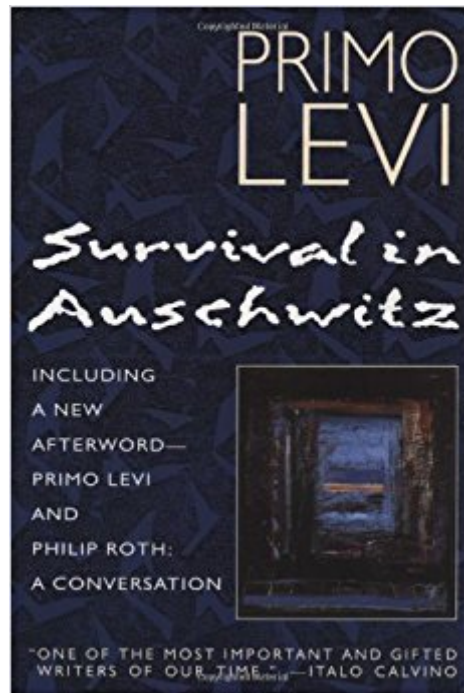




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Survival In Auschwitz



Synopsis

The true and harrowing account of Primo Levi's experience at the German concentration camp of Auschwitz and his miraculous survival; hailed by The Times Literary Supplement as a "true work of art, this edition includes an exclusive conversation between the author and Philip Roth. In 1943, Primo Levi, a twenty-five-year-old chemist and Italian citizen of Jewish race, was arrested by Italian fascists and deported from his native Turin to Auschwitz. Survival in Auschwitz is Levi's classic account of his ten months in the German death camp, a harrowing story of systematic cruelty and miraculous endurance. Remarkable for its simplicity, restraint, compassion, and even wit, Survival in Auschwitz remains a lasting testament to the indestructibility of the human spirit. Included in this new edition is an illuminating conversation between Philip Roth and Primo Levi never before published in book form.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Survival in Auschwitz is a mostly straightforward narrative, beginning with Primo Levi's deportation from Turin, Italy, to the concentration camp Auschwitz in Poland in 1943. Levi, then a 25-year-old chemist, spent 10 months in the camp. Even Levi's most graphic descriptions of the horrors he witnessed and endured there are marked by a restraint and wit that not only gives readers access to his experience, but confronts them with it in stark ethical and emotional terms: "[A]t dawn the barbed wire was full of children's washing hung out in the wind to dry. Nor did they forget the diapers, the toys, the cushions and the hundred other small things which mothers remember and which children

always need. Would you not do the same? If you and your child were going to be killed tomorrow, would you not give him something to eat today?" --Michael Joseph Gross

Italo Calvino One of the most important and gifted writers of our time. David Caute, New Statesman
Survival in Auschwitz is a stark prose poem on the deepest sufferings of man told without self-pity, but with a muted passion and intensity, an occasional cry of anguish, which makes it one of the most remarkable documents I have ever read. Meredith Tax, The Village Voice More than anything else I've read or seen, Levi's books helped me not only to grasp the reality of genocide but to figure out what it means for people like me who grew up sheltered from the storm. The Times Literary Supplement (London) Survival in Auschwitz has the inevitability of the true work of art.

