



How I Live Now

By Meg Rosoff

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“Every war has turning points and every person too.”

Fifteen-year-old Daisy is sent from Manhattan to England to visit her aunt and cousins she's never met: three boys near her age, and their little sister. Her aunt goes away on business soon after Daisy arrives. The next day bombs go off as London is attacked and occupied by an unnamed enemy.

As power fails, and systems fail, the farm becomes more isolated. Despite the war, it's a kind of Eden, with no adults in charge and no rules, a place where Daisy's uncanny bond with her cousins grows into something rare and extraordinary. But the war is everywhere, and Daisy and her cousins must lead each other into a world that is unknown in the scariest, most elemental way.

A riveting and astonishing story.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Possibly one of the most talked about books of the year, Meg Rosoff's novel for young adults is the winner of the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize 2004. Heralded by some as the next best adult crossover novel since Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, who himself has given the book a thunderously good quote, this author's debut is undoubtedly stylish, readable and fascinating.

Rosoff's story begins in modern day London, slightly in the future, and as its heroine has a 15-year-old Manhattanite called Daisy. She's picked up at the airport by Edmond, her English cousin, a boy in whose life she is destined to become intricately entwined. Daisy stays at her Aunt Penn's country farmhouse for the summer with Edmond and her other cousins. They spend some idyllic weeks together--often alone with Aunt Penn away travelling in Norway. Daisy's cousins seem to have an almost telepathic bond, and Daisy is mesmerized by Edmond and soon falls in love with him.

But their world changes forever when an unnamed aggressor invades England and begins a years-long occupation. Daisy and Edmond are separated when soldiers take over their home, and Daisy and Piper, her younger cousin, must travel to another place to work. Their experiences of occupation are never kind and Daisy's pain, living without Edmond, is tangible.

Rosoff's writing style is both brilliant and frustrating. Her descriptions are wonderful, as is her ability to portray the emotions of her characters. However, her long sentences and total lack of punctuation for dialogue can be exhausting. Her narrative is deeply engaging and yet a bit unbelievable. The end of the book is dramatic, but too sudden. The book has a raw, unfinished feel about it, yet that somehow adds to the experience of reading it. (Age 14 and over) --John McLay

From Publishers Weekly

This riveting first novel paints a frighteningly realistic picture of a world war breaking out in the 21st century. Told from the point of view of 15-year-old Manhattan native Daisy, the novel follows her arrival and her stay with cousins on a remote farm in England. Soon after Daisy settles into their farmhouse, her Aunt Penn becomes stranded in Oslo and terrorists invade and occupy England. Daisy's candid, intelligent narrative draws readers into her very private world, which appears almost utopian at first with no adult supervision (especially by contrast with her home life with her widowed father and his new wife). The heroine finds herself falling in love with cousin Edmond, and the author credibly creates a world in which social taboos are temporarily erased. When soldiers usurp the farm, they send the girls off separately from the boys, and Daisy becomes determined to keep herself and her youngest cousin, Piper, alive. Like the ripple effects of paranoia and panic in society, the changes within Daisy do not occur all at once, but they have dramatic effects. In the span of a few months, she goes from a self-centered, disgruntled teen to a courageous survivor motivated by love and compassion. How she comes to understand the effects the war has had on others provides the greatest evidence of her growth, as well as her motivation to get through to those who seem lost to war's consequences. Teens may feel that they have experienced a war themselves as they vicariously witness Daisy's worst nightmares. Like the heroine, readers will emerge from the rubble much shaken, a little wiser and with perhaps a greater sense of humanity. Ages 12-up. (Aug.)

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From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up--Daisy, 15, a troubled New York City teen with a distant father, a wicked (and pregnant)

stepmother, and an eating disorder, is sent to England to stay on a rambling farm with her deceased mother's sister's family. It is made up of Aunt Penn "who always has Important Work To Do Related to the Peace Process" and her brood of children: Osbert, 16; 14-year-old twins Isaac and Edmond; and 9-year-old Piper. As the kids spend more and more time together, Daisy warms to them, beginning to tune in to a seemingly psychic bond that the siblings share. When Aunt Penn travels to Oslo, Daisy begins a sexual relationship with Edmond. At the same time, hostile forces invade England. Originally enjoying the freedom of a world that seems to have forgotten them, the cousins are inevitably separated, leaving Piper and Daisy to struggle across the countryside and rejoin the others. Daisy's voice is uneven, being at times teenage vapid, while elsewhere sporting a vocabulary rich with 50-cent words, phrases, and references. In addition, Rosoff barely scratches the surface of the material at hand. At times, this is both intentional and effective (the enemy is never named) but for the most part the dearth of explanation creates insurmountable questions around the basic mechanisms of the plot. There is no explanation of how a small force could take out all communications (including cell phones) and proceed to overrun and to control an entire country. Perhaps even stranger, the ramifications of psychic abilities and underage sexual relationships between first cousins is never addressed.—*Douglas P. Davey, Halton Hills Public Libraries, Ontario, Canada*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Grady Meraz:

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