



The Cage

Ruth Minsky Sender

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As long as there is life, there is hope

After Mama is taken away by the Nazis, Riva and her younger brothers cling to their mother's brave words to help them endure life in the Lodz ghetto. Then the family is rounded up, deported to Auschwitz, and separated. Now Riva is alone.

At Auschwitz, and later in the work camps at Mittlesteine and Grafenort, Riva vows to live, and to hope - for Mama, for her brothers, for the millions of other victims of the nightmare of the Holocaust. And through determination and courage, and unexpected small acts of kindness, she does live - to write the unforgettable memoir that is a testament to the strength of the human spirit.

The Cage Details

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From Reader Review The Cage for online ebook

Miyu says

The Cage is an unforgettable story of a girl living through the horrors of World War II and the decisions that she is faced with. The beginning of this story is told through the flashbacks of Riva, the protagonist, and what it was like having to take care of her siblings and to have to work and work, just to see another day as a Jew during the holocaust. Riva who was once a positive, carefree girl is forced to take on many responsibilities at a really young age and has to quickly learn to take care of herself and those around her if she wants them to survive. With each and every day passing by, she fears that her life will end any second and she works harder than she ever did before just to keep her and her family safe.

This book is a story of love and hope, and each and every page will fill you with grief for those who had to live through the holocaust. I think anyone from the ages 10 and up with an interest in WWII would enjoy this read. Even though the sudden time trips may throw you off a little, this book will make you go through a rollercoaster of emotions, and this read will make you feel as if you were taking a time trip all the way back to 1939.

Aubrey Cykon says

I absolutely loved this book and the moral of it. "As long as there is life, there is hope" is such a great learning experience to all and is used completely through the book. As long as you are alive, you need hope to survive and go along through paths that may be a little bumpy to your destination. This book shows that you need each other to show it and to live through "the cage" of life.

Anitra says

This book makes me cry, no matter how many times I read it. This woman struggle through the jewish concentration camps is epic. A non fiction novel that I enjoy reading because it put life in prospective. A can't even tell you how gloriouse this book is.

Brandy says

A well written book. I really enjoyed this book. Ruth Minsky Sender does a great job of telling of her family struggles and survivals.

Emili Marin says

This book is about a thirteen year old girl who survived from the Holocaust. The girl was named Riva, and

the three children. This book was a very good book, which it brought the sadness of the concentration camps. The book was getting fast when it did happened in real life. On the September 10th, 1942, which their mother had taken out of the ghetto during a Nazi raid. This book was quickly, which there were some action, which the officers would kill some Jewish, put in the gas chambers, some dies with starve, and etc. It was a very most interesting book that I haven't ever read this book like this.

My favorite character was Riva Minska. She live in a landlord in the same house with her mother and her three brothers. She was a very responsible child, taking care of her three brothers. She was worried about what might be happened to her brothers. Well, I kind remember of someone, but not like this story. Which it all started, when my aunt left from Mexico. She left with my other cousin to U.S. So, when my older cousin stayed with his younger brother and youngest sister in Mexico to take care of them. In me, is like when most of the time, while our parents go to work, I would take care of my little sister. So, I take my responsibility of being a young adult.

Oriyah Nitkin says

It's hard to objectively rate (or review) a book you've read since it was age appropriate. As an adult I'd probably give it a star less, but when I first got this book I thought it was wonderful, and read it many times. Having holocaust literature coming at me from every angle for as long as I can remember, the story felt unremarkable (I feel so horrible saying that!) though now I see that she had some fairly miraculous experiences and with 20/20 hindsight I always wondered why the people in the story made the risky choices that they did.

As an adult I question the author's decision to write in present-tense and can only imagine it comes either from a constant reliving of her traumatic ordeal, or an immigrant's inability to express herself and her experiences in competent past tense (though I suspect her reasoning lay in the former.)

I would have preferred that her story be told in more of a religious context, but that's just my preference and obviously it would be ludicrous to expect it. The author's funny habit of not mentioning characters and long-standing important relationship to them until they have an interaction with the reader (at which point she goes back and explains their importance) left me feeling that the book was not ENTIRELY well thought out. Kind of like this review.