I'm a history buff, and my favorite time period is the World War II era ... both because it occurred recently enough that I can still talk to survivors of the conflict and because of all the changes in the world that happened in just a six year period. But as I've read or own many, if not most, of the worthwhile books about the fighting, I've recently begun reading and learning about what was happening away from the fighting. After reading "Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin" by Timothy Snyder, an outstanding book about the intentional mass murder of over 14 million people between 1930 and 1947, I decided to learn more about the Holocaust and related topics. (Many of the books I've read did touch on the Holocaust and the murders of other nationalities and ethnicities, but I've only read a bare handful of books dealing specifically about these sad events.) My buying this book is a result of my desire to learn more. "Survival in Auschwitz", by Primo Levi, is an excellent account of Mr Levi's year in Auschwitz. It begins with his train transport to Auschwitz and the separation of the train's passengers into categories of what turned out to be "workers" and "those to be immediately killed", and his subsequent transport into one of the labor subcamps. The book then covers his life and severe struggles for survival in the camp until his eventual liberation by the Soviets. While the book is arranged chronologically, it isn't a straightforward diary of events. The author, as he notes in his introduction, organizes the book into themes and things he feels most strongly about, while the timeline still flows chronologically. Mr Levi was educated as a chemist, and after the war he worked in and later managed a paint plant until his retirement. As a man somewhat classically educated, he has a keen eye for the human condition of himself, his fellow prisoners, and his guards. His writing is a bit dry, perhaps also reflecting on his education as a chemist (although some of it could be the translation from Italian to English). Mr Levi wrote the book in a matter-of-fact manner about his time as a prisoner. At first, I was relieved that I wouldn't have to

read too many more heartrending anecdotes as contained in other, similar books I've read. (I know that such anecdotes are necessary to be read so as to better remember the actions and inhumanity that had occurred, but they're still very hard for me to read.) But then, as the author matter-of-factly described the casual brutality, the simple choices that meant the difference between continued life or a trip to the gas chambers, and the things the prisoners had to do (even to other prisoners) just to survive, I began to feel that his non-emotional telling of his story might be even more frightening and unsettling than the other books were. The author states that it was basically a string of good luck and chance that he survived the camp, while most of the others perished. He possibly had a life-long guilt about his survival and likely suffered from long-term depression, as he may have committed suicide in 1987 (the coroner and three later biographers believed so, but others disagreed.) But this and other books he wrote about this time in his life, both factual and fiction, clearly give you a view into what it was like inside a concentration camp was, when death was but a short tap on the shoulder away. Highly recommended.

Sobering. How can one truly understand life and horror (if you can call it life) within the Nazi concentration and extermination camps without having experienced it? Read this along with Elie Wiesel's "Night" and "The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them" by Eugen Kogon a long time prisoner in Buchenwald. This book only the first half of his story. It is the English titled version of "If This is a Man". I recommend ordering the book "If this is a Man and The Truce" ISBN-13: 978-0349100135. The Truce describes Levi's liberation by the Soviets and long return to Turin, Italy via the Soviet Union.

"For human nature is such that grief and pain - even simultaneously suffered - do not add up as a whole in our consciousness, but hide, the lesser behind the greater, according to a definite law of perspective. It is providential and is our means of surviving in the camp. And this is the reason why so often in free life one hears it said that man is never content." (Page 73) Primo Levi writes eloquently - though he has every right to douse himself in self-pity, Levi articulates his year-long experience in Auschwitz with detailed observations, acute emotions, and kernels of universal truth that readers can relate to even now, seventy years after the end of WWII. The writing style reads a bit dense at times, though whether Levi wrote it that way or it's due to the translation process I don't know. That being said, it isn't impossible to read - it forces readers to take his words in slowly, perhaps reread a sentence or two, and that may be where the power of his words stems from. No doubt this is one of the most important Holocaust books ever written.

This is a translation from the original Italian the translation is rather stilted. Rather than a direct translation it would have been better if the language had been Anglified. The descriptions are graphic without being sensational. The book was heavily underlined by the last owner which tended to annoy

This is a harrowing book that all need to read. Levi is one of the very greatest of our witnesses to the horrors of the concentration camps of Nazi Germany, and he speaks with profound depth of observation and genuine emotional engagement. I cannot recommend this powerful book too highly. I need offer no summary; you will join Levi in the camps and experience first-hand the monstrosity of his life there. I may add that his supposed suicide in post-war Italy, long taken for granted and mourned as the result of his time in the camps, has now been seriously questioned. However, the fact of his death by whatever means--whether accidental or by his own deliberate hand--does not in any way detract or add to the potency of his unforgettable witness to one of history's darkest hours.

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