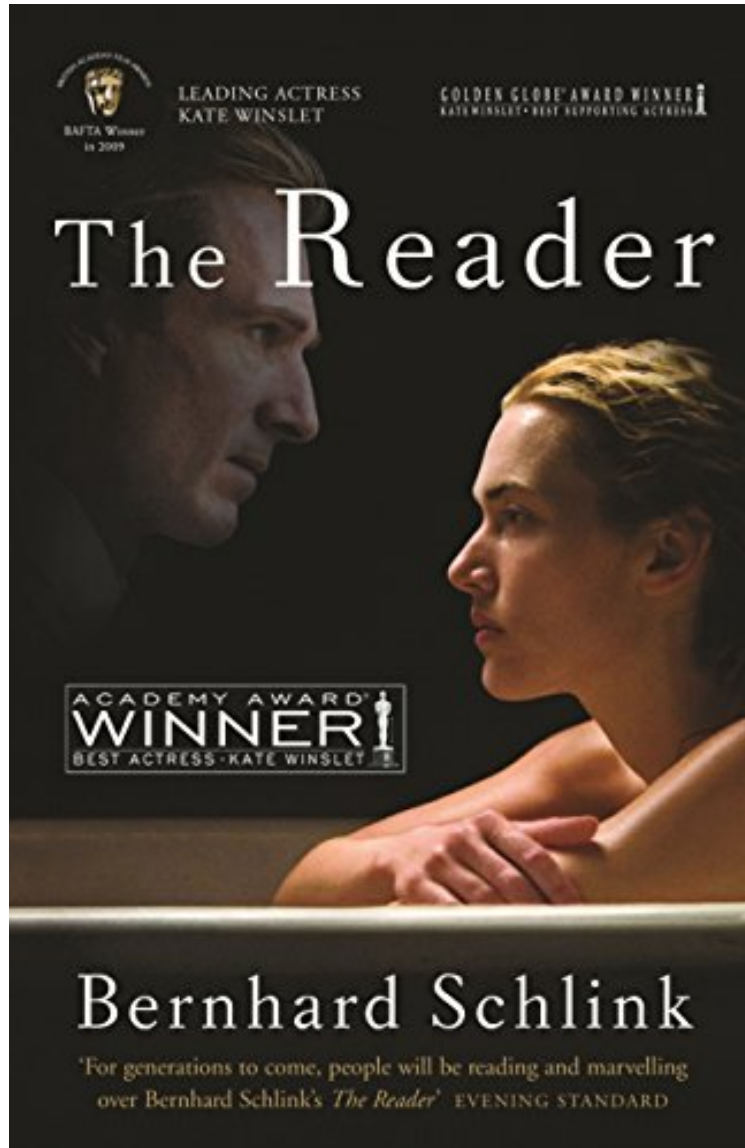


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The Reader (English Edition)

Von Bernhard Schlink

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Von Bernhard Schlink : The Reader (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Reader (English Edition):

Kundenrezensionen Hilfreichste Kundenrezensionen 5 von 5 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. **COMPELLING...COMPLEX...PROFOUND...** Von lawyer au Winner of the Boston Review's Fisk Fiction Prize, this thematically complex story is written in clear, simple, lucid prose. It is a straightforward telling of an encounter that was to mark fifteen year old Michael Berg for life. The book, written as if it were a memoir, is divided into three parts.

