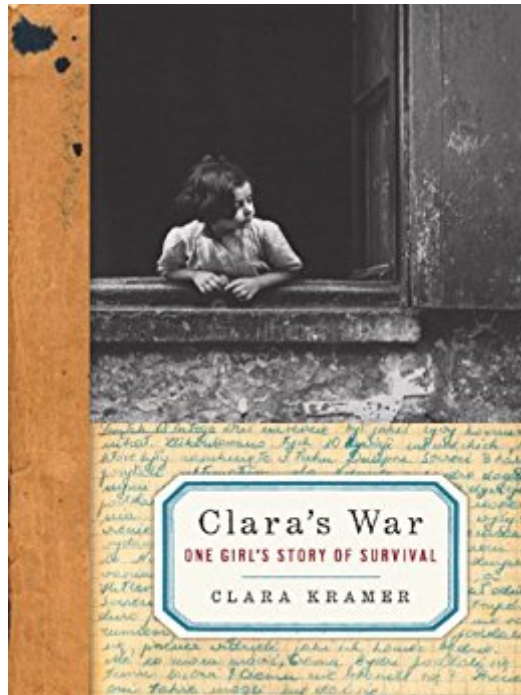




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# Clara's War: One Girl's Story Of Survival



## Synopsis

“A superlative memoir of survival”. Few wartime memoirs convey with such harrowing immediacy the evil of the Nazi genocide. “Daily Telegraph (London)” “One Girl’s Story of Survival”, Clara’s War is based on Clara Kramer’s diary of her years spent hiding in an underground bunker with seventeen other people during the Nazi occupation of Poland. In the classic vein of The Diary of Anne Frank “a heart-wrenching and inspiring story of a life lived in fear and cramped quarters” Clara’s War is a true story of the Holocaust as told by a remarkable young girl who lived to bear witness.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Anne Frank’s Diary of a Young Girl was my introduction to the Holocaust. Anne had only been a little older than I, and together we became aware of the world beyond our own homes. Fifty years later, I still want to read the stories of survivors, mourn for them, admire their courage, rejoice in the miracle of their lives. Clara’s War is no exception. From the first page, I am immediately living Clara’s experiences. I remain amazed by the resiliency of the human spirit. Evil had its season of dominance in World War II, but even then, good people did the right thing. That’s what gives humanity hope. Want to be inspired by hope? Read Clara’s War.

Another gripping, heartwarming Holocaust story. The lives of the people mentioned here will live on as long as someone, somewhere reads. Thank you Clara Reitzfeld Kramer for keeping your diaries and thank you Stephen Glantz for organizing them into a readable memoir of a horrific time, one that must never be forgotten. Here's my favorite passage, from page 265: Waiting for Beck and our fate in darkness would have been too frightening to bear. Since the initial bombing of Lov last week, we never knew if we'd have electricity or not. I didn't know if Beck would come back unharmed, or the police would break down the door and kill us. Ever since Beck had been taken away, we had all been so on edge that I feared we were going insane. Mr Patrontasch was calculating seconds, minutes, hours and days in his book again. Gedalo was writing madly, but wouldn't show it to anyone. Lola had her hand to her mouth, suppressing her laughter. The more everyone looked at her, begging with their eyes for her to stop, the harder it was. She turned her face to the wall until she calmed down. It had to be hysteria because there was nothing funny going on this morning. The Steckels fingered the cyanide capsules around their necks as they always did when we were threatened. Zosia grabbed a pillow and put it over her own face and started to cry silently. And there was Mama in the dirt. At least we had light this morning."

Clara's War was another view into the Holocaust, as seen through the eyes of a young girl. As Clara and her family experiences the horrors of hiding, literally underground, and the almost daily danger of discovery by police, SS officers, and other assorted antagonists; this story was a page-turner! The added heartbreak of former friends and schoolmates turning against their neighbors, and then the horrifying news of friends and loved ones' violent deaths at the hands of Nazi's and sympathizers made this an emotional read as well. I had never read anything which dealt with the war in Poland, so this was also informative. Clara went into detail to describe life before the war, and through her memories of family and friends, both Jew and Gentile, a vivid picture of her home town emerges. I enjoyed this, and learned from it. Clara's style of writing was natural and easy to read.

I have read many Holocaust memoirs but this is definitely amongst the best. I was totally absorbed in this book from the first page and devoured it in 2 days. Clara and the 17 other Jews' (who hid in the bunker under the Beck home) ordeal is vividly described over the course of the book in the most minuscule detail so that you cannot but be transported there with them. I honestly cannot imagine how these Jews survived in that hole in the ground, amidst such terrible fear and deprivation, for as

long as they did. It is truly remarkable. I have read some criticism of the book online regarding inconsistencies in the story e.g. over the mother selling her wedding ring in the first chapter as a ransom for the community leader's freedom and later to pay for food in the bunker. That doesn't really worry me. What I did feel was missing in the book was what became of the "bunker" inhabitants after their freedom. The author summarized the post bunker lives in very few pages which left me feeling let down and disappointed. I understand that perhaps the author only wanted to write about the period of captivity in that it echoed her diaries - but I was so engaged with the story and the key figures that I hungered to know what became of them. Most importantly - I wanted to know the psychological after effects of their captivity. The details of their experiences going to Israel and going to the USA made everything sound so normal. Clara got married, they opened a luncheonette, they had kids etc... What of her parents? No mention is made of them or what happened to them? What became of the Melmans and the Patrontrach families? Did they ever hear from the cold-hearted pharmacist and his wife again? How did the two children, Zosia and Zygbush cope after the war for surely they were the most scarred of all? And though we heard something about the Becks, it was not much at all. I felt I had grown to know all these people intimately and I was let down not knowing what became of them and how they coped after leaving Poland. Despite my disappointment with the end of the book - I highly recommend this memoir as one of the best I've read in this genre.

Clara's war is a very different holocaust story. While it does not ignore the atrocities, it is more than anything a celebration of courage. There is no shortage of true horror and ugliness in any tale of the Holocaust. But this book offers a glimmer of hope for humanity. As Clara's town in Poland is conquered by German forces, her family tries and fails to find escape or refuge. Then from the most unexpected place, comes rescue in the form of a man whose reputation, drunkenness and antisemitism make him an unlikely savior. Amid the horror and privation, abuse and violence, a candle of common humanity flickers. A German army officer refuses to allow the senseless killing of a Jewish child by a Nazi underling. A Catholic family risks their own lives almost daily for over two years to save three Jewish families. I wept throughout for the good buried in the trough of man's inhumanity.

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