



## IF THIS IS A MAN



- AUTHOR: Primo Levi
- Title: If This Is a Man
- GENDER: novel-witness
- SETTLEMENT DATE: December 1945-January 1947
- YEAR OF PUBLICATION: 1947
- Publisher: Einaudi
- NARRATOR: Primo Levi
- POINT OF VIEW: Inside
- No PAGES: 153
- PRICE: € 10.50

### Structure of the work

The work is articulated in CHAPTERS 17 and is divided into three distinct parts:

#### DEPORTATION- AUSCHWITZ - LIBERATION

### Plot

**PART ONE: THE DEPORTATION** • This part, comprising the first chapter, summarizing the news of the protagonist previous to the internment in camp: capture on 13 December 1943, the first detention camp in Fossoli, Emilia, and transfer in the concentration camp at Auschwitz, Poland. This part of the novel concludes with a description of devastating train journey experienced by the writer along with thousands of other prisoners, trains packed like animals-cattle, without water, food and clothes for the cold.

**PART TWO: THE FIELD OF AUSCHWITZ** • The second part runs from second to sixteenth chapter and covers the entire period of his stay in the camp. The writer and others experience the harsh laws of the camp, where, amidst hardships and violence of every kind are subject to work very hard. The Nazis, in fact, organized the annihilation of slavery and then deported in accordance with the strict rules of an economic activity designed to be as profitable: those who do not have the strength to survive are removed in the gas chambers. Primo Levi fortunately able to resist until the end of the war, benefited from several circumstances: the fact that, being chemical, his work was required in the rubber factory adjacent to the field from the knowledge of German, from rugged physique.

**PART THREE: THE LIBERATION** • The third part consists of Chapter XVII and tells the last ten days of internship. The writer, who was hospitalized in Ka-Be, or field hospital, together with some friends, witnessing the disintegration of the field until the arrival of the allies. At beginning of '45, in fact, with the defeat of their armies on all fronts, the Germans abandoned Auschwitz. Remain only the sick in the infirmary. Levi is among them, because ill of scarlet fever. There is found and freed by Russian troops on 27 January 1945.

## Theme and Message

The theme of the entire book is the oppression of man by man, the destruction of man in body and soul, the conversion of men into living skeletons who have lost their dignity and consciousness of themselves. The message that emanates from every point of the novel is always the same: the horrors of deportation should not be forgotten because it should not happen again.



## Characters

The characters are many and they, for the most part, are connected to a single episode. The character that returns more consistently is **Alberto** is the best friend of Levi. He's a young twenty-five of Italian origin and is the man with who the writer will spend a large part of life in the camp.

Protagonists were all guests of the camp, divided into two categories: **submerged**, owning the majority of prisoners are men who have now lost their dignity and they left annihilate to the rules of the camp, but **the saved** although very few are those who have managed to maintain their own identity and fight for freedom without losing hope.

The secondary characters are a lot, like **Arthur**, a thin little French farmer who, at the end of the novel, help with compatriot Charles Levi to feed many sick people as they left the field. **Charles**, a teacher of thirty-two French nationals, a strong man both physically and moral, brave and sympathetic.

# PRIMO LEVI



Primo Levi was born in Torino in 1919 by a rich Jewish family of intellectual tradition. In 1941 he graduated in chemistry despite the obstacle of racial laws. After September 8, 1943 Levi joined a partisan of "Justice and Liberty", but is stopped by the Republican militia. Delivered to the Germans was deported to Auschwitz in January 1944. Survived the concentration camp is liberated by the Red Army in January 1945 and for nearly a year, is the result of Soviet troops in an odyssey that leads him along a route crazy throughout Eastern Europe. Only in October 1945 can go home. He became famous in 1947 with the novel *If This Is a Man*, testimony of imprisonment suffered in Nazi concentration camps and the struggle for survival, not only physical but also their human dignity. The next novel, *The Truce*, which won the Campiello premium is the description of the return to life after the terrible experience. Public later novels, essays, collections of poetry and numerous short stories. Committed suicide in 1987 but his death there are still questions.

## Comments

### Margherita and Raffaele

"If This Is a Man" is a book that we read with pleasure and that really made us think about many things. Beautiful, touching, we believe that if people read it and, above all remember what they read, a book can help open your eyes and be better. From the first pages we can realize of barbarism and horrors committed by the Nazis. It's a fascinating book that gave us a share of the emotional state of people living in camps and understand the pain suffered. The message is clear: Do not forget, because this never happens again. But today we have not yet transposed this message: in the name of power continue the atrocities against his fellow man. That's why we recommend that everyone read the book.

