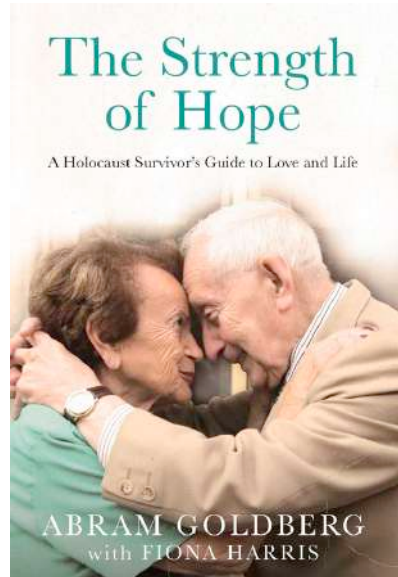


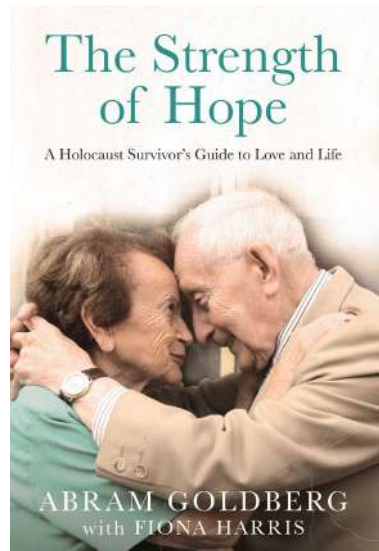
LEARNING THROUGH MEMOIR

‘The Strength of Hope’ by Abram Goldberg



Abram Goldberg was born in Lodz, Poland in 1924. He and his parents were imprisoned in the Lodz Ghetto following the Nazi invasion in 1939. As a teenager, Abram was an active member of the underground in the ghetto. Abram’s father and most of his extended family were deported and murdered in 1942, leaving Abram and his mother in the ghetto. In 1944, they were deported to Auschwitz, where Abram’s mother was murdered in the gas chambers on arrival. Abram was sent to a series of camps until his liberation in 1945. Abram and his wife Cesia migrated to Australia in 1951. In 2013, Abram was honoured by the Australian government, receiving an OAM.

To watch Abram’s testimony [click here](#).



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Theme: Pre-War Jewish Life

Context: Abram describes aspects of his life growing up in the Polish city of Lodz before World War Two.

Page numbers: p23 ("Around this time I also joined...") to p26 ("...endurance would be tested.")

Approximate word count: 820

GLOSSARY

SKIF: Youth branch of the Jewish Labour Bund, a left-wing political party committed to social justice; Abram's family were members of the Bund

ping-pong: table tennis

agile: fast moving

devour: eat quickly

landlord: person who owned the building in which Abram's family lived

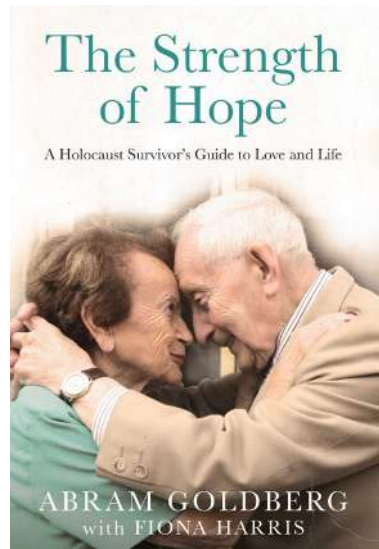
Polish boys: when Abram refers to 'Polish' people, he is referring to non-Jewish people to differentiate them from Jewish people; it should be noted that Jewish people in Poland were also Polish and identified as such

accosting: harassing; being hostile to

hooligans: young troublemakers

set upon: attacked

endurance: ability to put up with difficult situations



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Theme: Rise of the Nazi Party

Context: Abram describes the rise of antisemitism (hatred of Jews) in Poland in the years leading up to World War Two. Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, but life for Jews in neighbouring Poland also started to change.

Page numbers: p29 ("I knew that antisemitism was getting worse..." to p30 ("...should we be bombed."))

