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Living among the Dead.

My Grandmother's Holocaust Survival Story of Love and Strength

By Adena Bernstein Astrowsky

Publisher: Amsterdam Publishers

BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the author mean by being a Memorial Candle?
2. Bubbie's radio was considered a luxury item at the time. What is an item you would consider a luxury item now and why?
3. Bubbie said she survived because of "fate." What do you think of fate? Do you think this was the only reason she survived?
4. The author discusses being an upstander versus a bystander. What does she mean by this?
5. Why was Janina initially willing to take in Bubbie and Popa but then later moved them to the horse stables and then the forest. What changed?
6. Why do you think Bubbie returned to her hometown knowing everything she knew was gone?
7. What would be the considerations for your decision to warn others, keep quiet or take action in a similar situation?

8. Bubbie used writing as a medium to deal with her feelings. Do you have a similar way of dealing with yours?
9. Thoughts on Survival: What do you think was going through the minds of Mania and the other escaped Jews while in hiding? How could anyone bear standing or squatting in silence for weeks while hearing people being chased and shot outside? What would be going through your mind? Do you think you could stay silent for that long?
10. Do you think Mania and Joseph ever talked about what happened to them once their life became “normal” again? Would you want to talk about it with the one person who shared the terror with you, or would you try to keep it suppressed?
11. Mania talks about several of her family members and others who helped her during the tragic times as “heroes.” The father-in-law who shares his portion of dirty water with her instead of drinking it himself or her grandmother sharing the tiny pickle... she refers to several of them as her heroes in the story. Who are the “heroes” in today’s society? We always see them as Super Heroes in movies or comics, but after reading about Mania’s heroes, can you think about any heroes in your life? In your community?
12. Several photographs are included in the book. How do they help you understand the story? Choose one photograph that stands out to you and discuss why you find it meaningful.
13. The author has written a very personal book about her “Bubbie.” If you were writing about a family member, who would you choose and why?
14. Explain your interpretation of the title, *Living Among the Dead*.
15. Choose your favorite poem from the book and interpret what it means to you.
16. This story is told from the perspective of a granddaughter. How would it be different if it were in first person, told by Bubbie? How does having a third-person narration add to the story?
17. Why do you think survivors often feel guilty?
18. Why is this book relevant today?
19. Do we see genocide occurring in the world today? Where/How?
20. Why is it important to read about Holocaust survivors today?