



Shoah: The Complete Text Of The Acclaimed Holocaust Film

Claude Lanzmann , Simone de Beauvoir (Preface by)

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A nine-and-a-half-hour documentary on the Nazi extermination camps, *Shoah* (the Hebrew word for "Holocaust") was internationally hailed as a masterpiece upon its release in 1985. Shunning any re-creation, archival footage, or visual documentation of the events, filmmaker Claude Lanzmann relied on the words of witnesses—Jewish, Polish, and German—to describe in ruthless detail the bureaucratic machinery of the Final Solution, so that the remote experiences of the Holocaust became fresh and immediate. This book presents in an accessible and vivid format the testimony of survivors, participants, witnesses, and scholars. This tenth anniversary edition, published on the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the camps, is newly revised and corrected in order to more accurately present the actual testimony of those interviewed. *Shoah* is an unparalleled oral history of the Holocaust, an intensely readable journey through the twentieth century's greatest horror.

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Eva Leger says

I'm still trying to figure out how a 9+ hour movie translates into a -200 page book with double and sometimes triple spacing, not to mention a few photos. I don't normally read texts of films though so maybe there's something I don't know.

I borrowed this from my library because everywhere I looked the DVD cost hundreds of dollars. My library didn't have it, my DVD swapping site didn't have it, NetFlix didn't have it, I started to think I'd never see it. Then I had the bright idea to check eBay. Or, well, actually, a friend told me to. And it was there, my region, for cheap.

I haven't watched the film yet so I can't speak on that.

This is most definitely worth reading in my opinion, if only because it's handled differently here.

Raul Hilberg talks about the progression of hate, on pages 71-72 and it stuck with me. He said, "...from the fourth century, the sixth century, the missionaries of Christianity had said in effect to the Jews: 'You may not live among us as Jews.' The secular rulers who followed them from the late Middle Ages then decided, 'You may not live among us.' The Nazis finally decreed, 'You may not live.'" Conversion, expulsion, death.

I found (Dr.) Franz Grassler's testimony the most intriguing. Grassler was the deputy to Dr. Auerswald, Nazi commissioner of the Warsaw ghetto. His words seem so glib. So 'it's over, it didn't effect me to any harsh decree, why must we talk about it.' It's disgusting and fascinating.

I look forward to seeing the film but as it's so long I have to not rush. I hope to get to it soon but just knowing it's here in my possession makes it easier to wait until I really have the time alone to devote to it.

Larry says

Number 6 on my list is this little book, which I read not knowing that it was a movie script and I am embarrassed to admit that I have never seen the movie. Shoah is Hebrew for holocaust and this tightly written work compacts the enormity of the Nazi genocide campaign against the Jews of Europe into an impactful overview. The inhumanity and the banality of the destruction of innocent people staggered me when I read the story. It convinced me that evil, evil by human choice, lurks around us always. Whether we as a species will ever exercise the communal will to stop these acts is doubtful in my mind. The wails, tears and prayers of millions went unheard making it difficult to reconcile with the concept of a just and caring deity. The sheer numbers of human lives, not just Jews, but Gypsies, homosexuals, and other untermenschen were put to death with industrial precision, and no German ever raised a hand. There is an unerasable bit of Hobbesian simian in all of us that no amount of moralizing ever seems to explain or correct. We humans are imperfect creatures who are able to hold unfulfillable dreams of perfection. But our evil will always live with us.

Stephen says

I read this in conjunction with viewing the nine hour film, in several sittings over a period of a couple weeks. I would recommend watching the film first, although I can't say what effect the book might have on its own. The five stars are for the movie, technically, although the book serves as a useful supplement. But it's the

documentary that is the masterpiece.

Of all the different ways in which I've been exposed to the Holocaust--at least two in-person guest lectures from survivors, dozens of movies like *Schindler's List* and *Life is Beautiful*, documentaries like *Night and Fog*, memoirs like *Night* and *Survival in Auschwitz*, fictionalized books like *Kaddish for a Child Unborn*, history classes, at least two Holocaust museums, photographs, and even the graphic novel *Maus*--this is the first thing that made it startlingly clear to me that the Holocaust happened in this exact same, normal world that we're living in. A world where people wear Hawaiian shirts, where children sometimes walk alongside their bicycles, and where old men pay to get haircuts. A world where people are overworked and complain about their jobs, where not having a flush toilet in your home can seem appallingly primitive, and where children under four can ride trains for free. A world with railroads and moving vans and travel agencies and typewriters. The grass was green at Auschwitz in the summertime, then and now, a living body exposed to exhaust fumes will suffocate, and a dead body exposed to ash will turn to flames.

An unprecedented and devastatingly horrible thing happened, but it happened among trees and highways and very boring looking people who just wanted to keep on doing their jobs without worrying too much about the world outside of themselves.

Anna says

Though I would have liked a little more background information included, I understand this is a movie transcript, so some of what was shown in the film may not translate to the page. I very much liked how the interviews documented here were not just from people who were in or at the well-known concentration camps, but also from the lesser publicized, but equally tragic, camps, such as Chelmno and Treblinka.

Shawn says

A very powerful read. I'm looking forward to seeing the film, as I'm sure that the impact of the visual documentation along with these written recollections will stay with Me longer than just reading the text. I'm almost certain that, had I seen the film prior to reading this, I would have been compelled to give this book five stars. As a 'stand alone', it's very moving. I imagine the film to add another layer to this disturbing piece of history.

Gia Kokotakis says

This book was amazing. I have never seen the movie, but I imagine it couldn't have been anymore intriguing than this. The horrible stories of the ruthless Nazis coming directly from survivors was something I cannot explain. I began to tear up as I turned page after page, wanting to stop but knowing I couldn't. This book will take you places you thought you could never go, show you people you thought you could never see, and push you to comprehend things you thought humans were not capable of comprehending.

