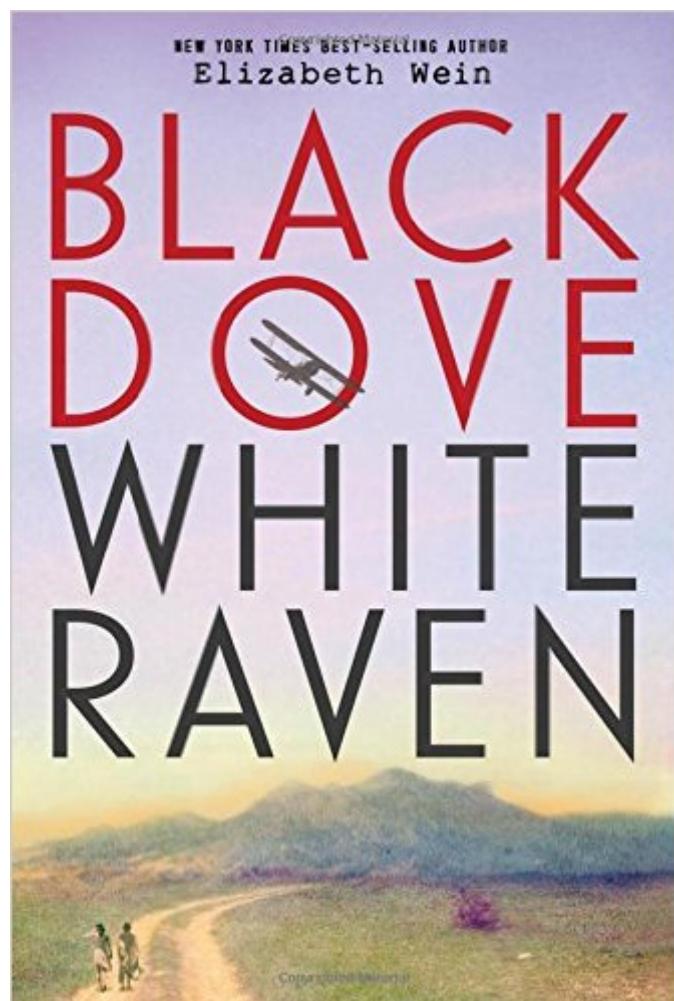


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# Black Dove, White Raven



## Synopsis

Emilia and Teo's lives changed in a fiery, terrifying instant when a bird strike brought down the plane their stunt pilot mothers were flying. Teo's mother died immediately, but Em's survived, determined to raise Teo according to his late mother's wishes-in a place where he won't be discriminated against because of the color of his skin. But in 1930s America, a white woman raising a black adoptive son alongside a white daughter is too often seen as a threat. Seeking a home where her children won't be held back by ethnicity or gender, Rhoda brings Em and Teo to Ethiopia, and all three fall in love with the beautiful, peaceful country. But that peace is shattered by the threat of war with Italy, and teenage Em and Teo are drawn into the conflict. Will their devotion to their country, its culture and people, and each other be their downfall or their salvation? In the tradition of her award-winning and bestselling *Code Name Verity*, Elizabeth Wein brings us another thrilling and deeply affecting novel that explores the bonds of friendship, the resilience of young pilots, and the strength of the human spirit.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Originally reviewed at

[http://www.shaelit.com/2015/03/review-black-dove-white-raven-by-elizabeth-wein/Black Dove, White Raven \(BDWR\)](http://www.shaelit.com/2015/03/review-black-dove-white-raven-by-elizabeth-wein/Black%20Dove%2C%20White%20Raven%20(BDWR).html), first and foremost, is a book about family. Emilia Menotti and Teo Gedeyon are family, despite their different skin and lack of blood ties. Rhoda Menotti and Delia DuprÃ©, Emiliaâ™s and Teoâ™s mamas, were family through and through, both in the air flying their stunts and on the ground in Jim Crow America. When Delia dies, family means Emilia, Teo, and Rhoda