### Giovanna and Christian

In the book describes the period of imprisonment experienced by Levi, where the author knows the ordeal of the camp or a field in which there is no alternative to pain, where the goal is to destroy the individual in body and spirit. We really enjoyed the book, and it was not always easy to read, very realistic and inevitably frightening in some scenes. However, we did understand how much evil there could be a man, and today maybe not much different than yesterday. The book is definitely one of those masterpieces that you send something to the skin, not to mention the great spiritual lesson that teaches that freedom is the free interpretation of life, thoughts and deeds, and nobody can take away the freedom of all hope that a tomorrow we could be!

### Roberto and Elvira

Levi's work is a valuable record of Nazi barbarism faced by the people jew. The author tells with stark reality, life in concentration camps, sometimes using strong expressions that evoke the reader's mind sharp image of that terrible "hell". Certainly the text gives us great ethical and moral teachings on ethical and moral life of simplicity, pain, despair and loneliness, in the regret of not being able to return "home" and reunited with their loved ones, going back to being a decent man. This book has aroused so many emotions in us but when we started to try them was when we closed the book. Infact, when we finished reading and went back to reality, we realized an important thing, that if this had happened to us we would not have survived, we would not have had the courage to go ahead and put those at the thought of torture that caused such horror . The message that Levi want to it soon becomes clear: Do not forget us but instead do the opposite, infact, the horror is repeated, perhaps in different ways but is repeated and when we hear reports of killings and torture, we only give a damn and continue to navigate indifference thinking about ourselves.

## Ausilia and Raffaele

The book "Primo Levi's If This Is a Man" is an emotionally powerful text, to understand. It tells the period of imprisonment ranging from two northern European winters, during which the narrator sees firsthand many friends die because of prohibitive environmental conditions of the poor state of sanitation in the camp, the exhausting work and all the other malice who were forced to suffer in the camps. The book has shaken a lot because the author was able to relate the brutalization and loss of dignity that took possession of the prisoner, before even realizing it. It is the testimony of the atrocities of a system, the Nazis built to destroy the human soul and body. Reading the novel has prompted us to reflect and ask how the man could have and still continue to commit cruel actions.

## Carmela and Antonio

In his book recounts the experience of Primo Levi's concentration camp, organized and targeted annihilation of human dignity. A crazy project of destruction, where man can no longer feel pity, no longer knows the friendship, rebellion, hope, but care only not to die and to maintain a heap of bones and a broken body hunger, from pain and highest form of violence. Men who prevailed over other men so evil as to make their fellow beasts for slaughter, as objects to manipulate. This is the destruction not only of man as a physical being but of its values, its essence.

## Annamaria and Sergio

The book manages to perfectly express the emotions and dramatic experiences that the author lived. Can communicate the importance of not forgetting, for not making the same horrors, why should someone suffer like most atrociously, because never has trampled the dignity of a man.

## Lyubov and Yevgeni

With this book Primo Levi wanted us to know its horrible experience that led him to suicide, witnessing a crime that must not happen again. In the book speaks of the deprivation of the most important thing for a man: freedom. It 's a book that invites us to remember and reflect on the atrocities of which man is capable.

## Laura

Primo Levi tells in this book, with extreme hardness, the sad experience in concentration camps. Captured by Fascist militia, as a Jew, was handed over to the Nazis deported him to Auschwitz. It 's a tale that offers a glimpse of history, shedding light on what happened in the camps. In the book describes the horror and misery that a man can do to a fellow. Levi invites us to reflect, rather to "meditate" in order not to forget what it was.

## Giuseppe

The book is testimony to the terrible atrocities of a system, the Nazis built to destroy the human soul and body, forcing him to live in subhuman conditions, devoid of any emotional connection, any meaning of life,

hope .In this situation, living skeletons, who, crawling like ghosts, haunted the camps have lost their dignity and consciousness of themselves through a cruel and systematic plan. These pages, shouting the tragedy of a people represent an enormous shame of humanity. Surely it is a text to be stored, after reading in the library of house with the obligation to go through almost every day.

## **Raffaella**

The reading of this book "If This is a Man" it makes me to reflect on what we have, also the smallest thing and how much is important, because everyone has the right to live own life, in the respect of the others.

## **Carmela**

I liked a lot Primo Levi's book and I was very excited. I'm a very believer and for that I have read with great involvement. I was very impressed with the ability of the writer with such clarity in telling this experience that perhaps many would have preferred to remove once survivors.

## **Claudia**

Primo Levi's book, "If This Is a Man" is definitely one of my favorite books. I read it several times and I was always excited. I think it's the strongest evidence exists of Jewish extermination. Levi addition to recount what has lived in the camp of Auschwitz try to understand the causes that led human beings to cancel their similar physically and spiritually.