She is uninterested in the war, in heroism, and in the Resistance movement around her. All that concerns her is that she remains a proper housewife and correct mother. Regarding motherhood, Mother's sacrifice and dedication to her children is inspirational, although one may believe that she cares for Antigone more than her son. Petros, at first cannot understand his mother's reaction to the war, although it seems a natural reaction for a housewife. To him, Mama's behavior was very odd and her indifference to victories annoys him. He even accuses her of not being a Greek; however, these thoughts are overturned when the family discovers that she has hidden an Italian soldier in the cellar.

Grandfather, another important member of the family, is a quaint character: egotistical, selfish, cold, sly, a liar and a thief. The only thing that he does all day from the moment he wakes up is to grumPetros' War 319 ble, sit on the sofa wrapped up in a blanket, and play solitaire. He steals the rest of the family's bread rations and goes out on the streets and acts as if he is dying of hunger in order to be fed. He finally becomes helpful when he finds out that his "good-for-nothing" son-in-law is working for the Resistance. He offers to help him. He is the classic caricature of a man frightened and weakened by war in such a manner that his worst traits are unveiled.

Petros, however, is also surrounded by a number of friends. His best friend is ragamuffin Sotiris who lives in the same building on the top floor. The two boys go through many adventures together. They save the dog Storm, take Sotiris's grandmother secretly to the cemetery, and paint slogans on walls. Sotiris is very independent and brave.

He is left by his mother when she remarries and moves to another city with her new husband. He is also a martyr in terms of the war and his death is a shock when it occurs.

The way he interacts with other characters and his personal slogan "Reltih Tupak," meaning Hitler is finished (Hitler Kaput) said in German and read backwards, are unique. Sotiris is unforgettable and his death is perhaps one of the most heartwrenching and explosive scenes of the novel.

Petros' other friend is Iannis, a public school boy turned Resistance fighter. It is Iannis who initiates the young protagonist to the world of the Resistance movement.



Although Iannis is in love with Antigone, she remains uninterested in him for most of the novel, only to fall in and out of love with him within the space of a few chapters.

Iannis is also instrumental in introducing Petros to Achilles and Drossoula. These two characters, a dynamic young adult couple, are integral in Petros' ultimate development into maturity. Achilles is one of the "real" heroes of the war, whilst Drossoula is possibly Petros' first love. He remembers her and discusses her right to the end of the novel and her death affects him more than any other episode in the novel. It is upon her death that he realizes the true nature and horror of war.

Finally there are other minor characters throughout the novel. They include the little Czarinas (caricatures of Black Market children); the peculiar and enigmatic man in pajamas; and Rita, Antigone's Jewish best friend. The boys are generally described as playful and energetic, whilst the girls are romantic, in love and coquettish. The heroes of the fairytales and legends should also be noted for these are nonindividual, highly symbolic and even more stereotyped than the minor characters. All the characters, however, are individual and unique in themselves and are impossible to confuse with one other. They are also all heroes in some way or another and this is integral to the framework of the novel. Although some of the roles are very small, the characterizations are very well rounded and exquisitely described, and their presence is distinct within the plot.



Topics for Discussion

1. "I am only a boy and I shall perish; I shall be forgotten; but my country will endure!." This quotation, from one of Penelope Delta's patriotic books, is mentioned twice within Petros' War. Why is it highlighted and what does it signify?
2. Petros' greatest wish is that he could be older. As the novel progresses, specific events influence Petros and help him mature faster. Trace Petros's developing character through the novel and highlight those events which influence him most and aid in his maturity.
3. Grandfather changes suddenly in Petros' War once the Second World War begins. Discuss the changes in his character along with the development of the war.
4. How does Drossoula's death affect Petros, and why is this episode so shocking to him?
5. Discuss the use of animals in Petros' War. Do not forget to mention Petros' cricket and Storm, the dog.
6. Take one of the parents/adults in the book and discuss the way that they are heroic. Do not assume that they have killed many German soldiers or have fought with the Resistance in the mountains; heroism can come in all shapes and forms.
7. What is the role of the man in pajamas in Petros' War? Why is he an integral element of the plot?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Resistance movements existed all over Europe during the Second World War.

One of the most famous ones was the so-called "Maquis" in France. Find out about a Resistance movement that was created and write a report about the movement, discussing where it existed, its main aims and actions, who its followers were, and so on.

2. "Our country is the thing we must love best in our lives" (Petros' War). Patriotism is one of the major themes of Petros' War and it may be found even in the smallest details described in the book.

Describe one of the most patriotic actions that Petros does in the novel.

3. Hunger and famine is a worldwide problem that did not disappear with the end of the Second World War. There are hundreds of thousands of people today who are starving in their countries due to drought and war. Many of these people are also children. How do other countries that have enough food to spare aid these people? Are there special organizations that have been created in order to combat famine? What can we do to help people who are dying of starvation?

4. Explain why and how a paintbrush can be analogous to a sword.

5. Discuss how Petros' slogans of freedom, death, and "We are hungry" can be compared to today's graffiti drawn by gangs and young artists.

For Further Reference

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Related Titles

Alki Zei has written a number of eminent novels and three of these have received the Mildred L. Batchelder Award for excellence in translating a foreign-language work for children. *Wildcat under Glass* has often been said to be the prequel to *Petros' War*. It tells of Melia and Myrto, two young girls who live on an island in the Aegean in 1936, just before the war. Their grandfather tells them myths and legends of the Ancient Greeks instead of "proper" stories. Their cousin, Nikos, a student in Athens, enchants them with the story of a wildcat, which stands embalmed in a glass case in the large living room of their house. Slowly, however, they find that the wildcat is a symbol for freedom, a term they come to value when Metaxas' dictatorship begins.

The novel ends just before the Second World War, where *Petros' War* picks up and continues with the story of Modern Greek history. *Wildcat under Glass* begins with themes that are later to be continued in *Petros' War*.

As always, Alki Zei focuses on children's reactions to adult-created situations. The children try to understand what is going on in the world around them and their characters slowly develop as the novel progresses.

Another young adult book which could be read in relation to *Petros' War* is James Forman's *The Skies of Crete*, published in 1963. In this novel, the Second World War is described through the eyes of Penelope (Penny) Metaxa on the island of Crete. The day that the war begins for her is the day that she and her father go to meet the ship from Greece carrying refugees and remnant soldiers of the defeated Greek army.

Her cousin, Alexis, who has traveled to stay with them remains silent and distant, remembering the atrocious acts of war that he has seen. With the invasion of the island, however, Penny, Alexis, their Grandfather— still living in his dreams of old-fashioned battles—and the shepherd-philosopher, El Greco, go into the mountains to try to escape. The young heroine takes on adult responsibilities and matures as the small party makes its difficult way in the shadow of bombers overhead, but she still keeps hoping that El Greco's "magic wings" that he talks of will carry her and her family to safety. She slowly begins to realize, however that there is much more to war than she has ever dreamed. "Life and freedom, immortality and the futility of war, enriched by the faith and folklore of Crete" are the elements which make *The Skies of Crete* a perfect accompaniment to *Petros' War*. This time, the war is seen through the eyes of a girl who, like Petros, develops into a young woman by the end of the novel.

Like Petros, she also realizes and makes even her grandfather realize, that war is not heroic and that it is a synonymous with death, or escape and survival.



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Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

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