The first part of the book deals with that encounter. While on his way home from school one day in post-war Germany, Michael becomes ill. He is aided by a beautiful and buxom, thirty six year old blonde named Hanna Schmitz. When he recovers from his illness, he goes to Frau Schmitz's home to thank her and eventually finds himself seduced by her and engaged in a sexual encounter. They become lovers for a period of time, and a component of their relationship was that Michael would read aloud to her. Michael romanticizes their affair, which is a cornerstone of his young life. They even go away on a trip together. Then, one day, as suddenly as she appeared in his life, she disappears, having inexplicably moved with no forwarding address. The second part of the book deals with Michael's chance encounter with Hanna again. He is now a law student in a seminar that is focused on Germany's Nazi past and the related war trials. The students are young and eager to condemn all who, after the end of the war, had tolerated the Nazis in their midst. Even Michael's parents do not escape his personal condemnation. The seminar is to be an exploration of the collective guilt of the German people, and Michael embraces the opportunity, as do others of his generation, to philosophically condemn the older generation for having sat silently by. Then, he is assigned to take notes on a trial of some camp guards. To his total amazement, one of the accused is Hanna, his Hanna. He stoically remains throughout the trial, realizing as he hears the evidence that she is refusing to divulge the one piece of evidence that could possibly absolve her or, at least, mitigate her complicity in the crimes with which she is charged. It is as if she considers her secret, that of her inability to read and write, more shameful than that of which she is accused. Yet, Michael, too, remains mute on the fact that would throw her legal, if not her moral, guilt into question. Consequently, Hanna finds herself bearing the legal guilt of all those involved in the crime of which she is accused and is condemned accordingly. The third part of the book is really the way Michael deals with having found Hanna, again. He removes himself from further demonstration and discussion on the issue of Germany's Nazi past. It affects his decisions as to his career in the law, eventually choosing a legal career that is isolating. He marries and has a child but finds that he cannot be free of Hanna. He cannot be free of the pain of having loved Hanna. It is as if Hanna has marked him for life. He divorces and never remarries. It is as if he cannot love another, as he loved Hanna. Michael then reaches out to Hanna in prison, indirectly, through the secret they share of what she seems to be most ashamed of. Yet, he carefully never personalizes the contact. The end, when it comes, is almost anti-climatic. The relationship between Michael and Hanna really seems to be analogous to the relationship between the generations of Germans in post-war Germany. The affair between Michael and Hanna is representational of the affair that Germany had with the Nazi movement. The eroticism of the book is a necessary component for the collective guilt and shame that the Germans bear for the Holocaust, as well as for the moral divide that seemingly exists between the generations. Yet, the book also shows that such is not always a black and white issue, that there are sometimes gray areas when one discusses one's actions in the context of the forces of good and evil. There is also the issue of legal and moral responsibility. One would think that the two are synonymous, but they are not always so. It also philosophizes on the ability to love another/a nation who/that was complicit in war crimes. This is an insightful, allegorical book that defies categorizing. It is also a book that is a wonderful selection for a reading circle, as it has a wealth of issues that are ripe for discussion. This is simply a superlative book. Bravo!

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A revised reading of relationships

Von Friederike Knabe

The topic of the Holocaust is raised almost every day in some manner. Many books have been written about the topic. Whether in studies, documentaries or fictional accounts, finger-pointing at the perpetrators of the crimes against millions has been part of the process of coming to terms with the Nazi atrocities. For Imre Kertesz, renowned author and Nobel laureate of 2002, there is no other topic. Yet, when he reflects on the traumatic impact of Auschwitz, "he dwells on the vitality and creativity of those living today" and "thus, paradoxically, not on the past but the future." Bernhard Schlink, professor of law and practicing judge in Germany, born in 1944, has attempted to capture the struggles of his generation in confronting the past and the future in "The Reader". "Pointing at the guilty party did not free us from shame", his narrator and protagonist contemplates, "but at least it overcame the suffering we went through on account of it". The usually unambiguous distinction between villain and victim has facilitated the identification with those who lost their lives or suffered under the Nazi atrocities while all scorn, abhorrence and hate was piled on the perpetrators. Until recently, few books have focused on the after-war generation. While growing up, the children had to come to terms with the, often sudden, exposure of their parents' active or passive participation in the crimes of the Nazi regime. "The Reader", set in post-war Germany and against the backdrop of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials of the mid-sixties, takes this new and, for our generations, important angle: in the form of the fictional memoir of Michael Berg. Michael, while not refuting guilt, shame, and atonement, is led to examine and dissect the complexity of inter-generational conflicts in the context of his personal experiences. Like Schlink himself, he grapples with the fundamental problem of the relationships between these two generations. Michael recounts the most important stages in his life, starting with experiences long passed in his youth. While his account follows the chronology of events, he progressively interleaves retrospective reflections on his past conduct, questioning his conflicting emotions - his behaviour. The story starts with Michael's first, secret, love affair at age 15 with a woman more than twice his age. The blossoming erotic relationship strengthens his self-worth and confidence yet, at the same time, increasingly isolating him from his family and peers. Hanna Schmitz, of whose circumstances and background Michael knew very little, was affectionate and standoffish at the same time, prone to abrupt mood