Approximate word count: 350

GLOSSARY

antisemitism: hatred of Jewish people

Lodz: city in central Poland where Abram's family lived

escalate: increase rapidly

tentacles: arms, as in an octopus

culture: environment

Bund: left-wing Jewish political party committed to social justice

ethnic tension: conflict between groups of people with different backgrounds

manufacturing: making products in factories

Poles: when Abram refers to 'Poles', he is referring to non-Jewish people to differentiate them from Jewish people; it should be noted that that Jewish people in Poland were also Polish and identified as such

Union: organisation that protects the interest of workers

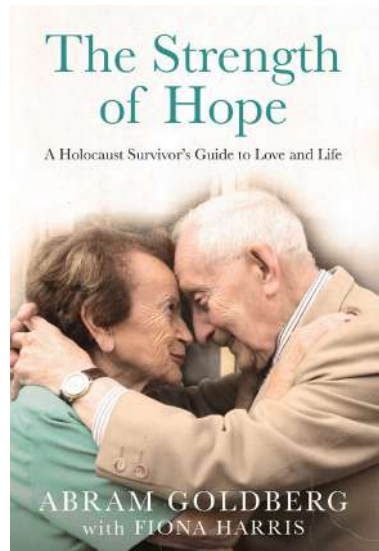
state-run high schools: schools run by the Polish government, which were in theory open to all children, regardless of their background

Yiddish secondary school: school for Jewish children; Yiddish was the language used by many Jewish people in Poland

verge: edge

volunteers: people who agree to work for no pay

trenches: ditches for protection



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Theme: War

Context: Abram describes the panic among Jewish people in Lodz in 1939 as the German army defeated Poland and occupied the city in which his family lived. He was 14 at the time.

Page Numbers: p30 ("Hitler invaded Poland...") to p33 ("...murdered by the Nazis.")

Approximate word count: 800

GLOSSARY

Lodz: city in central Poland where Abram's family lived

civilian: person not in the army or the police force

ethnic German population: people of German background who lived in Lodz

manufacturing sector: area where goods were made in factories

refugees: people fleeing war

Warsaw: capital of Poland

cavalry: soldiers on horseback

pitted against: fighting

blindsided: taken by surprise

psychological shock: mental or emotional shock

primitive: basic; poor standard

underground: secret organisation fighting against those in power, in this case the Nazis

chaos: confusion

en masse: in large groups

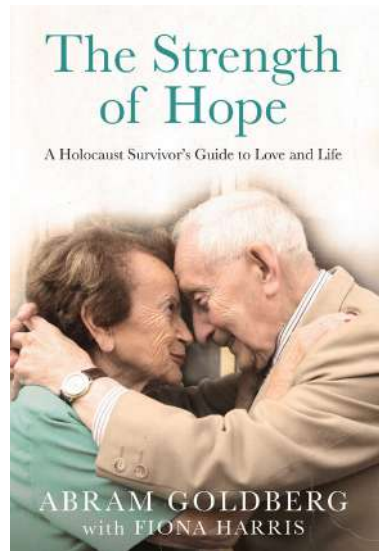
inevitable: unavoidable

swastika: Nazi symbol

Nazi: extreme right-wing political party that ruled Germany under Adolf Hitler

occupation: control

ravines: deep, narrow gorges



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Theme: Persecution

Context: Abram describes the antisemitic laws introduced in Lodz under the Nazi occupation, and the reaction of some of the local non-Jewish population. He was a teenager at the time.

Page Numbers: p33 ("In our newly occupied town...") to p34 ("...to see what they wanted")

Approximate word count: 350

GLOSSARY

antisemitic: relating to hatred of Jewish people

Nazis: in this case, Abram is referring to German soldiers

alsatians: German Shepherd dogs

proclamations: public or official announcements

curfew: regulation forcing people to stay inside at certain times, typically at night

