

**Valor Wings**

by Sam Subity

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The Story

Everyone in Iris's small English village avoids the dragon in the woods. Everyone, that is, except for Iris. She knows Galahad would never hurt her—she's been caring for the dragon since he lost his mother when he was a baby. When Galahad is accused of stealing military rations, Iris strikes a bargain that will spare Galahad's life . . . but send him off to the war brewing in Europe. Soon after, she receives news that her brother is among the troops trapped in France by the advancing German troops. Refusing to give up hope, Iris devises a desperate plan that will either save both her brother and her best friend—or end in disaster.

Meanwhile in Belgium, Max's school day is abruptly interrupted by some terrifying news: The Germans have invaded his country. He and his grandmother are forced to flee for their lives west toward France where they hope to find safety. But when they are separated after a German attack, Max must continue the treacherous journey on his own.

Across hundreds of miles, the stories of Iris and Max steadily converge toward an explosive conclusion that will change them both forever. Along the way, they each must find the inner strength and resolve—the valor—to do the impossible.

Reading Group Questions

1. No one believes that Iris can train Galahad to fly but she refuses to give up. Can you think of a time when you worked hard to prove someone wrong?
2. Max and Iris are very different characters. Which did you relate to more? Why?
3. Max and his grandmother can only take a few belongings when they flee Belgium. What would you take with you if you had to leave home quickly?
4. What makes someone brave? Can you talk about a time you showed courage in a difficult situation?

About the Author



Sam Subity loves writing stories that explore the magic and wonder of being a kid. When he's not writing, you might find him running the trails of northern California where the endless, winding miles past fog and ocean inspire stories of adventure and mystery.

Author Q&A

What was your inspiration for *Valor Wings*?

The story was inspired by my daughter whose voracious reading habits had her working her way through two very different series at the same time. One was *Anne of Green Gables*, and the other was *Wings of Fire*. I started wondering what a mashup of these series would look like, and that spark eventually led to my heroine Iris, who I like to think is similar to the famous Anne, albeit living in WWII-era England and with a dragon as a best friend.

What kind of research did you do?

The research was one of the most fun parts of writing *Valor Wings*! I spent countless hours digging through a variety of sources like eyewitness accounts of the Dunkirk evacuation where I was regularly astonished by the bravery of the people who put their lives on the line to rescue the soldiers trapped in France. To get the period details right, I pored over fashion catalogs of the era and read other stories written contemporary to that time to understand how kids talked and behaved in England nearly a century ago. And while I was writing, I practically wallpapered my office with maps of the United Kingdom and Europe to help me plot the movements of my characters throughout the story.

Was it challenging to write two points of view with intersecting storylines?

It was very challenging! It was like a puzzle trying to work out the series of events that day by day draw my two main characters together through enormous hardships until their paths collide in a huge finale. I hope it's equally fun for readers to follow with anticipation as Iris's and Max's storylines intersect.

What's the best part about being a writer?

The absolute best part is getting to talk about books and writing all the time with young readers all over the world. I wish I'd met an author when I was growing up, and just hope I can inspire maybe a few kids to follow their dreams like I did, whether that's becoming an author, a doctor, or even an astronaut. I also love getting fan mail from kids saying thanks for visiting with them or sending me a drawing of their favorite character from one of my books.