

VENTURA BOOK REVIEWS

Where will the next book take you?

SALT TO THE SEA

by Ruta Sepetys



Sepetys

Salt to the Sea (2016) was recommended to me by my mom. I had not heard of the book and could not recall who the author was but she insisted that I listen to this book next. I wanted to read it because I hadn't physically read a good book in a while, but she said that I should really listen to it instead because the characters had different voices and added to the story, in her opinion. So, I followed her advice and borrowed the audio version.

Salt to the Sea is Ruta Sepetys' third novel. All three of her novels have made it onto multiple best-seller lists and have been published in over fifty countries (About). *Salt to the Sea* is a story told from four people's points of view as World War II is ending in East Prussia in 1945. Every character is very different from the next and makes for an interesting and exciting read.

One aspect of the novel that amazed me was the way that the characters are described. The reader learns about the characters from the perspective of the

character, the Shoe Poet. He was a shoemaker before the war and can distinguish a lot about a person from their shoes. He tells Joana, "The shoes tell the story," after he figures out her family situation. I had never read a story where the characters are introduced like this before and found it unique.

The author clearly put an immense amount of effort into the novel and revised it many times. I noticed that a lot of the chapters ended in cliffhangers. Regardless of who was the narrator during the chapter, it would end with a "bang" or something that would make one continue reading, or listening. A tip I would offer to future readers is to be aware of some foreshadowing. Some things that are mentioned early on or are breezed across as if they were just another detail turn out to be more important in the end.

Many times, I would hit the fifteen-second rewind button on my app to hear a line again. There is no other way to put the fact that Sepetys has a way with words. One line that I loved from Joana says, "The books, raped and rummaged of their dignity, lay in heaps on the floor." Another line I particularly loved was from Alfred who said, "So I build my own nest and feather it with thoughts of you."

Salt to the Sea proved to be an excellent listen. I agree with my mom that listening to it made the story even better. If I had one complaint, I would say that Emilia seems immature and naïve but I am not sure if that's because she sounds young in the audio version. She is also only fifteen so maybe she really was immature and naïve.

I have read one of Sepetys' other novels, *Between Shades of Gray* (2013), but never wrote a review for it. It has been years since I read it but I remember enjoying it. I plan to go back and actually read *Salt to the Sea* sometime. I want to pay closer attention to the foreshadowing and highlight all the lines that made me go, "wow."

Ruta Sepetys is currently working on a fourth novel. Her website is rutasepetys.com.

Reviewed by Grace Ventura