Poles: when Abram refers to 'Poles', he is referring to non-Jewish people to differentiate them from Jewish people; it should be noted that Jewish people in Poland were also Polish and identified as such

cues: signals

Frajda and Estera: Abram's sisters

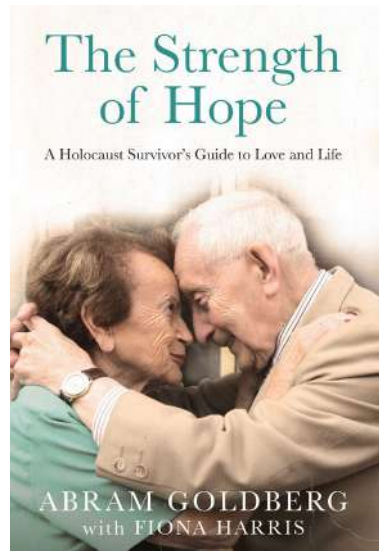
level-headed: sensible

ethnic Germans: people of German background who lived in Lodz

became Nazis: supported the occupying Germans

Hitler Youth: youth wing of the Nazi Party

Zgierska Ulica: major street in Lodz



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Theme: Ghettoisation

Context: Abram describes life in the early years of the Lodz Ghetto, the poorest part of the city where the Nazis forced Jewish people to live in appalling conditions behind barbed wire. He lived in the ghetto between the ages of 15 and 19.

Page Numbers: p54 ("As we were setting up our new home...") to p55 ("...officially cut off from the outside world.") and p56 ("The Germans quickly figured out...") to p57 ("... many others who were not so lucky.")

Approximate word count: 530

GLOSSARY

ghetto: poor part of a city or town where Jewish people were forced to live in isolation from the rest of the population in over-crowded conditions and with inadequate food

dragged out: prolonged

brutal: savage; violent

efficiency: getting something done without delay

potential: usefulness

textile workers: people who make clothes

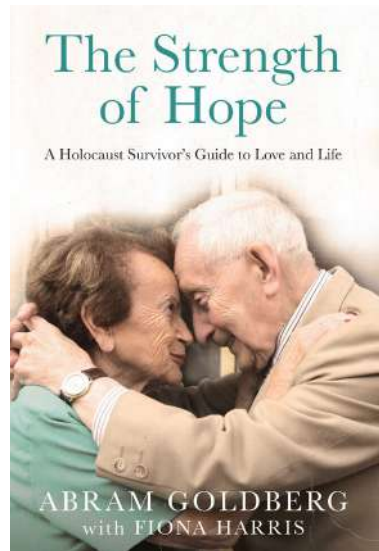
cobblers: people who make shoes

urban: area in a town or city

ping-pong: table tennis

curfew: regulation forcing people to stay inside at certain times, typically at night

rations: amount of a commodity allowed, in this case food



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Theme: Resistance

Context: Abram describes aspects of life in the Lodz Ghetto, the poorest part of the city where the Nazis forced Jewish people to live in appalling conditions behind barbed wire. He lived in the ghetto between the ages of 15 and 19.

Page Numbers: p66 ("Dad and I continued to actively ...") to p67 ("...for as long as possible").

Approximate word count: 500

GLOSSARY

Bund: left-wing Jewish political party committed to social justice

Bono: Bono Wiener, Abram's youth leader and friend, a fellow member of the Bund

socialist: someone who believes wealth should be shared equally

role model: a person who sets a good example to be followed

Lodz: Polish city where Abram was living in the ghetto

Orthodox Jews: traditional, religious Jews who sometimes wear distinctive clothing

ghetto: poor part of a city or town where Jewish people were forced to live in isolation from the rest of the population in over-crowded conditions and with inadequate food

fuel: material that could be burnt for cooking or warmth

appalling: awful

atrocities: acts of cruel violence

witnessing: seeing

Frajda: Abram's sister

familiar: well known

refrain: repeated line

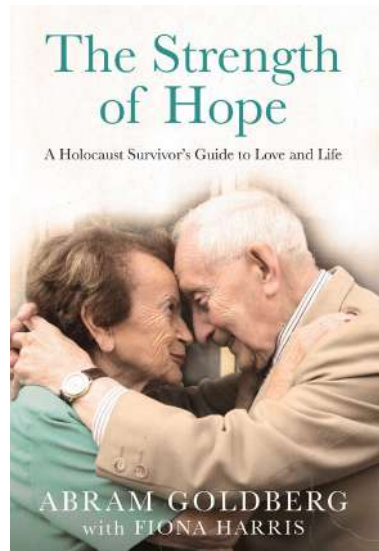
defy: resist or refuse to obey

recitals: musical performances

crucial: vitally important

specifics: details

deportation: forced transportation, in this case to a death camp



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Theme: Courage

Context: Abram describes the construction of illegal radios in the Lodz Ghetto. He explains the importance of establishing a connection with the outside world, and why this was extremely dangerous and needed to be kept secret. Abram lived in the ghetto between the ages of 15 and 19.