moving to Ethiopia where Teo won't be shunned because of the color of his skin, and where Rhoda can fly and heal in equal measure. Family means sticking together when the Italians crowd the Ethiopian border, emboldened by Mussolini and the apathetic response from the League of Nations. Family means speaking with only a Nod, and staring into the teeth of war together, hand in hand. I know when I pick up an Elizabeth Wein book, I am going to learn something. I don't learn something because her books are teaching books, full of lessons and morals solemnly handed down through mouthpiece characters. I learn because these books are alive. When I read *Code Name Verity*, I am in France, trapped in a Gestapo prison or hiding in a trunk, or in England, flying over a mist-veiled countryside. When I read *Rose Under Fire*, I am in the Ravensbruck concentration camp, sharing a thin bunk with three other girls and watching the clouds float by during roll call. And when I read *Black Dove, White Raven*, I am in Mennonite Pennsylvania, attending air shows and riding trick ponies, and I am in pre-WWII Ethiopia, running barefoot across a coffee plantation and bidding friends selam and tafash. I learn because I am there.

I loved Elizabeth Wein's previous books, *Code Name Verity* and *Rose Under Fire*, but this one was lacking the emotional heft and believability of those novels. In this one, we focus on Em and Teo who are sort of brother and sister. They are the children of two female American stunt pilots. When they move to Ethiopia expecting a peaceful life, they find themselves in the midst of a war with Italy. I really enjoyed the setting of this book. I learned so much about a time and place that I had never really thought about before. The League of Nations politics were fascinating! And the Ethiopian landscape and people were lovingly and accurately depicted since Wein has traveled there several times. However, this book didn't hold my interest like Wein's previous works and I truly considered abandoning it. I probably would have if I hadn't read *Code Name Verity*. The problems come down to three areas:<sup>\*</sup> Pacing - The first half (or maybe 3/4) was dreadfully slow. Almost no plot happened for huge sections of text.<sup>\*</sup> Characters - I didn't connect well to the main characters. Em was awfully self-centered. She complained and bragged and generally annoyed me. On the other hand, Teo's quiet self-consciousness irritated me. And I kept wondering how he felt with a white family and how he managed to skip right past grieving for his mother and accept Rhoda as "Momma." speaking of which, why wasn't this book about Rhoda and Delia? They were fascinating!<sup>\*</sup> Format - Like Wein's other books, this one is told through letters and journal entries. She also added in school essays and some character-written fiction. Unlike her previous novels, this format didn't work very well. My initial problem was that the character voices sounded too much alike.

I think my favorite part of this book was how rich the historical setting and details are. Evidence of how hard the author worked to get things right are seen throughout the entire book. She brings to life a part of the WWII era not often explored, in fiction or otherwise, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and how WWII impacted this part of the world. She also brings to life a culture that is unique, colorful, and different than any Westerners are used to. She definitely transports her readers in every way, the hallmark of a great historical fiction writer. I also really enjoyed her characters; all are different and exceptional. Steady Teo, intrepid Em, and protective Rhoda all make their mark on the reader's hearts. Even Delia has a strong presence, even though she was dead for most the book. She serves as a motivation and driver for the book after that event due to her strong personality early on. The secondary characters also exhibit their own personality traits and quirks, making them remarkable and remember-able to the reader long after reading. The format of the story was different than I've seen used before, but then, I've grown to expect that from this author. The story is told in a combination of letters, memories, flight logs, and fictional stories written by Teo and Em. I liked how this gave the story a distinctive feel and flow. The only part I wasn't that thrilled with was the fictional story parts. As they were written by children, of course their tone and content will be way different than the flight logs and such. But I found myself thrown out of the story more than once trying to digest these pieces in the middle of the others. Overall, this is a great book looking at a part of WWII that isn't often explored in WWII literature.

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