Briana says

I have to say I am fascinated by the Holocaust. I have read a lot of Holocaust lit over the years and am just as moved, touched, startled, and emboldened as the very first one I read (Jacob's Rescue when I was about 9 years old). I find that as I get older what hits me the most has changed. When I was young I was always taken aback by the physical pain. I was able to sympathize with that; the hunger, cold, dirtiness, etc. but now that I am older I find what hits me more is the mental and emotional anguish of these people; realizing you are surrounded by people on the outside who are just going about their daily lives offering no help, knowing that if you survive you will be the only one in your family, wondering how ordinary human beings could turn into such cruel animals, etc. how could you possibly ever restore your faith in humanity after that? But, I guess that's why they are called survivors, the people who survived. They didn't only survive physically but mentally and emotionally as well. That is not to say that they don't still have scars and that a day does not

pass without remembering. But they live on. They raise their families, enjoy their grandchildren, and share their stories with us. People always ask me, "how can you read about that over and over again??" Well, I guess I feel like if they are brave enough to open their hearts and speak about something so painful, I can be brave enough to listen.

Mamey says

I LOOOOOVED this book. The best Holocaust book I've ever read....I would give it 6 stars if I could. This book was life-changing for me, it truly was. The love between the siblings was like no other. "IF THERE IS LIFE, THERE IS HOPE" is something that has been ingrained in my head and my heart forever. I wish I could meet this author, fall to my knees and thank her for sharing her story.

Claudia Moscovici says

The Lodz Ghetto: Review of The Cage by Ruth Minsky

In her Holocaust memoir, *The Cage* (Simon & Schuster, 1997), Ruth Minsky Sender compares the Lodz ghetto not to imprisonment of human beings, but to a cage that animals are trapped in. The metaphor is powerful and apt. A medium sized city in Poland, Lodz had a relatively large Jewish population. Out of the city's nearly 700,000 occupants, about a quarter of million were Jews. The Germans established the Lodz Ghetto in February, 1940. They forced the Jews who lived in other areas to abandon their homes and squeeze into the tiny, 4 square kilometer area, of the Jewish Quarter. The cage grew smaller and smaller as outside contact became more and more difficult. German Police units patrolled the perimeter of the ghetto, to eliminate contact between Jews and Poles. The ghetto walls trapped inside 162,681 human beings, left with meager means of survival. Many of them, particularly those who had moved from other parts of town, were also left homeless, at the mercy of the ghetto's dissipating community resources. To ensure that the ghetto didn't receive outside help, the Germans passed punitive laws towards anyone that sold food or goods to its inhabitants. While in the Warsaw Ghetto the underground food smuggling and black market trade flourished for a while, in the Lodz Ghetto it was practically impossible. As contact with the Poles was strictly punished, the Jewish inhabitants were at the mercy of the Germans for all the resources they needed to survive. The ghetto was governed by a Jewish Council whose "Elder", Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, ruled with an iron fist. One of the most colorful and controversial figures of the Holocaust, Rumkowski became so used to the power he exercised within the ghetto walls that he came to be known as "King Rumkowski". The historian Raul Hilberg describes him as a megalomaniac autocrat hungry for power. He notes, however, that Rumkowski had some benevolent tendencies, which he exercised on behalf of the ghetto inhabitants and particularly on behalf of children:

"A Zionist, he involved himself in community affairs and managed several orphanages with devotion. Widowed and childless, he became a dedicated autocrat in the ghetto. He was able to act alone, because the fear-stricken men who had replaced the murdered councilmen were merely his advisory board... When bank notes were printed in the ghetto, they bore his likeness. Frequently he made speeches with phrases like 'I do not like to waste words,' 'My plan is based on sound logic', 'I have decided,' 'I forbid,' and 'My Jews.' Rumkowski presided over his community through periods of starvation and deportations for almost five years" (Perpetrators, Victims and Bystanders, New York: HarperPerennial, 109).

