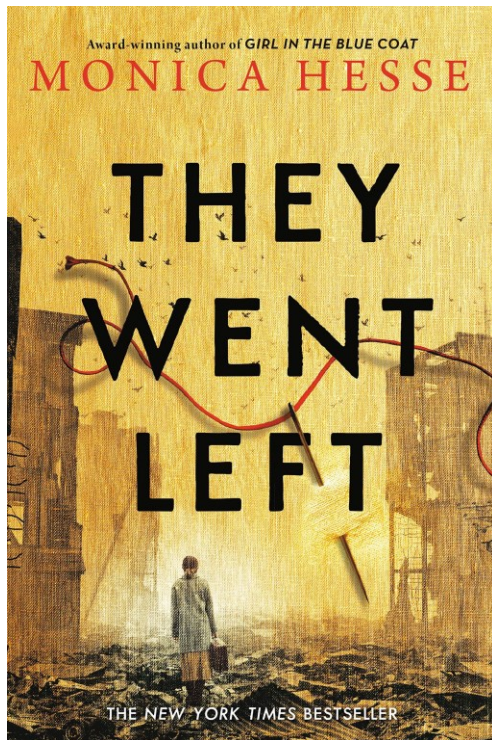


THEY WENT LEFT



Young Adult

By Monica Hesse

ISBN: 978-0-316-49057-3

Book Summary:

A teenage Holocaust survivor looking for her brother, meets new people and they exchange their life stories.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains inexplicit sexual activities; moderate violence; profanity; suicide commentary; and alcohol use.

2/5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

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xiv	As soon as the woman bent, the guard brought her mallet down on the woman's back, and she yelped in pain.
14	In that line, the lucky people were sent to hard labor. The unlucky people- we could see the smoke. The smoke was the burning bodies of unlucky people.
17	Sometimes it's not that families got tired. Sometimes they were shot on the spot. Sometimes it was whole towns, into mass graves.
58	Please let them just steal my things and not beat me. Please let them just beat me and not rape me. Please let them just rape me and not kill me.
65	This young soldier said he could manage something, but it would be a big favor, requiring payment. I put my hand down his pants; I was very pretty then. Three minutes later, he agreed.
70	But as the rumble of the wheels began, sending vibrations up our legs, he pulled a small bottle of amber liquid from his coat and handed it to me for a taste. Nalewka, spiced vodka, sweet and strong, the small sip burning my throat. I passed the bottle back, he took his own drink, and returned it to me again.
71	"For a noisy mind," the old man says. Another bottle.
85	Zyklon B was a pesticide. It came in pellets that dissolved into gas. I heard it was originally designed to kill rodents. In Birkenau, I unloaded those canisters, and then guards would take them to the buildings they called the showers. There they would pack hundreds of people inside and use the Zyklon B, and it worked on people, too.
115	They unloaded the cars one by one; they came to the cars screaming, with dogs straining at their leads, biting anyone who didn't move quickly enough. The guards pulled women by their hair. They brought whips down on their backs and legs, and they shoved families apart to send them to separate lines.
120	Bissel, the woman with the gashed, angry holes in her legs, the one from Ravensbruck, swore she would one day go to her daughter living on a farm. She sat on the windowsill one morning and laughed and laughed, and then suddenly she hurled herself outside, and we heard screams from passerby when her body hit the pavement.
126	"Rudolf said, 'Put her in the right dress and she's still fuckable.' He said, 'In the war, all Jewesses would fuck for a scrap of bread.'" <p>..." In war, all dirty men were glad for starvation," I spit back reflexively, overcome by anger at Rudolf's disgusting statement. "Since they could use it to try to get us to fuck them."</p>
193	The darting in the bodice that should define her breasts stops at her nipples, but halfway down her midsection, sticking out obscenely around her waist.
258	And suddenly we were kissing
259	As soon as our lips meet, my heart jolts; my head feels dizzy. <p>...Our lips meet more softly this time, less clumsily, and so slowly time has stopped.</p> <p>I've kissed someone before. The first time was at a birthday party when I was thirteen, when a boy named Lev and I were dared to go behind a dining room</p>

