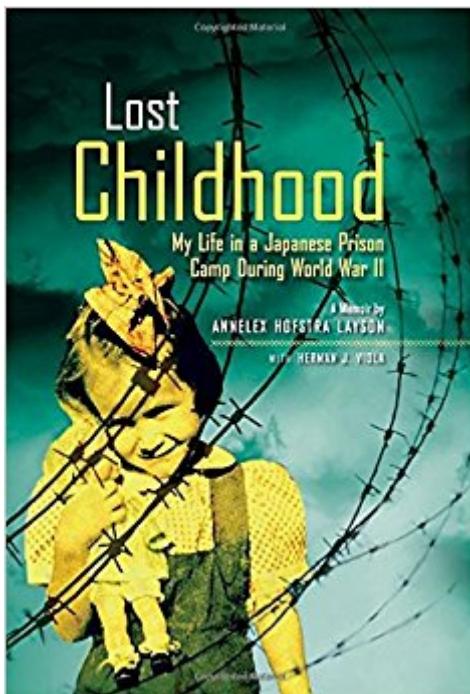


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# Lost Childhood: My Life In A Japanese Prison Camp During World War II



## Synopsis

Lost Childhood is the vivid, first-hand account of the horrors of war through the eyes of a child. This real-life memoir breaks a 60-year silence to tell one woman's riveting story of prisoner life during World War II. As a little Dutch girl in Indonesia, Annelex Hofstra's comfortable world was torn apart when she and her family were sent to Japanese prison camps for three and a half years. The story begins in 1942 when four-year-old Annelex is living on the island of Java in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). Her grandfather is a successful planter, and her father is a pilot instructor in the Royal Netherlands Navy. But her carefree childhood ends as the Japanese invade Java, and along with 10,000 other Dutch residents, Annelex's family is rounded up. With few belongings, they are shipped off to interment camps, to a helpless, unknown future. In a shockingly honest narrative, we learn of the tactics used by their captors to dehumanize the Dutch prisoners. We learn of the grinding daily routine of the prisoners, the food rations, the sleeping arrangements, and the awful sanitary conditions. We share in Annelex's near-death bout with malaria. We also share some of the awful things she witnessed: "extracting parasitic worms from a fellow-prisoner's throat; the agonizing death by starvation of women punished for stealing food; and the sight of bodies being piled high on a truck. Eventually the hell ends and the family is liberated. But the girl's personal hell plagues her in freedom. Just days after she is reunited with her father, he is killed in an explosion. World war is replaced by civil war in Indonesia, forcing the family to flee first to Holland and then to the U.S., where the family tries to mend their broken lives. For 60 years Annelex Hofstra Layson has repressed her early memories, shielding even her husband and children from the horrors of her past. With Lost Childhood, her harrowing ordeal is finally revealed. The author shares her story now to provide hope in young lives torn apart by war, and to inspire future generations to work for peace.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 920L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 112 pages

Publisher: National Geographic Children's Books; No Edition Stated edition (October 14, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1426303211

ISBN-13: 978-1426303210

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (10 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #637,766 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #100 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Holocaust #385 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Military & Wars #3857 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

When I was growing up, we learned everything we could about World War II. Most of the focus was on Hitler's rise to power and the horrors of the concentration camps. However, I don't remember learning anything about the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Annelex Hofstra Layson shares her own account of that harrowing period in her autobiography *Lost Childhood: My Life in a Japanese Prison Camp During World War II*. Before the Pearl Harbor bombing, life was easy and carefree for 4 year old Lex. Her days were filled with playing outside with her older brother and the other neighborhood kids. Her father was a pilot instructor in the Dutch Navy and her mother and grandmother looked after the home and the children with the help of a cook (Kokkie), a maid (Baboa), and a butler (Djongos). Everything changed for the worst after the Japanese invasion of the small island of Java. Lex's father was sent away on a mission and shortly thereafter the rest of the family was forced to relocate. Little Lex was too young to understand that this wasn't a vacation, but a four and a half long internment in the Japanese concentration camps Gegandan and Halmaheria. Separated from her big brother (he was sent to an all male prison camp), Lex and her mother and grandmother endured unimaginable horrors: grueling labor, physical and mental abuse, witnessing murder, starvation, disgusting sanitary conditions and rampant disease. The little Dutch girl managed to survive in thanks to the strength, love, and courage of her mother. Sadly, the liberation from the camps (which wasn't swift) didn't bring an immediate happy ending.

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