To appease Hans Biebow, the ruling Nazi official of the area, and to keep the inhabitants alive, Rumkowski established a ghetto manufacturing economy for the Germans. Even so, most of the ghetto inhabitants, particularly the poorer ones and those unable to work, barely had enough food to survive. Most subsisted on a meager diet of about 900 calories a day. Starvation and disease thinned out the ghetto population even before the Nazis began deporting people to the death camps.

Ruth (Riva) Minsky was only 16 years old when her mother was taken away by the Nazis, never to be seen again. Her father had already passed away earlier from an illness. So Riva, only a child herself, was left to take care of herself and her three younger brothers, including the youngest, Laibele, who suffered from tuberculosis. They barely have enough food to survive; in the harsh Polish winter they shiver from cold. Eventually Riva manages to find a job as a seamstress making German army uniforms. Despite being orphans, Riva and her brothers resist with all their might moving to the ghetto orphanage or being adopted by different families. In fact, the way their nuclear family clings together—with such tenacity that even the director of the orphanage decides to give Riva custody of her brothers—is one of the most moving aspects of the memoir.

Even so, during the winter, the living conditions become so harsh that the Jewish Council decides to burn all the old homes in order to have firewood for the ghetto inhabitants. Riva and her brothers, who live in an old house, are obliged to move into a room of an old grocery store with an underground cellar. This new place, though much smaller and bereft of their family memories, serves them well. Later they hide in the cellar, during the repeated raids by the Jewish Police looking for Jews to meet the Nazi quota for deportation to death camps. Riva and her brothers are particularly at risk since “Operation Reinhard”, or the Final Solution, initially targets children, the ill and the elderly. All those in the Lodz Ghetto deemed by the Nazis “unfit” for work are sent to the Chelmno death camp. Riva escapes several of the selections by hiding and depending on a network of teenage friends. But she cannot escape for long.

In the summer of 1944, the Nazis begin to liquidate the entire ghetto as the Soviet forces approach. They transport the remaining population, including the Elder himself, to Auschwitz. Although he had been promised safety and protection for his cooperation with the local Nazis, Rumkowski himself perished in the concentration camp. Out of the nearly 200,000 inhabitants of the Lodz ghetto, less than 1000 survived to be liberated by Soviet troops on January 19, 1945. Only 12 of them were children. Riva is one of the relatively lucky ones. She survived the unspeakably harsh conditions in Auschwitz due to her youth and resilience; her network of friends that helped each other; luck, and a kind prisoner doctor that took her to a local hospital. Her moving memoir, written in a simple and didactic prose intended for the young adult audience, offers a unique and informative look into the horrendous human cage that was once the Lodz Ghetto.

Claudia Moscovici
Holocaust Memory

Heather says

I remember the 8th graders at my previous school read this book, and since I have a propensity for reading Holocaust novels, I finally picked this one up. This is an autobiographical account of Riva's life as a young girl in Lodz, Poland. Riva, her mother, and her three brothers live in a ghetto there at the start of World War II. Several older siblings had moved to Russia before the war started, and her father had died years prior. Riva's story mirrors those of other Holocaust novels I have read, and it definitely hits home about the atrocities of this genocide and the strength of the Jewish men, women, and children who lived in the ghettos, workers' camps, and concentration camps. Riva's mother taught her children how to be strong and always said, "As long as there is life, there is hope." This mantra helped Riva to survive World War II. This was a

truly touching account - one that I would imagine would lend itself to lots of classroom dialogue.

Speaker says

Haunting. I couldn't put it down. A young girl is forced to become a woman at an entirely too young age. The horrors of everyday life for Riva and her family are unimaginable. We should never ever forget what terrible things happened so that they won't ever happen again.

lacy [a ravenclaw library] says

Mom Mondays is a bi weekly segment here on a ravenclaw library. Click here to learn more details about this segment and how you can do this with your family!

note: My mom knows that the Holocaust is one of my favorite events to study and one of my first loves of history. (Thank Danielle Steel's book, Echoes, for that.) Hence why Mom picks up Holocaust books for me whenever she can. She also does this really awesome thing (that she should totally keep doing because I really like it!) where if she is at a dollar store or something like that, she will pick up a book for me. This is one of those selections. My mom knows me so well!