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	<p>curtain. ...It doesn't feel like kissing Lev did, like a pantomime or a rehearsal for the real thing. I can feel this kiss rushing through my entire body.</p>
261	<p>I cut him off before he can say more, putting my arms around his waist, crushing my lips against his. We're kissing again, only now we're breathing harder; I can feel his body start to respond to mine, feel the way my hands start out trembling but grow more certain, and then more certain than they've ever been about anything. I slide my hands under his shirt and then up against the bare skin of his chest, where his heart crashes against my palm. He gasps against my lips and then reaches for the buttons on my dress, lingering at the top one, near the nape of my neck. "Can I-" "Yes," I say, but then I have to do it myself when he can't work the button out of its hole. When I'm finished, he gently pulls my chin up using the tips of his fingers, and then he touches his tongue to the now-bare hollow of my neck. My whole body shudders as he manages the next button on his own, and then the button after that. I forgot that pleasure could feel this strong. ...How the door is thin, and unlocked, and could be opened any minute. How Aunt Maja told me what happens on wedding nights, but it was always put like that- what happens on wedding nights- and not what happens with a boy you've known only a few weeks. I close my eyes, trying to block Aunt Maja's face, but now my body is warring with itself. "Wait." "What?" Josef says in between kisses on my neck, soft, slow kisses that make me melt.</p>
264	<p>"I'm missing my right molars." He pries his mouth open with his fingers, nodding at me to look inside, where two black holes replace what used to be teeth. "A soldier hit me with the butt of his rifle, and they flew out of my mouth." ..."My shoulder was dislocated, and it didn't set right," he says. "I can't do even one push-up anymore. I have trouble holding myself up on my arms if I'm in a certain position. If I'm..." He trails off. He's not laughing anymore. By the lamplight, I can tell that his face has turned red, and then I feel myself blush, too, because I can tell what he's trying to say: If I were on my back, and he was above me, it might not work, he might not be able to hold himself there. "I don't mind," I say. Josef hesitates. "Do I need to...should I go get-" He doesn't finish, but I know what he was about to say. Should he go get protection? Could this have consequences? "No." I'm overcome by a wave of tenderness and then one last wave of nerves. "I haven't- I haven't bled in a long time. Josef, when my clothes are off, you can count my ribs. Even after months in the hospital, I don't look very...womanly." My breasts are gone, is what I mean to tell him. My cycle is dried up. I am shriveled; I am a nothing-girl.</p>

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	<p>"I don't mind," he says, and reaches to turn off the lamp. My final confession and this final darkness have liberated me. He knows every embarrassing thing about my body.</p>
265	<p>"Please stop talking," I instruct him. And he does. He sits on the edge of the bed and puts his hands on my waist while I finish unbuttoning the rest of the buttons on my new purple dress and let it slip to the floor. I take his hands, and I put them on my flattened chest. From his sharp intake of breath, I can tell I am not too flat for him. He puts his lips on my stomach, and I run my hands through his hair. I kiss the top of his head, and we remember that we are alive.</p>
267	<p>My father was already dead. My father was dead because, when he saw the German soldiers kick the old pharmacist, he went to help him, and so they shot him. First, one soldier viciously jammed his hand against my father's throat, knocking out his wind, and then they shot him.</p>
284	<p>I wonder if I was supposed to do something when I left- leave him a note or wake him again. I don't know the protocol for leaving a man's bed in the middle of the night.</p>
286	<p>I told him that when I was about to be naked in his bedroom.</p>
301	<p>"I know," Josef says. "But Buchenwald- I've heard there was a patch of woods called the 'singing forest.' It was called that because they would torture men there. Tie prisoners' hands behind their backs and then hang them from their wrists and leave them there. From the camp, you could hear the men screaming. The singing forest." My stomach turns. Is this what my brother had to witness? Were the sounds accompanying him to sleep every night? The sounds of tortured men begging to die?</p>
323	<p>He leans in and kisses me. And for a moment, I kiss him back; for a moment, I consider that this is what I could do instead. I could stand here and kiss him back, his fingers tangled in my hair, his lips urgent against mine.</p>
330	<p>And the soldier used his hand to break my father's windpipe. ...I waited in lines with all the other Jews of Sosnowiec to learn their fate on the twelfth of August in 1942, and my father ran to help the pharmacist in the mud, and Josef punched Rudolf's windpipe in the courtyard. And the soldier punched my father's windpipe in the soccer stadium, except that neither of them were punches, they were slices at the throat with the meaty L of a hand.</p>
331	<p>Just the basics, the dirtiest of basics: A knee to the groin. A jab in the eyeballs. Or, hand flat like a knife, a vicious stab to the throat, before your enemy was paying attention, before he even knew you were fighting. It's what brought my father to his knees in the stadium. When he tried to help up the pharmacist, a soldier jabbed him in the neck, then they shot him.</p>
332	<p>"You were just looking for someone to bed? You thought what Rudolf did when I arrived- that maybe I'd fuck for a scrap of bread?"</p>
334	<p>"The soldier did hit me. I saw him harassing a girl, and I tried to stop him. He hit me with the butt of his rifle, and my teeth flew out..."</p>

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336	This man has kissed me. This man has been inside me.
340	<p>I could see a guard line up three people, front to back, and shoot a bullet through them all at once to use only one bullet. I could see, in my mind, the memory of my own father receiving a bullet to the head, and the soft way he crumpled to the ground.</p> <p>...I'd taken off Abek's jacket to use as his pillow, and now I bunched it up in my hands. I started to tell his favorite stories. I put the jacket over his nose and mouth. He didn't struggle. He wasn't conscious anymore. I don't even know if he was alive anymore. He might have gone already; he was so still, I could no longer see his chest rise and fall.</p>

Profanity	Count
Ass	4
Fuck	4
Piss	7
Shit	4