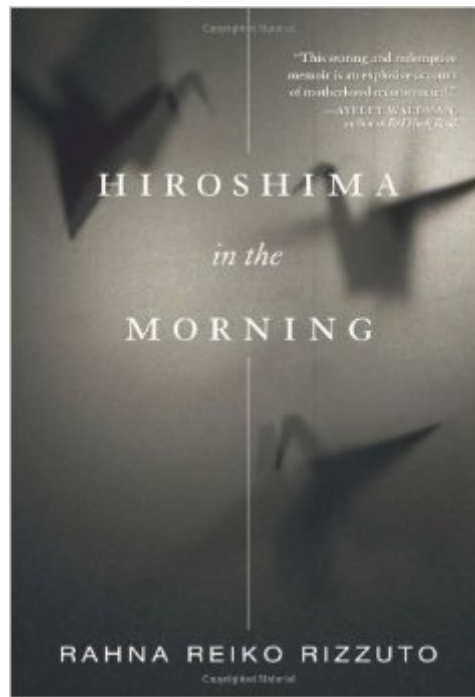


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# Hiroshima In The Morning



## Synopsis

In June 2001 Rahna Reiko Rizzuto went to Hiroshima in search of a deeper understanding of her war-torn heritage. She planned to spend six months there, interviewing the few remaining survivors of the atomic bomb. A mother of two young boys, she was encouraged to go by her husband, who quickly became disenchanted by her absence. It is her first solo life adventure, immediately exhilarating for her, but her research starts off badly. Interviews with the hibakusha feel rehearsed, and the survivors reveal little beyond published accounts. Then the attacks on September 11 change everything. The survivors' carefully constructed memories are shattered, causing them to relive their agonizing experiences and to open up to Rizzuto in astonishing ways. Separated from family and country while the world seems to fall apart, Rizzuto's marriage begins to crumble as she wrestles with her ambivalence about being a wife and mother. Woven into the story of her own awakening are the stories of Hiroshima in the survivors' own words. The parallel narratives explore the role of memory in our lives and show how memory is not history but a story we tell ourselves to explain who we are. Rahna Reiko Rizzuto's highly acclaimed first novel, *Why She Left Us*, won an American Book Award in 2000. She is a faculty member in the MFA in creative writing program at Goddard College, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Much is written here about Rahna Reiko Rizzuto's book "Hiroshima in the Morning" detailing its thrust and theme, but even more regarding praise, ridicule, and legitimate criticism of both book and author. What follows here is more of a review of the reviews, a criticism of the criticism, than a

review of the book; however, there will be some of the latter. A common criticism has much more to do with the author than the book, namely that she is a bad mother, a bad wife for "abandoning" her children. Now all I have to go on is what I read in the book, where it seems to me she clarified the situation in the very beginning at the second page of the Prologue. She notes that her husband Brian asked her "Why are you going to Japan?" She goes on at the very next page to say, "He was the one who urged me to apply" for the grant to spend six months in Japan. Furthermore, on the next page she recalls, "Brian had plenty of help with the children. And, he himself pointed this out, he had always promised to be their primary caretaker, so he owed me a chunk of time." It appears Rahna took him at his word, that he could handle the situation for the six months and that he would support her. It also appears, as we read on, that when reality set in, and did so very soon, the promises were without meaning. No, for those who claim this mother abandoned her children, there is a serious disconnect with reality on their part. Rahna went to Japan to fulfill her commitment upon receiving a grant/fellowship, which Brian had urged her to seek. She had put her children in the caring hands of her husband, the children's father. Yes, the usual deal is that it is the husband/father who takes off days, weeks, months at a time to do research, follow up on company business, etc.

It's hard to put into words the disgust I felt reading this book. What I wanted (and thought I was getting when I bought this) was the story of survivors of the atomic bombing mixed with a New York woman's experiences collecting those stories while her family back home dealt with 9/11. What I actually got was a whiney, poor me, self-centered tale from a woman who I don't think really cared at all about the bombing victims. For a book that is supposed to be focused on the atomic bombing in Hiroshima and the survivors, there's very little of that in here. Maybe 30%. We do get some survivors stories (which are powerful). But they're chopped down/edited until they run a page or less. Even Lily's story, which the author claims is one of the most important she collected in only a few pages (and is really more about the author's experience listening to the story than the story itself). Most of this book is the author talking about her trip to Japan (she hates it/is lonely then loves it (possibly more than her family)). It details her relationship with her husband (as it falls apart) and her relationship with her children (which I have to say shows her in a terrible light...though I still don't see the point of the potty story (which lasted for three pages)). There's also a weird, meandering thought process about the author's mother. I don't know what the point of it was or why it was included at all. And to top it off, there's a ton of words in Japanese in this book (which is great!) except that the author never bothers to actually tell you what most of them mean. It's hard to get into

a story about her family enjoying a meal when you have no idea what they're eating or why it's a problem for her kids.

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