Dolceluna says

Film documentario di oltre 6 ore sugli orrori della Shoah, gli orrori veri. Dimenticate film basati su storie immaginate seppur plausibili, dimenticate l'immaginabile. "Shoah" di Lanzmann è storia, è realtà, cercata, vissuta, testata su campo. In un vero e proprio viaggio-orrore Lanzmann si è recato sui luoghi, tanti dei luoghi, che sono stati teatro dei crimini della Shoah perpetrati durante la seconda guerra mondiale, campi di concentramento e sterminio, città, locali, stazioni, e ha interrogato testimoni, superstiti, carnefici, spettatori al fine di avere risposte che forse, fino in fondo, non è riuscito nemmeno ad avere. Ne deriva un insieme di testimonianze a volte scioccanti, come quella di uno dei carnefici che ora lavora in una birreria in Germania e rifugge alle telecamere di Lanzmann e quella di uno dei tanti ferrovieri che guidava uno dei "treni della morte". Ma Lanzmann non si ferma, chiede, si informa, cerca, disturba, con una sete e una curiosità implacabili.

Devo essere onesta, ho letto e visto molto sull'Olocausto e so che molti considerano quest'opera imprescindibile e fondamentale....personalmente la ritengo molto importante e di grande valore ma forse dal ritmo a tratti un po' lento e pesante da seguire. Di sicuro va spezzata in più parti, anche per essere digerita meglio.

Sentina says

I haven't seen the docu (yet) but just reading what is told, is so so impressive! I just have no words for it, only respectfull silence

Hilary says

This book is a text of the movie which I have not yet seen. It is shocking, horrific, and inhuman at times. It is hard to believe the nazis who were interviewed could take such a blase attitude about murder and death. I guess after seeing it day in and day out, one becomes immune. How people could do this to others simply because they were different than you is, unfortunately, something that our current president ran his campaign on and won. Be afraid, be very afraid.

John Stanks says

Wow...its a very haunting reading about their experiences they went through the holocaust.

Chris says

Haven't seen the movie. Book is rather shocking, disturbing, and engrossing.

jen says

a difficult movie and text, but one that is necessary to confront, especially because it is too easy with the access of media and information to become oversaturated with images, rather than the 'meaning', of trauma. hiroshima. rwanda. bergen-belsen.

Lanzman resists the expected telling of the Holocaust story; focusing not as much on the typically "dramatic" and "emotional", which he eschews for a more analytical, methodical unfolding of history.

It is disturbing in its straightforwardness.

Lanzman manages what no one was supposed to be able to do; re-tell a period of traumatic history that defies retelling.

Clumsy says

"Nel 1942, quando cominciarono i primi rastrellamenti a danno degli ebrei, e soprattutto dopo il novembre del '42, quando i tedeschi occuparono il Sud, mio padre ci addestrava di notte: dovevamo spogliarci disponendo i vestiti nell'ordine giusto per rivestirci, tutte le porte venivano maniacalmente olate, era una casa ossessionata dal silenzio. In fondo al giardino, aveva scavato una specie di nascondiglio e suonava alla porta alle quattro del mattino, come la Gestapo. Noi ci vestivamo a tempo di record e correvamo in giardino fino al nascondiglio. Lui arrivava, dopo aver fatto finta di cercare, ovviamente ci trovava e ci diceva: «Vi avrebbero trovato, avete fatto rumore». «No, papà, è un ramo che ha scricchiolato». Nostro padre faceva da solo le SS coi cani. Aveva ragione, è questo che ci ha salvati. Conoscevamo i rastrellamenti, ma posso dire, come Papon, che non sapevo niente dei campi di sterminio. Insomma, io non sono stato deportato e non ci sono stati deportati nella mia stretta cerchia familiare, ce la siamo cavati tutti. Ma se fossi stato deportato, di sicuro non sarei mai stato in grado di fare Shoah."

Lisa Olson says

This text is quite good but I look forward to seeing the movie as I think it would give a fuller image than just the transcripts. I also found a quote from a reputable source mentioning that "readers should be forewarned that Lanzmann disavows the English transcript, which is plagued by inaccuracies and which differs substantially in form from the French text prepared by Lanzmann himself," so I'm not sure what to make of that. Perhaps it explains how the book managed to be so short compared to the film.

It was an easy read, however, and I enjoyed it. Shoah was not nearly as graphic as many Holocaust testimonies I have read, and Lanzmann claims that he left out the exceptional cases of violence because he was basing these testimonies on intelligence not emotions. It was a good overview of the roles and opinions of Jews, Germans, and Poles during the Holocaust. Of course one must acknowledge that Shoah does not give the whole picture as it focusses solely on the persecution of Jews in Poland, while many others were persecuted, and in many other countries. It also does not portray the Poles particularly well and does not mention the Poles who helped Jews during the war. I don't see too much of a problem with this as long as we acknowledge that he has not covered the entirety of the Holocaust in Shoah, nor the entirety of Poles.

Paula Hartman-Carlo says

Although I've seen the film a few times, I'm glad to have read the complete text. Watching the film and seeing the survivors and the perpetrators speak to the director about what they witnessed gives the viewer one type of experience. Having the words right there in front of you gives you another. You read the lines over and over again because you can't believe what you just read. A line that I will never forget comes from Itzhak Zuckerman, second-in-command of the Jewish Combat Organization, a resistance group in the Warsaw ghetto. He says, "Claude, you asked for my impression. If you could lick my heart, it would poison you."