swings. The young lover is completely captivated and eager to please. He is the "Reader", in German "Vorleser" is a person who reads aloud to an audience. At her insistence he reads his books to her and it becomes an important element of their shared intimacy. When she disappears one day without any warning, her loss leaves him devastated and scarred for life. He can only seek the reasons in his own actions. Seeing Hanna again years later and in unanticipated surroundings, triggers a flood of questions about the person he loved and thought he knew. Her behaviour raises many questions and Michael discovers a long secret that puts in doubt the facts as they are exposed. He also wrestles with himself over his own inaction when confronted with choices. "What would you have done?" Although addressed to the judge by the defendant, this question hangs over Michael, as it does over his whole generation. It encapsulates the primary dilemma of the child-parent generations relationships. Finally, writing the story of his life, drafting and redrafting it in his head until it is in a publishable form, is seen as a chance for his own recovery and to give him a chance to live his life. The Reader, while a work of fiction, is deeply anchored in the personal experiences of the author and symbolic for his generation. His spare and unemotional language underlines the impression of a biographical investigation and is used quite deliberately. The English translation captures the tone and style amazingly well. Reading this book should not be an "easy pleasure" as some reviewers have suggested. The Reader covers difficult and complex terrain in a way that it forces the reader to reflect and question their own position long afterwards. Although written directly for a German audience of Schlink's and my generation, the novel, surprisingly, has attracted world-wide attention. While reviews and reactions among readers are highly diverse and even contradictory, it should be read by as many people as possible and with the care the subject matter deserves. [Friederike Knabe]0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. This is a controversial book that resonated in my mind. Von booklover10 "The Reader" is written in a deceptively simple style, but it is not simplistic. The story of Hanna and Michael, in my mind, is a metaphor for the brutality that the Germans perpetrated on their victims. Hanna may have had excuses for her behavior (everyone does), but in the end what she did was very harmful to a young and impressionable boy. Why does the author segue from this odd relationship to a depiction of the horrors of the Holocaust? He is trying to force us to think about the moral choices that people make in situations that are not simple or clear cut. Is Hanna morally innocent in her relationship with Michael and in the way that she behaved in her former life? Should she be forgiven by Michael and by her other victims? Schlink raises these and other questions that make the reader uncomfortable and that force us to think about difficult issues. "The Reader" is intriguing and unnerving but it is also unforgettable.

Kurzbeschreibung An exceptionally powerful novel exploring the themes of betrayal, guilt and memory against the background of the Holocaust. An international bestseller. For 15-year-old Michael Berg, a chance meeting with an older woman leads to far more than he ever imagined. The woman in question is Hanna, and before long they embark on a passionate, clandestine love affair which leaves Michael both euphoric and confused. For Hanna is not all she seems. Years later, as a law student observing a trial in Germany, Michael is shocked to realize that the person in the dock is Hanna. The woman he had loved is a criminal. Much about her behaviour during the trial does not make sense. But then suddenly, and terribly, it does - Hanna is not only obliged to answer for a horrible crime, she is also desperately concealing an even deeper secret. 'A tender, horrifying novel that shows blazingly well how the Holocaust should be dealt with in fiction' INDEPENDENT 'For generations to come, people will be reading and marvelling over Bernhard Schlink's The Reader' EVENING STANDARD 'Leaps national boundaries and speaks straight to the heart' NEW YORK TIMES. de Oprah Book Club Selection, February 1999: Originally published in Switzerland, and gracefully translated into English by Carol Brown Janeway, The Reader is a brief tale about sex, love, reading, and shame in postwar Germany. Michael Berg is 15 when he begins a long, obsessive affair with Hanna, an enigmatic older woman. He never learns very much about her, and when she disappears one day, he expects never to see her again. But, to his horror, he does. Hanna is a defendant in a trial related to Germany's Nazi past, and it soon becomes clear that she is guilty of an unspeakable crime. As Michael follows the trial, he struggles with an overwhelming question: What should his generation do with its knowledge of the Holocaust? "We should not believe we can comprehend the incomprehensible, we may not compare the incomparable.... Should we only fall silent in revulsion, shame, and guilt? To what purpose?" The Reader, which won the Boston Book 's Fisk Fiction Prize, wrestles with many more demons in its few, remarkably lucid pages. What does it mean to love those people--parents, grandparents, even lovers--who committed the worst atrocities the world has ever known? And is any atonement possible through literature? Schlink's prose is clean and pared down, stripped of unnecessary imagery, dialogue, and excess in any form. What remains is an austere beautiful narrative of the attempt to breach the gap between Germany's pre- and postwar generations, between the guilty and the innocent, and between words and silence. --R. Ellis.co.uk Originally published in Switzerland and gracefully translated into English by Carol Brown Janeway, The Reader is a brief tale about sex, love, reading and shame in post-war Germany. Michael Berg is 15 when he begins a long, obsessive affair with Hanna, an enigmatic older woman. He never learns very much about her and when she disappears one day, he expects

never to see her again. But, to his horror, he does. Hanna is a defendant in a trial related to Germany's Nazi past and it soon becomes clear that she is guilty of an unspeakable crime. As Michael follows the trial, he struggles with an overwhelming question: what should his generation do with its knowledge of the Holocaust? "We should not believe we can comprehend the incomprehensible, we may not compare the incomparable... Should we only fall silent in revulsion, shame, and guilt? To what purpose?" *The Reader*, which won the Boston Book 's Fisk Fiction Prize, wrestles with many more demons in its few, remarkably lucid pages. What does it mean to love those people--parents, grandparents, even lovers--who committed the worst atrocities the world has ever known? And is any atonement possible through literature? Schlink's prose is clean and pared down, stripped of unnecessary imagery, dialogue and excess in any form. What remains is an austere beautiful narrative of the attempt to breach the gap between Germany's pre and post-war generations, between the guilty and the innocent and between words and silence. --R Ellis, .com