

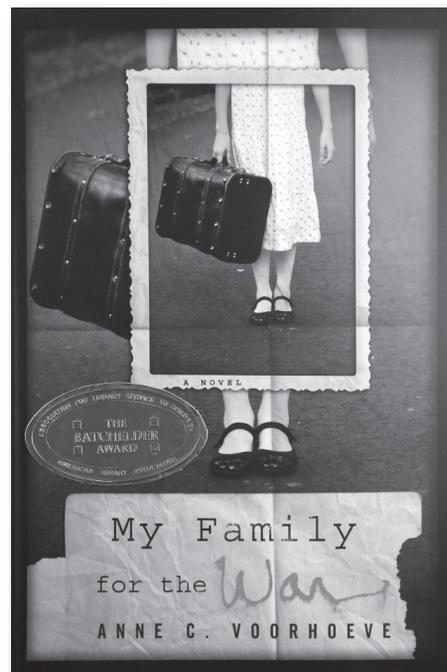
Good morning, everyone. As an editor, it is sometimes difficult to get a grasp on a book in a foreign language based on a partial translation. And then multiply that difficulty by the number of excellent novels set during World War II, and the decision to publish becomes even harder. But when Dial got in the first three chapters of *My Family for the War*, published in Germany as *Liverpool Street*, it was clear right away that this was something very different and very special.

The translator worked in bits. Each month, she would send in another few chapters, and I eagerly awaited each new part. I would get caught up in Frances's story, and then it would be over and I would have to wait again. I began to understand how Dickens's fans must have felt as they crowded the docks waiting for the next installment of *A Tale of Two Cities* to arrive.

In a way, *My Family for the War* is also a tale of two cities—Berlin and London. Frances was known as Franziska, or Ziska, in Germany. Despite growing up Protestant, her Jewish ancestry attracted the attention of the Nazis and she was forced to flee on the Kindertransport without her family. In London, she was taken in by an Orthodox Jewish family and she learned their ways. This is a story of duality. Two girls, two nations, two religions, two mothers, two evacuations, two romances, two lives, two families.

At one point after the Blitz, Frances is talking to her friend Professor Schueler, and he asks about her family.

I hesitated. Did he really want to hear that Papa was no longer alive, Uncle Matthew was missing in France and Walter imprisoned on the Isle of Man, that Gary was being hunted down by U-boats in the Atlantic, and that I hadn't heard anything from Mamu in weeks? "Mrs. Shepard and I are running the theater by ourselves now!" I dodged his question.



Of all the people Frances mentions, only two are her blood family. The rest are the people she has collected, who love her, and whom she loves. They are her family for the war, and beyond.

Anne Voorhoeve has written a beautifully unique and poignant story about a girl who seems to have nothing, but has everything. Two of everything, in fact. Instead of focusing on what she has lost, Frances sees what she has gained. She is a complicated, unforgettable character whose journeys enrich the entire canon of stories set during World War II. And it was definitely worth waiting for.

And I am so pleased to have been able to help bring this wonderful novel to English readers. My heartfelt thanks go to ALSC, and especially to Jean Hatfield and the rest of the Batchelder Award Committee. This recognition does so much to bring attention to foreign language novels in translation. With your continued support, we can keep publishing extraordinary stories from other countries for English readers. Many thanks. ☺



Batchelder Award Acceptance Speech

A Tale of Two Cities

Heather Alexander

Heather Alexander is an Associate Editor at Dial Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group, which won the 2012 Mildred L. Batchelder Award for My Family for the War, published in Germany as Liverpool Street, by Anne C. Voorhoeve, translated by Tammi Reichel. She delivered these acceptance remarks at the American Library Association Annual Conference in Chicago on July 1, 2013.