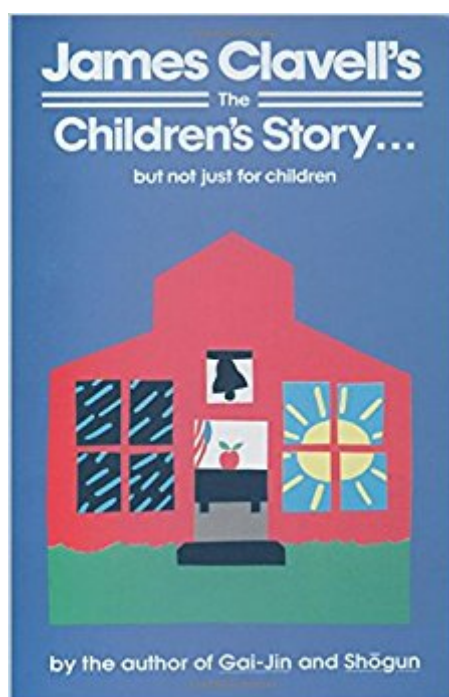


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# The Children's Story



## Synopsis

It was a simple incident in the life of James Clavell—a talk with his young daughter just home from school—that inspired this chilling tale of what could happen in twenty-five quietly devastating minutes. He writes, "The Children's Story came into being that day. It was then that I really realized how vulnerable my child's mind was—any mind, for that matter—under controlled circumstances. Normally I write and rewrite and re-rewrite, but this story came quickly—almost by itself. Barely three words were changed. It pleases me greatly because I kept asking the questions—Questions like, What's the use of 'I pledge allegiance' without understanding? Like Why is it so easy to divert thoughts? Like What is freedom? and Why is so hard to explain? The Children's Story keeps asking me all sorts of questions I cannot answer. Perhaps you can—then your child will...."

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (84 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

For years, I have carried the words of The Children's Story with me, and shared them with as many people as possible. With its roots in words we have taken for granted for years, Clavell forces us to look at all we, as Americans, hold precious, and how vulnerable we are without truly understanding the meaning of that which we espouse. A simple reiteration of the Pledge of Allegiance, taught to first graders across the country, goes deeper than teaching just the words. Set in "small town anywhere", the story of children in a classroom taken over after a military invasion, this powerful piece takes us to the core of our beliefs, and makes us aware, more than ever, of the true meaning of "allegiance". From the cutting up of the American flag in the opening pages, we are consistently

challenged and reawakened. The book teaches us to expect the unexpected, to appreciate our heritage, and to take nothing for granted. A simple, but moving piece of work that should be taken out of the closet, dusted off, and kept on the shelf to be read again and again! Ever since my own children were small, I have taken out *The Children's Story* and reread it together with them each and every Memorial Day. I have bought more copies than I can count, and given them to friends, students, and book clubs. I am proud to say that my son, a Firefighter, immediately following the tragedy of September 11th, donated 100 copies to local schools in hopes that reading and discussing it will help reignite an interest and pride in the words we speak from memory, seldom give much thought to, but will never again take for granted.

A fellow teacher recommended I read this book about 10 years ago, and I did - thankfully. It is provocative and compelling. It hit me like a board between the eyes. Not only are our children so easily molded, so are we - by anyone or any individual or institution that we allow to manipulate us, especially television, movies, the media, this story itself. It reminds me of another obscure little book I found at a library used book sale for a quarter - and it had the same profound effect on me: *Ways of Living and Dying* by Harry Jonesburg, Les Livres, Inc., 1992. These books are not for the faint of heart! Do yourself a favor and read them both. I am 52 years old and I am just now beginning to understand how much my thought has been manipulated all my life. *The Children's Story* was instrumental in that awakening. What I learned from that story: Democracy has its price. Clavell has shown me quite clearly how far freedom of expression can take us as a people. He has shown me that "democracy" is a philosophy that by its very nature defies definition.

James Clavell, author of *SHOGUN*, was inspired to write *THE CHILDREN'S STORY* when his five-year-old daughter expected a dime for reciting the "pledge illegience." Inquiries revealed to Clavell that few people are taught the meaning of the Pledge; they just learn to parrot it. In *THE CHILDREN'S STORY* Clavell dramatizes what can happen when people without true convictions encounter zealots intent on converting them. People whose beliefs are not grounded may be oblivious to almost imperceptible assaults on their value system. *THE CHILDREN'S STORY* reminds us that "the enemy" may not be hideous or foreign but may be attractive, intelligent, reasonable, gentle, and friendly. *THE CHILDREN'S STORY* is ideal for reading aloud. Not only can the contrasting tones of the story be conveyed vocally, the reading and discussion of this story (with occasional pauses to ask, "Who likes the New Teacher?") can be accomplished in approximately the same time required for the events of the story to take place.

As frightening as authors like Stephen King or as gripping as a political dramatist like Tom Clancy might be, they have never written anything near as good as this gem. What would your child do if suddenly his or her teacher told them the American flag was not important? What would a room full of impressionable young children do if taught that it was ok, and in fact good, to spy on their parents? These questions and more are asked in this short but sweet story. And it raises an even scarier question. If we don't teach our children morals, who will? Do we trust our teachers with this job? Hopefully we do, but if not, what should we then do about it? I'm not ripping on teachers-- my wife is a teacher, and a good one. But hopefully this book frightens us just a little bit into thinking about how we can take the responsibility to teach our children ourselves and take this burden away from teachers who already have too much to teach and not enough resources or class space to teach with, as some of them may use it improperly. "Character education" proposed by some to be taught alongside reading, writing, and arithmetic is not the answer. Whose values do we then use to teach? And when do teachers have time to teach it? And do we want our children adopting the values of someone the schoolboard thinks has good morals? This book reminds us that we have a responsibility and a duty to teach our children the right way to live. Read this book-- it will change your mind about a lot of things.

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