



Caleb's Wars by David L. Dudley

Subjects: Segregation—Fiction; Family life—Georgia—Fiction; World War, 1939-1945—Fiction; Prisoners of war—Fiction

Book Lists: Civil Rights



15-year-old Caleb is not having a good year. He wants a job in the new restaurant in town. But, he has a few problems; he lives in rural Georgia in 1944 with Jim Crow laws, there is a Second World War killing Americans overseas, and he has a difficult family life. Because of the Jim Crow laws, he must behave a certain way around white people—step off the sidewalk when they approach, never look them in the eye, never speak his mind. Because of the war he must deal with captured Germans in a nearby POW camp who work in the fields and the stores throughout his town.

But it was his family that was really opposed to the job. His father would have him stay away from town, away from white folk and Germans. Once, when Caleb disobeyed him and got into a fight with a white boy, his father whipped him. His father told him, “Don’t you know by now that white folks’d just as soon kill you as look at you?” His mother would have him spend more time in church and find comfort in religion. His brother just makes him look bad in comparison because he has joined the segregated army and is about to be sent overseas.

But Caleb really wants the job. So, against his father’s wishes, he takes one working at the new whites-only restaurant, washing dishes along with other African-American workers and a German POW named Andreas. Although Andreas is the enemy, Caleb can’t help but be drawn to the friendly young German. In fact, Caleb finds it hard to believe that this new quiet young boy could have tried to kill American soldiers. He almost forgets that he is someone to be hated until Caleb finds out that white POWs, like Andreas, are allowed to eat at the Dixie Belle, where he and his friends cannot be served. It is too much for Caleb. How will he ever accept the rules he must follow as a black boy while watching a white boy, who tried to kill Americans, sit where he cannot. Caleb must make decisions as to who he is and how he will behave. (*Hold up book*) Read *Caleb's Wars* by David Dudley and learn what it means to risk everything for the rewards of self-respect.