I want to cry. Why, as humans, must we think we are better than one another? Why did the Holocaust even have to happen? My heart positively aches for Ruth and for what she went through. It just bleeds for her. I had to set the book down after I finished it and hold back tears. Because I was at work and I probably shouldn't cry at work.

So why the three stars, Lacy? Because the book wasn't written well. As heart wrenching the topic is, I can't ignore the technicalities of writing. It was written very choppy with a lot of repetition. Pieces of time would fly by with no descriptions and it would leave me really confused as to what date it was. There were a lot of side characters that had no introduction and they would leave just as quickly. I had a hard time keeping track of who was who. The conversation amongst the characters was just really off. Translation might have been why that was the case but I can't be for certain. Some things just get lost in translation.

I did like this book for the aspect that it was from someone that lived in Poland during World War II. A lot of Holocaust books, the ones that I have read anyway, are based either in Germany or the UK. It was interesting to read about Poland and how the Jews there dealt with what was happening and I would like to find more of them.

But despite my critiques, this is another book that should be read and I will be reading more of her work, as she has a book about her journey in America. We must never forget the past so we aren't doomed to repeat it. We can never let another event like the Holocaust happen again. These books are important and we must protect them to ensure future generations never forget.

“...Remember: If hope is lost, all is lost.”

Adriana Landeros says

This book is about a young girl who loses her mother in a holocaust raid. She later gets separated from her younger siblings that she was responsible for ever since her mother was taken. Riva developed an infection in her hand from working in the concentration camp. She is treated by the kindness of the many officers of the concentration camp, even the commandant. Riva is freed from the concentration camp, she has a wonderful daughter that always asks her about her grandparents, Rivas parents. This starts off the book in a flash back.

This is one of the very few books that actually made me cry. I can say that this book is one of my favorite books. It makes me feel like if something ever happened to my parents, God forbid, I could take care of my siblings like Riva took care of her little siblings. If she could do it, especially in the situation that she was in, the I could be able to do it too. "The Cage" keeps you wanting to read more and more, wondering what is going to happen in the next chapter. If someone likes books that keep you wondering or that make you understand or feel what the characters are feeling then this is a great book for you. You will not be able to put the book down.

Vanessa says

"When there is life, there is hope" is the quote that the teenage girl received from her mother before the nazis separated her from her mother and her brother, Riva is alone sent her to concentration camp. Life has just gone bad for the poor girl, not only is she alone and scared but she is sick. Going through many hospitals looking for help but only one caring hospital who subsided the fact that she was Jewish to keep her alive, all other hospitals not willing to help do to her Jewish background. Riva finds a hospital and after her operations she is faced with the disability of not being able to use her right hand so she doctor had to teach her how to write with her left hand, she is not only alone but she is fighting for her life with her health complications. With the help of a russian commander who gave her food and baths the she was given a job much easier then those in prisons. With all her hope and courage she stays strong, for her family as well as the other victims of the Holocaust. Everyday she got through her hard times by following her mother's quote and reminding her to stay strong and never give up. The message of this book is life isn't easy. If you give up your letting it win you must believe in yourself and you will conquer all.

Rebekah says

As long as there is life, there is hope

I found this to be one of the most innocent memoirs of the holocaust that I have ever read. It was very clear that Sender suffered however I think she downplayed some of the eviler aspects of her imprisonment, as if she wants the world to know what truly happened but also wants to protect her readers from it at the same time. I wouldn't give a young teen Night but I would give them this book. This book is defiantly a good introduction to the horrors of the concentration camps.

It still amazes me that any of this was ever allowed to happen. (and it still amazes me even more that there are people out there who claim it never did). I admire Ruth's strength and sheer force of will- even in her

weakest moments. I am so glad that God preserved her so that she could bring hope and encouragement to the women around her and so that she would survive to be able to tell her story.
