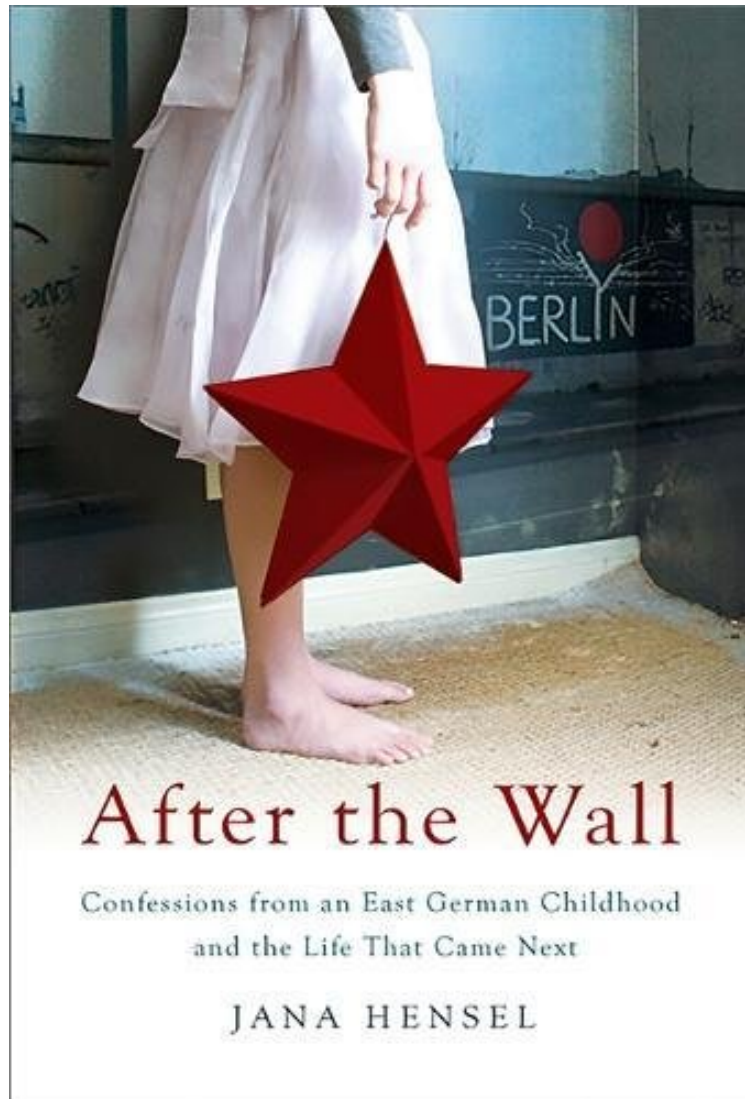


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After the Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life that Came Next

Jana Hensel

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Jana Hensel : **After the Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life that Came Next** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised After the Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life that Came Next:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. DDR 2By Kilgore TroutPart of my temporary obsession with East

German after seeing "The Lives of Others." Poignant memoir of growing up in the GDR of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well this is different. By William J. Overman I'm giving this a 3/5 because at times the book is very interesting culturally of the period that happened during the fall of the Berlin wall. However the author goes out of her way to idealize herself to the reader as the prime source of all that is good during this time period. It glosses over periods in history that should not be glossed over as assimilation of East Germany was almost immediate due to the Soviets holding back its push forward. In a manner of saying this I found this book both interesting and boring at the same time which rarely happens to me. It was like looking back in a grey past that had no liveliness to which to speak of as nothing stuck out to me. The repetitions occur over and over again through out the book never piercing the veil of intrigue that the book was supposed to explain. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Read both the German and English version By EE.J. I've read both the German and English version. I think it did a great job in explaining the former East-German life, even though I believe that the original version in German was able to capture the emotions and sentiments a bit better. But I guess it's not really fair to compare those two, since the German language is more expressively exhaustive to begin with.

Jana Hensel was thirteen on November 9, 1989, the night the Berlin Wall fell. In all the euphoria over German reunification, no one stopped to think what it would mean for Jana and her generation of East Germans. These were the kids of the seventies, who had grown up in the shadow of Communism with all its hokey comforts: the Young Pioneer youth groups, the cheerful Communist propaganda, and the comforting knowledge that they lived in a Germany unblemished by an ugly Nazi past and a callous capitalist future. Suddenly everything was gone. East Germany disappeared, swallowed up by the West, and in its place was everything Jana and her friends had coveted for so long: designer clothes, pop CDs, Hollywood movies, supermarkets, magazines. They snapped up every possible Western product and mannerism. They changed the way they talked, the way they walked, what they read, where they went. They cut off from their parents. They took English lessons, and opened bank accounts. Fifteen years later, they all have the right haircuts and drive the right cars, but who are they? Where are they going? In *After the Wall*, Jana Hensel tells the story of her confused generation of East Germans, who were forced to abandon their past and feel their way through a foreign landscape to an uncertain future. Now as they look back, they wonder whether the oppressive, yet comforting life of their childhood wasn't so bad after all.

From Publishers Weekly Hensel was born in Leipzig, East Germany, in 1976 and was 13 when the Berlin Wall fell. This intriguing but frustrating memoir, a bestseller in Germany, portrays the disorientation of her generation, whose upbringing under communism ended abruptly with the integration of East and West Germany. Hensel rambles through a wide range of subjects: the erasure of memory; East German youth's alienation from their Western peers; her ambivalence about her childhood; their inability to adjust to the new world, which resulted in a role reversal in which Hensel had to "interpret" Western customs for her parents; and her generation's compulsion to disguise themselves as Western, changing their clothes and even their accents. But the disappearance of the artifacts of her childhood and the lack of value attributed by her Western friends to her memories leave Hensel at a loss. According to Clarke's note at the book's end, this was the first title to expose the experience of Hensel's generation. Although the memoir clearly struck a chord in Germany, it is so blurred by the "twilight zone" of Hensel's existence, "in which daily life seems arbitrary, provisional, and somewhat unreal," that Clarke's thoughts more clearly reveal East German history and Hensel's generation than the author does herself. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist A best-seller in Germany under the title *Zonenkinder*, Hensel's memoir is one of the first from her generation to examine the cultural effects of communism's fall in East Germany. When the Berlin Wall came down, Hensel was only 13 years old, and her high-school class was the first to follow a West German curriculum. Hensel writes refreshingly unaffected personal anecdotes about growing up behind the iron curtain and, postcommunism, about how she and her young adult peers strove to assimilate in the West--losing accents and clothing styles--anything that would betray which side of the wall they grew up on. With candor, deep insight, and occasional bursts of acid wit, Hensel describes the bewildering divides between older generations of East Germans and her own. And in deeply moving observations, she shows how the universal ache of leaving childhood behind was, for her, even more profoundly disorienting because an entire culture, not just a childhood, had been lost. A fascinating, highly readable memoir that should interest a wide audience. Gillian Engberg Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "Publishing News" "Thirteen when the Berlin Wall came down, Hensel describes what it was like for her generation, growing up with the certainties and strange comforts of a totalitarian regime which was suddenly swept away. Her memoir is of a childhood suddenly truncated, life changed forever as she and many like her try to absorb all the experiences they had missed, behind the wall." "The International Herald Tribune" "[Jana Hensel] shines a fascinating light on the social and emotional consequences as the euphoria dissipated and was slowly replaced by a sense of disenfranchisement, disorientation and confusion... Surprisingly for someone who makes her living as a journalist... her prose is simple and at times almost guileless. Yet far from detracting from her story, this quality

actually enhances the honesty and integrity that runs through her fascinating narration of a changing world."