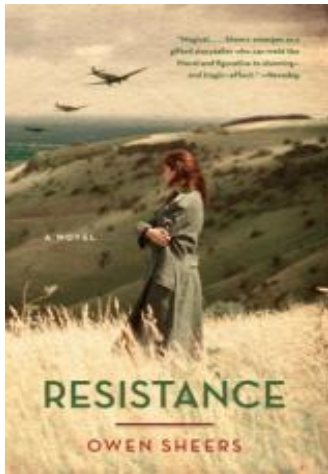


Resistance

by Owen Sheers



About the Book

1944. After the fall of Russia and the failed D-Day landings, a German counterattack lands on British soil. Within a month, half of Britain is occupied. The seat of British government has fled to Worcester, Churchill to Canada. A network of British resistance cells is all that is left to defy the German army.

Against this backdrop, *Resistance* opens with Sarah Lewis, a twenty-six-year-old farmer's wife, waking to find her husband, Tom, has disappeared. She is not alone, as all the other women in the Welsh border valley of Olchon wake to find their husbands gone. With this sudden and unexplained absence, the women regroup as an isolated, all-female community and wait, hoping for news.

Later, a German patrol arrives in the valley, the purpose of their mission a mystery. When a severe winter forces the two groups together, a fragile mutual dependency develops. Sarah begins a faltering acquaintance with the patrol's commanding officer, Albrecht Wolfram, and it is to her that he reveals the purpose of the patrol. But as the pressure of the war beyond presses in on this isolated community, this fragile state of harmony is increasingly threatened.

Imbued with immense imaginative breadth and confidence, Owen Sheers's debut novel unfolds with the pace and intensity of a thriller. A hymn to the glorious landscape of the Welsh border territories and a portrait of a community under siege, **Resistance** is a first novel of grace and power.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the ways in which the very specific landscape and setting of the novel not only allows the isolationist plot to develop but also lends the narrative both an important historical and thematic context.
2. To whom or to what does the novel's title, **Resistance**, apply? To what extent does Albrecht fulfill the literary figure

of the 'Good German'? Is he, in fact, a 'good' man?

3. To what extent does Albrecht fulfill the literary figure of the 'Good German'? Is he, in fact, a 'good' man?
4. What does the development of Sarah's diary entries to Tom tell us about her personal development across the arc of the novel?
5. Towards the end of the novel Bethan thinks to herself 'better by far to live in the truth and know it, however bad it might be, than hide yourself away behind ignorance and habit.' Don't some of the characters prove otherwise?
6. Two particularly striking 'hinge' scenes in the book are the playing of a Bach cello suite and the shooting of a horse. What are the overall significance of these scenes within the book as a whole?
7. Who or what is George aiming at in his final scene in the book?
8. Is Maggie a collaborator or a defender of her way of life and the other women?
9. Discuss the significance of the quotations used to lead into each of the three parts of the novel.
10. The German invasion of Britain was a very real threat during the early part of World War II in 1940/41. Does Sheers' re-imagining of the invasion in 1944 seem believable? Why do you think Sheers chooses to set his invasion in 1944, as opposed to the more likely 1941?
11. What do you know about the real Resistance movement in Britain?
12. To what extent is **Resistance** an anti-war novel?

Author Bio

Owen Sheers was born in Fiji in 1974 and brought up in Abergavenny, South Wales. The winner of an Eric Gregory Award and the 1999 *Vogue* Young Writer's Award, his first collection of poetry, **The Blue Book** was short-listed for the Welsh Book of the Year and the Forward Prize Best 1st Collection 2001. His debut prose work **The Dust Diaries**, a non-fiction narrative set in Zimbabwe, was short-listed for the Royal Society of Literature's Ondaatje Prize and won the Welsh Book of the Year 2005. Owen has also written for Radio, TV and newspapers. In 2004 he was Writer in Residence at The Wordsworth Trust and was selected as one of the Poetry Book Society's *20 Next Generation Poets*. Owen's 2nd collection of poetry, **Skirrid Hill** won a 2006 Somerset Maugham Award. *Unicorns, almost* his one man play based on the life and poetry of the WWII poet Keith Douglas was developed by Old Vic, New Voices. He is currently writing a play about WWII poet Alun Lewis and collaborating with composer Rachel Portman on a dramatic song-cycle to be performed at the BBC Proms 2007. A recent recipient of the Cullman Centre Fellowship, Owen Sheers lives in London.

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