Page Numbers: p70 ("More than anything...") to p73 ("...that we keep it a secret.")

Approximate word count: 750

GLOSSARY

British radio: radio broadcasts from Great Britain, one of Germany's main opponents in World War Two

Polish underground: secret organisation fighting against the Nazis

instil: establish

ignorant: lacking knowledge

ghetto: poor part of a city or town where Jewish people were forced to live in isolation from the rest of the population in over-crowded conditions and with inadequate food

Lodz: Polish city where Abram was living in the ghetto

Bund: left-wing Jewish political party committed to social justice

hatched: thought up

Kripo: Nazi Germany's criminal police

Bono: Bono Wiener, Abram's youth leader and friend, a fellow member of the Bund

component: part

faulty: broken

retrieve: get; collect

cursor: quick; not thorough

illegal: against the rules

severe: harsh

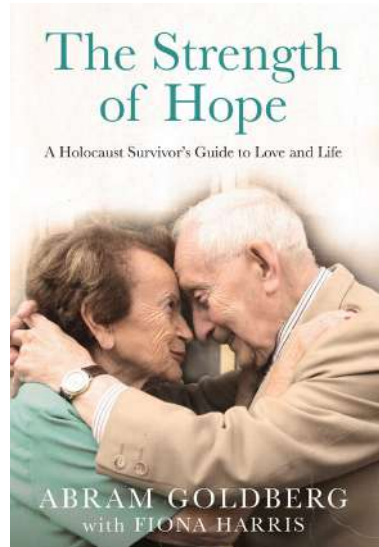
deceive: trick

smuggling: moving goods illegally

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

vigilant: cautious; careful

clandestine: secret



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Theme: Deportation

Context: Abram describes hiding with his mother in an attic in the Lodz Ghetto. This was to avoid the August 1944 liquidation of the ghetto, when the Nazis rounded up the remaining Jewish people and sent them to Auschwitz, a death and slave labour camp. Abram was 19 at the time. About 50 members of his extended family, including his father, had already been deported to a death camp and murdered in 1942.

Page Numbers: p106 ("We couldn't stand in our small space...") to p109 ("...our exhaustion made us indifferent.")

Approximate word count: 830

GLOSSARY

transported: in this instance, taken by cattle train to Auschwitz

cobblestone: large stones

Nazis: In this case, armed German soldiers or police

ghetto: poor part of a city or town where Jewish people were forced to live in isolation from the rest of the population in over-crowded conditions and with inadequate food

RAUS! [German]: OUT!

emaciated: weak from lack of food

nourishment: food

deportation: forced transportation, in this case to a death camp

death camp: camps where Jewish people were murdered on an industrial scale

adamant: determined

Auschwitz: Nazi camp where Jews were murdered in gas chambers or used for slave labour

radio: this refers to an illegal radio built by members of the underground in the ghetto to which Abram had access

Bund: left-wing Jewish political party committed to social justice

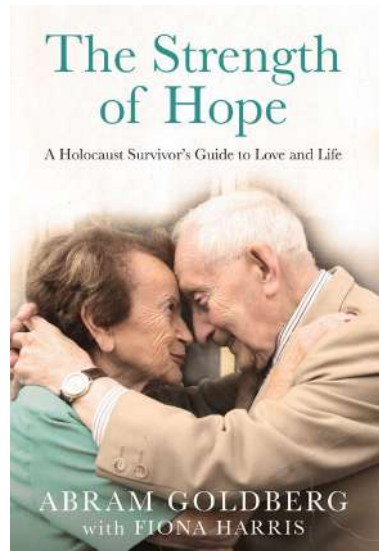
Lodz: Polish city where Abram and his mother were living in the ghetto

