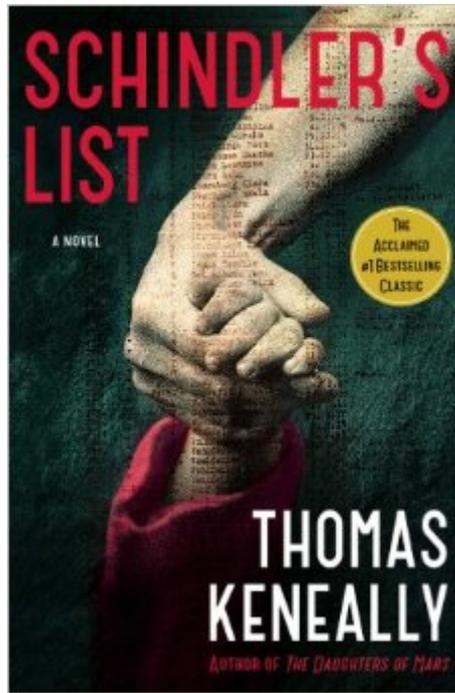


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Schindler's List



Synopsis

The acclaimed bestselling classic of Holocaust literature, winner of the Booker Prize and the Los Angeles Times Book Award for Fiction, and the inspiration for the classic film "Schindler's List" — a masterful account of the growth of the human soul • (Los Angeles Times Book Review). A stunning novel based on the true story of how German war profiteer and factory director Oskar Schindler came to save more Jews from the gas chambers than any other single person during World War II. In this milestone of Holocaust literature, Thomas Keneally, author of *Daughter of Mars*, uses the actual testimony of the Schindlerjuden "Schindler's Jews" to brilliantly portray the courage and cunning of a good man in the midst of unspeakable evil.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thomas Keneally's Booker Prize-winning, fictionalized biography of Oskar Schindler memorializes a member of the Nazi party who endangered his own life for four years, working privately to save Jews from the death camps. A playboy who loved fine wines and foods, he was also a smooth-talking manipulator (and briber) of Nazi officials, as well as a clever entrepreneur, already on his way to stunning financial success by the early days of World War II. Nowhere in Schindler's background are there any hints that he would one day become the savior of eleven hundred Jewish men and women. While the excellent film of this novel concentrates on the dangers Schindler and "his Jews" faced daily throughout the war, Keneally, well known for his depictions of characters acting under stress, concentrates on the character of Oskar Schindler himself, beginning with his childhood and teen years. As he explores Schindler's transformation from war profiteer and

"passive" Nazi to a man willing to use his fortune to ensure the salvation of his factory workers, Keneally reveals a man of enormous courage and derring-do, a man who thrives by living on the edge. Presenting episodes from the lives of some of the "Schindlerjuden," Keneally highlights their humanity, creating moments of high drama. Characters such as Leopold Pfefferberg and factory manager Itzhak Stern move in and out of the narrative, illustrating graphically the extent to which their lives depend upon Oskar Schindler, while the constant intrusion of sadistic SS commandant Amon Goeth in Schindler's life shows the fragility of their security. Other stories, of people who just missed being saved by Schindler, highlight the arbitrariness of fate--chance--in their (and our) lives. Throughout the novel, Keneally stresses the importance of bearing witness and testifying to the atrocities. In one of the novel's most moving passages, Schindler and his lover ride horses to a ridge where they can view the expulsion of the Jews from the Krakow ghetto, watching, horrified, as old or crippled laggards are murdered in front of Jewish children. "They permitted witnesses because they believed the witnesses, all, would perish, too." Later, Schindler works with a Zionist rescue organization, secretly going to Budapest to testify about the hidden death camps. Schindler's heroism, his goodness within a country committed to the extermination of other humans, his recognition that witnesses are essential, and his ability to use the system in order to hasten its end bring this story of one man's fight against the Holocaust to life. But it is Keneally's incorporation of Schindler's faults and excesses which gives texture and depth to this portrait and make Schindler a character with whom the reader can identify. Keneally's meticulous research and his portrait of Schindler after the war, beloved by Jews but at loose ends personally and professionally, make this novel an unforgettable study of character and time. n Mary Whipple

I saw the movie ten years ago so I thought I knew what to expect from this novel. (By the way, this is a fictionalized account of a story that is, for the most part, true, and is well-researched by the author) This novel is very well written, and full of themes that apply today as much as they did during the Holocaust. The thing I like about this story is it forces the reader to examine what makes a man good vs. what makes a man evil. Schindler starts the novel as a brilliant but self-serving war profiteer, exploiting his Jewish workers in some of the same ways as the Nazi Party starts out doing. However, Schindler sees a few things that start him on the course to becoming a modern-day saviour, the most impressive image being the brutal killing of a little Jewish girl whose beautiful red dress he had admired from across the ghetto. The book is filled with shocking imagery such as this, which make it all the more moving, but not recommended for the faint-of-heart. There were many passages I read, after which I could feel my stomach turning. Oskar Schindler saw all this first-hand,

and you feel as if you do as well when reading this book. Schindler risked his life throughout the entire war to save thousands of Jews who were completely dependent on him. The whole time he was also competing with an SS Captain who probably killed, on any whim, ten Jews for every one life that Schindler saved. I would highly recommend this book, despite the fact that there are thousands of Holocaust books on the market. This one transcends the setting.

This is Thomas Keneally at his best. The chance meeting with a Schindler Jew in a Los Angeles shop made a book, then a movie, then a global project to catalogue the stories of Holocaust survivors. It took Spielberg and Hollywood to bring the story to the screen but it was Keneally and his evocative text on the life of Oskar Schindler that brought the story to the world. His choice to use the texture of a novel works well. As the author said himself, this seemed the best way to handle a character with the ambiguity and magnitude of that celebrated Sudeten charmer. But a novelist's approach also makes it easier to convey meaning, to explore and probe every shadow, each emotion, any nuance. Keneally's gift is to do this well. The highlight of the book is his brilliant study of Oskar and Amon, good with bad, the German bon vivant versus the Dark Prince. Like two heads of the same coin, Keneally shows nobility and evil as uncomfortably close bedfellows. There go I but the grace of God...Keneally has a well-deserved reputation as one of Australia's greatest writers, but the forces this book has set in train, perhaps, have not been fully acknowledged. Fortunately, for a select group of southern Polish Jews in World War II, a saviour was in their midst. Fortunately, for those that followed, there was a writer who saved the saviour's story for us all.

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