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Mr. Churchill's Secretary: A Maggie Hope Novel, Book 1



Synopsis

For fans of Jacqueline Winspear, Laurie R. King, and Anne Perry, Mr. Churchill's Secretary captures the drama of an era of unprecedented challenge - and the greatness that rose to meet it. London, 1940: Winston Churchill has just been sworn in, war rages across the Channel, and the threat of a Blitz looms larger by the day. But none of this deters Maggie Hope. She graduated at the top of her college class and possesses all the skills of the finest minds in British intelligence, but her gender qualifies her only to be the newest typist at No. 10 Downing Street. Her indefatigable spirit and remarkable gifts for codebreaking, though, rival those of even the highest men in government, and Maggie finds that working for the prime minister affords her a level of clearance she could never have imagined - and opportunities she will not let pass. In troubled, deadly times, with air-raid sirens sending multitudes underground, access to the War Rooms also exposes Maggie to the machinations of a menacing faction determined to do whatever it takes to change the course of history. Ensnared in a web of spies, murder, and intrigue, Maggie must work quickly to balance her duty to King and Country with her chances for survival. And when she unravels a mystery that points toward her own family's hidden secrets, she'll discover that her quick wits are all that stand between an assassin's murderous plan and Churchill himself. In this daring debut, Susan Elia MacNeal blends meticulous research on the era, psychological insight into Winston Churchill, and the creation of a riveting main character, Maggie Hope, into a spectacularly crafted novel.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I bought this book for my mother's 90th birthday. She did work in Churchill's war office during the war and went to the Yalta Conference in Russia. I didn't know how the whole espionage aspect of the book would go over with her, but was hoping that the description of the book as an accurate picture of wartime England would prove to be enough to interest her. She says it is very accurate. It evoked some memories for her of working as a secretary, being looked down on by some of the older secretaries due to her limited wardrobe (She was just out of school and fulfilling her wartime service), hearing her father's correct conclusion when she was given a clothing list that included a warm coat for an undisclosed trip ("You're going to Russia."), etc. etc. Thus, my five star rating--approval by someone who lived it and priceless memories.

This story took awhile to build character descriptions..... At first, I was not sure I would make it thru..... but I do like the time period and kept reading. In the final analysis..... I stayed with it..... came to like the book and plan to read the next in the series..... I will give the author another chance to make me a follower.

I liked the book and may read others in the series. My only complaint was the sometimes contrived scenes and conversations between the female characters; it didn't particularly enhance the story and took away from the tension that was occurring between Maggie and Churchill. Several of the male characters came across as dolts and that too seemed a bit contrived. Despite these shortcomings I would recommend the book and hope the others in the series are better written.

This is a fun book. It never slows down enough to be boring; the characters are delightful, the dialogue is snappy. And hallelujah, it has very few typos or grammar errors. It always makes for fun reading if you don't have to worry about what the author really means because there are so many typos in the sentence. In fact, I could very nearly give this book a 5. But not quite, and for two reasons. First, when someone comes in raving about getting the role of "Rebecca" in a stage production of Daphne du Maurier's "Rebecca," your jaw just has to drop a little. "Rebecca" is one of my top five favorite books; I've seen the movie and two television adaptations of it. And one of the two things that made the book and all adaptations unique is, "Rebecca" just ain't in it, and if the stage play was written by du Maurier herself (and it was) you'd better show me a copy of it before I'll believe the author went that far from her own book. Unless the author can produce a copy of du Maurier's stage play, I'm far more likely to believe she figured nobody had ever read "Rebecca"--certainly Miss Macneal didn't--and so she didn't bother to check her facts. This leads

me to question her credibility on other things, and in a historical novel, you can't afford to lose credibility. The second thing, and one more people probably noticed and were annoyed by, is that the book doesn't end, or that is, it's full of fake endings. Bad guy's dead, whew, story's over. But no! The other bad guy got away, so it's not really over. And this just keeps going, so I lost count of how many times it ended before it really ended. (And the ending isn't quite satisfying, because it leads into the next book, which I didn't buy.) Still, as I said, it's a lot of fun.

Let me begin with, this book is an easy and fast read. It isn't a Pulitzer but it is interesting. I love history, love reading about it be it fictionalized or true. This is a combination of using real history to make an interesting mystery come to life. The author did a good job with the facts and made her characters realistic. I would recommend this book without hesitation.

I love a mystery that takes me back in time and teaches me about major historic events. Several years ago, I read myriad novels written about WWII. The more I read, the more I wanted to know about this time in history that preceded me by a decade. I purchased a biography on Winston Churchill, but had a difficult time getting through the first chapter. When I began reading Susan Elia MacNeal's novel, *Mr. Churchill's Secretary*, the interest was peaked again. The book is the first in MacNeal's *Maggie Hope Series*. After the writer visited the Cabinet War Rooms and the Imperial War Museum in London, the story of a young American woman who worked as a secretary for Winston Churchill during the war began to unfold in the writer's mind. It's London, 1940; Churchill has just taken over as prime minister. Soon Maggie Hope's intelligence and mathematical ability results in her breaking German codes that threaten to destroy England. Her superiors begin to see Maggie in a new light, but as her involvement becomes more entangled in government intelligence, she becomes suspicious of her colleagues as well as her close friends. The story moves along at breakneck speed, and just when you think the tale is nearing conclusion, the plot takes a new turn. MacNeal has given her readers an insight into Churchill, not only as a political mastermind and intriguing statesman, but a husband and father figure to those who worked under him. Thanks to MacNeal's thrilling account of what took place in the War Rooms in 1940, I've taken that biography off the shelf and will give it another try.

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