burden: load; problem

conscience: moral sense of right and wrong

Jewish Prison: prison in the ghetto that became an assembly point for people being deported

indifferent: not caring



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Theme: Selection

Context: Abram describes the selection process at Auschwitz, where he and his mother were taken in cattle cars after handing themselves in for deportation at Lodz Ghetto in 1944. At the selection process, men and women were separated and Abram was unable to fulfil his wish of protecting his mother. This extract includes Abram's mother's final words to him before she was selected to be murdered in the gas chambers. Abram was selected for slave labour. He was 19 at the time.

Page Numbers: p110 ("The journey was...") to p112 ("...screaming women and children.")

Approximate word count: 650

GLOSSARY

cattle car: railway carriage meant to carry cattle

Biebow's speech: speech made in the Lodz Ghetto by senior Nazi official Hans Biebow, who encouraged workers to turn up for deportation by telling them they would be sent somewhere safe to work

labour camp: work camp

Auschwitz: Nazi camp where Jews were murdered in gas chambers or used for slave labour

Morning Star Club: Jewish sports club in Lodz, of which Abram was a member before the Holocaust

echoing: repeating

SS Guards: elite unit of Nazis who were in charge of camps and the mass murder of Jewish people

barrage: bombardment

RAUS! [German]: OUT!

Auschwitz-Birkenau: largest section of the massive Auschwitz complex, where Jews were murdered in gas chambers or used for slave labour

Carpathian Mountains: mountain range

Alsatian dogs: German Shepherds

striped uniforms: uniforms prisoners were made to wear, having had their own clothes taken away

Yiddish: language spoken by many Jewish people in central and eastern Europe, including Poland

single file: single line; one in front of another

chimneys: smokestacks from the crematoria where bodies of murdered people were burned

shred: last piece

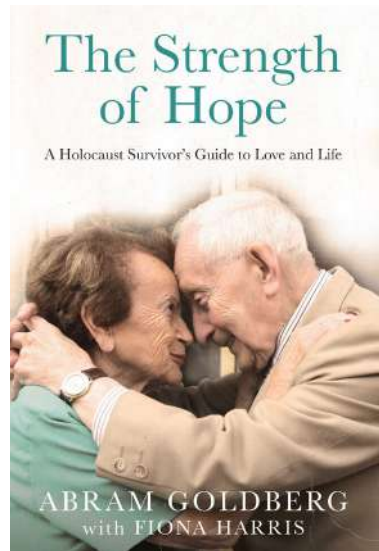
extinguished: destroyed

wrenched: pulled violently

glimpse: brief view

herded: moved like animals

swallowed up: disappeared into



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Theme: Camps

Context: Abram describes daily life in Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest section of the massive Auschwitz camp complex. Auschwitz was a death and slave labour camp. Abram turned 20 in Auschwitz.

Page Numbers: p120 ("The guards finally arrived...") to p122 ("...memories of Auschwitz-Birkenau to be clear.")

Approximate word count: 750

GLOSSARY

roll call: calling out a list of names to establish who is present

kapos: prisoners, often criminals, who helped the Nazis run the camps in exchange for special favours

profanities: swear words

latrines: group toilets

Auschwitz: Nazi camp where Jews were murdered in gas chambers or used for slave labour

barracks: building where prisoners were housed

spite: hatefulness

Heniek: Abram's friend from Lodz

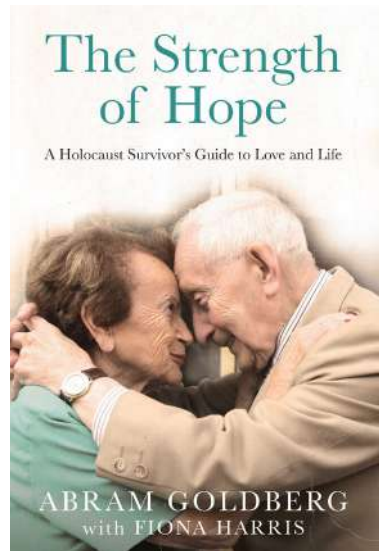
humiliation: extreme embarrassment; shame

potential: possible

sadistic: deriving pleasure from inflicting pain

Blockfuhrer: Nazi in charge of a barrack, or block

Sonderkommandos: Jewish prisoners forced to work in the gas chambers and crematoria



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Theme: Murder

Context: Abram describes the emotional and psychological impact of the knowledge that his mother had been murdered in the gas chambers at Auschwitz. She was 53 at the time; he was 19.

