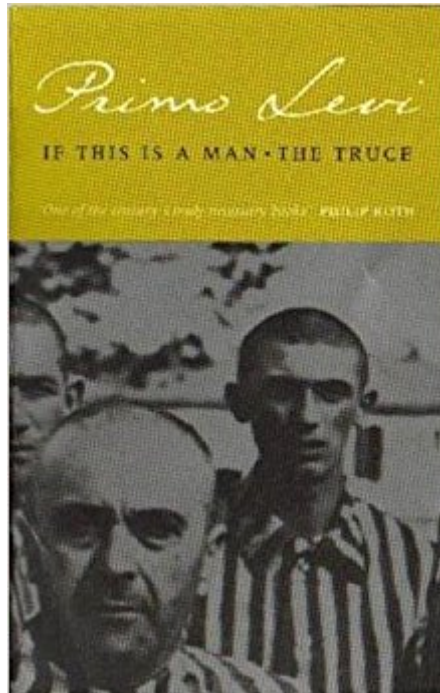


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# If This Is A Man And The Truce



## Synopsis

With the moral stamina and intellectual pose of a twentieth-century Titan, this slightly built, duitful, unassuming chemist set out systematically to remember the German hell on earth, steadfastly to think it through, and then to render it comprehensible in lucid, unpretentious prose. He was profoundly in touch with the minutest workings of the most endearing human events and with the most contemptible. What has survived in Levi's writing isn't just his memory of the unbearable, but also, in *THE PERIODIC TABLE* and *THE WRENCH*, his delight in what made the world exquisite to him. He was himself a "magically endearing man, the most delicately forceful enchanter I've ever known" - PHILIP ROTH

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A life-changing book. •Daily ExpressThe death of Primo Levi robs Italy of one of its finest writers...One of the few survivors of the Holocaust to speak of his experiences with a gentle voice •GUARDIANTHE TRUCE: •One of the century's truly necessary books. •Philip Roth •One of the greatest human testaments of the era.

Primo Levi was born in Turin in 1919 and trained as chemist. Arrested a member of the anti-fascist resistance during the war, he was deported to Auschwitz. His experiences there are described in his two classic autobiographical works, *IF THIS IS A MAN* and *THE TRUCE*.

This unsentimental testament stands as a living memorial to the millions who died in the

concentration camps of the Second World War. The author is a survivor of Aushwitz. He tells his own and others stories and describes the conditions they endured. In a way the physical violence is at a distance. The beatings, torture and executions are of course mentioned. It is however complete and brutal dehumanisation that is at the centre here where all links to a persons identity and humanity are systematically taken and destroyed; family, possessions, name. The starvation, the cold, the brutal work all serve to erase all sparks of what we might deem human. Early on Levi gives up any attempt to stay clean. An older prisoner takes him to task. This man is scrubbing himself in the filthy amenities area with freezing cold dirty water and drying himself with his tattered filthy shirt which he then puts back on. An Italian worker gives Levi every day for 6 months a slice of bread and his leftover ration as well as his spare much patched vest. It seems in some ways not a lot but in those circumstances it is everything. This simple act of kindness, punishable by death if discovered and done out of plain goodness, reminds Levi what it is to be a man. It stands like a rock in the filthy sea of mindful brutality where not just his physical being but his very inner being is crushed and ground down. From the most unbearable of circumstances Levi has given the whole of humanity something to contemplate, rising above if not eradicating his own anguish and anger to write a plain and powerful testament which has in fact endured and outlasted the horror that created it. Attached to this edition are a set of questions the the author was often asked as he did speaking engagements after the publication of the books. They are also illuminating and bravely honest. A fitting adjunct for the two books in this edition.

This is a book I had heard of over for over forty years but never read. I am really glad I have read it now as it is one of the best and most humane books I've read on this dark time in our collective history. It is one man's story told in such a way that there is no blame or wish for retribution and it is so much better for that. It shows what day to day life was really like for so many people who suffered in the concentration camps. It shows the pain and suffering but also the joys and simple humanity along the way. It is inspirational in its simple honesty and I highly recommend it.

Primo Levi is the most insightful, pragmatic realist of all holocaust authors. I have read more than 50 books on the subject, and his insights into what happened, human nature, the (bad) luck of the draw, and the tragedy of his experience are brilliant and by far the most articulate. Somehow, perhaps with his scientific mind, Levi was able to maintain his awareness through an experience that is utterly beyond the scope of imagination. He somehow emerges from the ashes of this horrific epoch like a literary phoenix. He doesn't dwell on the inhuman acts and suffering, although he has a

perfect right to do so, but instead offers his account almost from an omniscient perspective. This book contains the best of Primo Levi, but his other writings demand to be read as well. And, if you haven't seen *The Truce*, starring John Turturro, you should do so. It's not a hundred percent historically accurate, but it is a great presentation.

I consider this book as an authority on the events that happened in Auschwitz concentration camp. Primo Levi was a highly educated Italian Chemist and writer and Jew and he describes his imprisonment in Auschwitz in heartrending detail and was also capable of diagnosing the scope and brutality of his Nazi captives and to understand and describe the depths the human soul can sink because of the sheer cruelty meted out constantly and relentlessly. Seventy years have passed since this horrific display of man's cruelty to man, yet this book revives the horrors that happened here as lucidly as if it happened just yesterday. A fantastically good read even if it tugs at your heartstrings.

In *If This Is a Man* Primo Levi describes his experience as a worker slave in one of the sub camps of Auschwitz, the one working for the German firm IG Farben. He describes the horrifying experience in cool terms, which makes a powerful impression. It is essential reading if you want to understand what WWII was about. That may sound extravagant, but consider that at the end of the war, as the Soviets were closing in, the Germans diverted trains that were needed on the Eastern front to shipping Jews to slaughter. For Hitler that took precedence. When the Soviets got closer the Germans marched all the surviving camp prisoners toward Germany. (Actually Auschwitz was in Hitler's expanded Germany.) Almost all of them died or were shot on the way. The Germans planned to kill the sick prisoners who were left in the camp but ran out of time. Levi was one of those. In *The Truce* Levi describes the few months after the Soviets freed the remaining prisoners. You get a sense for the confusion and human destruction in Eastern Europe--his travels took him to Romania and up to Belarus and then back the same way and through Austria back to his native Italy. We meet all sorts of strange characters who survived the war. In the end he reunites with his family.

Wow. I've read several books by holocaust survivors. Levi writes in a matter-of-fact sort of way that really drives home the overwhelming horror of his experience. Recommended for everybody. This is the kind of book that should be required reading in school.

I am currently in a phase and reading a lot about WWII and the holocaust. This book is incredible and impactful! It is the best book on the subject I have read. I recommend it fully to everyone!

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