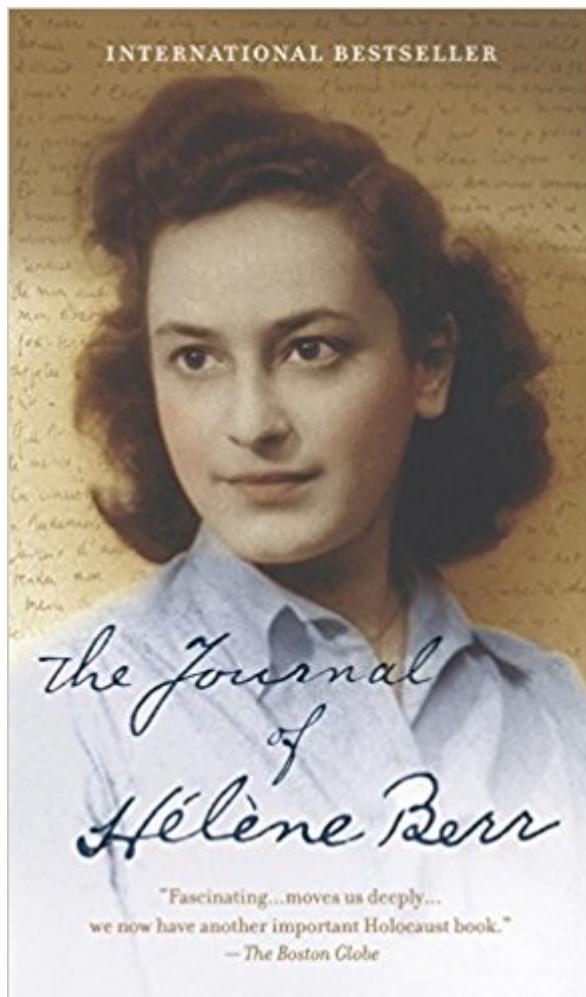


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The Journal Of Helene Berr



Synopsis

Not since The Diary of Anne Frank has there been such a book as this: The joyful but ultimately heartbreaking journal of a young Jewish woman in occupied Paris, now being published for the first time, 63 years after her death in a Nazi concentration camp. On April 7, 1942, Hélène Berr, a 21-year-old Jewish student of English literature at the Sorbonne, took up her pen and started to keep a journal, writing with verve and style about her everyday life in Paris — about her studies, her friends, her growing affection for the "boy with the grey eyes," — about the sun in the dewdrops, and about the effect of the growing restrictions imposed by France's Nazi occupiers. Berr brought a keen literary sensibility to her writing, a talent that renders the story it relates all the more rich, all the more heartbreaking. The first day Berr has to wear the yellow star on her coat, she writes, "I held my head high and looked people so straight in the eye they turned away. But it's hard." More, many more, humiliations were to follow, which she records, now with a view to posterity. She wants the journal to go to her fiancé, who has enrolled with the Free French Forces, as she knows she may not live much longer. She was right. The final entry is dated February 15, 1944, and ends with the chilling words: "Horror! Horror! Horror!" Berr and her family were arrested three weeks later. She went — as was discovered later — on the death march from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen, where she died of typhus in April 1945, within a month of Anne Frank and just days before the liberation of the camp. The journal did eventually reach her fiancé, and for over fifty years it was kept private. In 2002, it was donated to the Memorial of the Shoah in Paris. Before it was first published in France in January 2008, translation rights had already been sold for twelve languages.

Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Weinstein Books; 1St Edition edition (November 3, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1602860947

ISBN-13: 978-1602860940

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.8 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 27 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #141,743 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #80 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > France #107 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic &

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. I was abruptly assailed by the feeling that I had to describe reality, writes Berr midway through this urgent firsthand account of the devastation of Paris's Jewish community during WWII. This journal, which begins in 1942 as the record of a young woman's intense and buzzing inner life, becomes over time a record of human suffering: How will the world be cleansed unless it is made to understand the full extent of the evil it is doing? Berr, daughter of a prosperous assimilated Jewish family, was forced to quit her studies at the Sorbonne, joined an underground network to save Jewish children, saw her father arrested and beloved friends deported. But as compelling as external trials are the thoughts and feeling of this brilliant, passionate and brave young woman. As the noose tightens around Paris's Jews, Berr wonders if she still has the right to find momentary pleasure in reading; she questions herself for falling into instinctive, primitive hatred of Germans. Yet in one overpowering moment of rage, she rails against impassive Parisian Christians who crucify Christ every day. Berr died in Bergen-Belsen in 1944, five days before the camp's liberation, but her vibrant voice—full of anguish, compassion, indignation and defiance—springs from these pages—as extraordinary a document of occupied France as Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française*. Photos. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Reading The Journal of Hélène Berr, a diary of denial, heartbreak, and resistance that her family’s cook passed on to surviving relatives after Hélène’s death at Bergen-Belsen, is like watching a sunset: an inevitable, achingly vivid journey into the dark.” • O, The Oprah Magazine “[A] brilliant, passionate and brave young woman. . . . Her vibrant voice—full of anguish, compassion, indignation and defiance—springs from these pages—as extraordinary a document of occupied France as Irène Némirovsky’s *Suite Française*. • Publishers Weekly (starred review) “The publishing sensation of 2008 . . . We seem to understand for the first time the horror and absurdity Jews had to face every day in occupied Paris.” • Liberation (Paris) “A work of exceptional literary and historical qualities.” • Sud Ouest “Deserves to be a publishing sensation.” • Ottawa Citizen --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Everyone knows Anne Frank but this first-person account of what it was everyday life was like for French Jew in Paris during the German Occupation is gripping. She was just a student interested in school and her friends writing a diary. Very compelling and interesting.

It is a different way to read about those dark days through the eyes of a very intelligent young woman just starting her life. Keeping track of all the characters was a challenge but not a distraction.

Makes one realize how life can change for the rich and poor alike in times of war and upheaval and the torments people endured.

This book is a little difficult to read because it is written as a journal, not as a book. Still, it provides yet another perspective on the German occupation in France, specifically Paris, from the viewpoint of a young, highly intelligent Jewish woman.

It did remind me of the Diary of Ann Frank but this was better written. They were tough times, and any documentation from people involved in WWII should be valued and read by young people as well as older people who were familiar with what went on.

can't wait to read it

was a gift

I pre-ordered this book for my father and although I have not read it, he tells me that he is really enjoying it for all the insight that he is receiving. I would recommend it.

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