Page Numbers: p122 ("The first thing I made a mental note of...") to p123 ("...a place full of so much fear and pain and death.")

Approximate word count: 350

GLOSSARY

crematorium: furnace where bodies of murdered Jewish people were burned
wafts: movement, of smoke in this case
belched: sent out large amounts
pyres: piles for burning bodies
incomprehensible: impossible to understand
Auschwitz: Nazi camp where Jews were murdered in gas chambers or used for slave labour

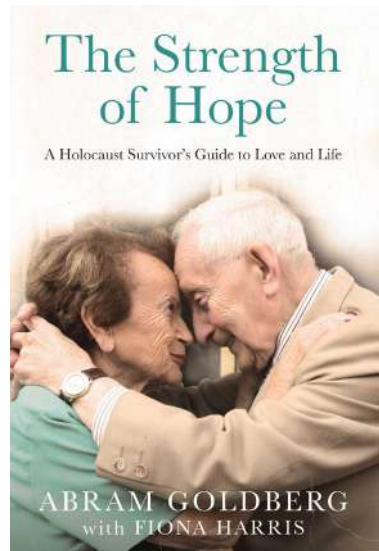
operation: organised activity
unfathomable: impossible to understand
inconceivable: impossible to understand
concept: idea
nurtured: cared for; protected
realisation: becoming fully aware of something
mourning: period of grief

Student Questions

On the lines: How far was Abram's camp from the crematorium where the bodies of murdered Jews were burned?

Between the lines: Explain why Abram uses the term "murdered" for the killing of Jews. Why does he avoid euphemisms (softer language) such as "died", "perished" or "passed away"?

Beyond the lines: Analyse the complex emotions that Abram felt about the loss of his mother, and why he was unable to properly mourn her. How in the extract does he "rehumanise" her – and why?



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Theme: Liberation

Context: Abram describes the moment of his liberation at Wobbelin concentration camp in Germany. Abram was sent to a series of camps after Auschwitz, Wobbelin being the last. He was 20 when he was liberated.

Page Numbers: p147 ("On that momentous day...") to p148 ("...no better than them.")

Approximate word count: 450

GLOSSARY

Heniek: Abram's friend from Lodz

American soldiers: soldiers from the USA who had been fighting Nazi Germany

Nazi: In this case, any German officer, guard or soldier

liberated: freed

surging: moving intensely

indescribable: impossible to describe

fathom: understand

saviours: soldiers who liberated the camp

immense: enormous

Wobbelin: Camp in Germany from which Abram was finally liberated

skeletal: like skeletons

traumatised: deeply distressed in a way that causes lasting emotional pain

makeshift: temporary

Yugoslavs and Russians: prisoners from Yugoslavia and Russia

revenge: hurting someone to get back at them

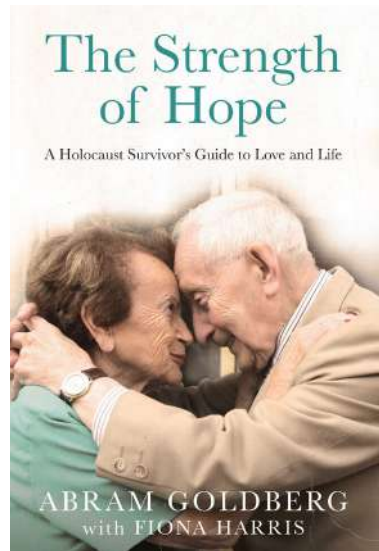
fantasising: dreaming about

Student Questions

On the lines: What did Abram weigh when he was liberated?

Between the lines: Explain the impact that the conditions in Wöbbelin had on the Americans who liberated the camp.

Beyond the lines: Analyse the ways in which liberation was a time of mixed feelings for Abram and other survivors. What emotions did he and others experience?



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Theme: Return to Life

Context: Abram describes his arrival in Australia in 1951 with his wife Cesia. Abram and Cesia, also a Holocaust survivor, had married in Belgium in 1947.

Page Numbers: p216 ("I had just £5 in my pocket...") to p218 ("...give our children a good life.")

Approximate word count: 520

GLOSSARY

£: symbol for the pound, the currency in Australia at the time

Cesia: Abram's wife, a Holocaust survivor he married in Belgium in 1947

Hela and Herszel: friends of Abram and Cesia who welcomed them to Melbourne

Fitzroy: suburb of Melbourne

mesmerised: intensely interested, ignoring all else

paradise: place that seems beautiful or perfect

political upheavals: instability

oasis: safe place amid danger

Belgium: country in western Europe where Abram lived immediately after World War Two

deserted: empty

Brussels: capital of Belgium

monkey suits: tuxedos

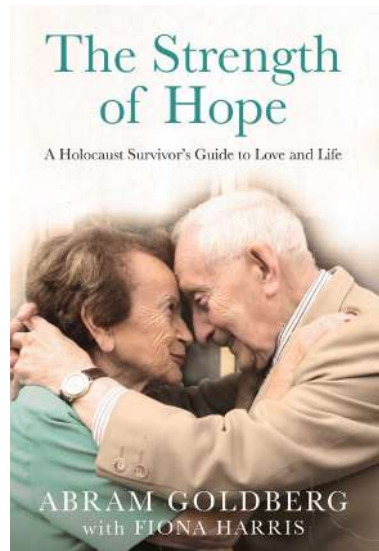
cinema: movie theatre

Student Questions

On the lines: How much money did Abram have with him when he came to Melbourne?

Between the lines: Explain the ways in which coming to Melbourne was a culture shock for Abram and Cecia. How was it different to life in post-war western Europe?

Beyond the lines: Analyse Abram and Cecia's initial relationship with Australia. They found it quiet, even dull, yet also a "paradise". What challenges did they face? Why did they commit to a life in Australia? What were their priorities, and how might these be connected to their trauma as Holocaust survivors?



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Abram Goldberg was born in Lodz, Poland in 1924. He and his parents were imprisoned in the Lodz Ghetto following the Nazi invasion in 1939. As a teenager, Abram was an active member of the underground in the ghetto. Abram's father and most of his extended family were deported and murdered in 1942, leaving Abram and his mother in the ghetto. In 1944, they were deported to Auschwitz, where Abram's mother was murdered in the gas chambers on arrival. Abram was sent to a series of camps until his liberation in 1945. Abram and his wife Cesia migrated to Australia in 1951. In 2013, Abram was honoured by the Australian government, receiving an OAM.

Theme: Legacy and Life Lessons

Context: Abram discusses the legacy he carried on behalf of the murdered members of his family and the millions of other Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust. He shares his philosophy on how to live a good life.

Page Numbers: p297 ("But I am not ready to give up...") to p300 ("...never forget that.")

Approximate word count: 770

GLOSSARY

humanity: humans collectively; the quality of being human

ghetto: poor part of a city or town where Jewish people were forced to live in isolation from the rest of the population in over-crowded conditions and with inadequate food

Nazis: members and supporters of the extreme right-wing political party that ruled Germany under Adolf Hitler

liberated: freed

legacy: what they left the world

race: social construct that falsely divides people into separate biological categories

ethnicity: group of people with a similar background

the centre: Melbourne Holocaust Museum

Hitler: Nazi dictator who ruled Germany from 1933 to 1945

discriminative: treating different groups in an unfair way

slogans: short, catchy phrases

superior: better

optimistic: positive

oppression: cruel or unjust treatment

antisemitic: relating to hatred of Jewish people

trauma: deep distress

Auschwitz-Birkenau: the largest section of the massive Auschwitz complex, where Jewish people were murdered in gas chambers or used for slave labour

belching: sending out large amounts

Melbourne Holocaust Museum: Australia's largest institution dedicated to Holocaust education, research and remembrance

bitterness: resentment

generations: people born at roughly the same time

