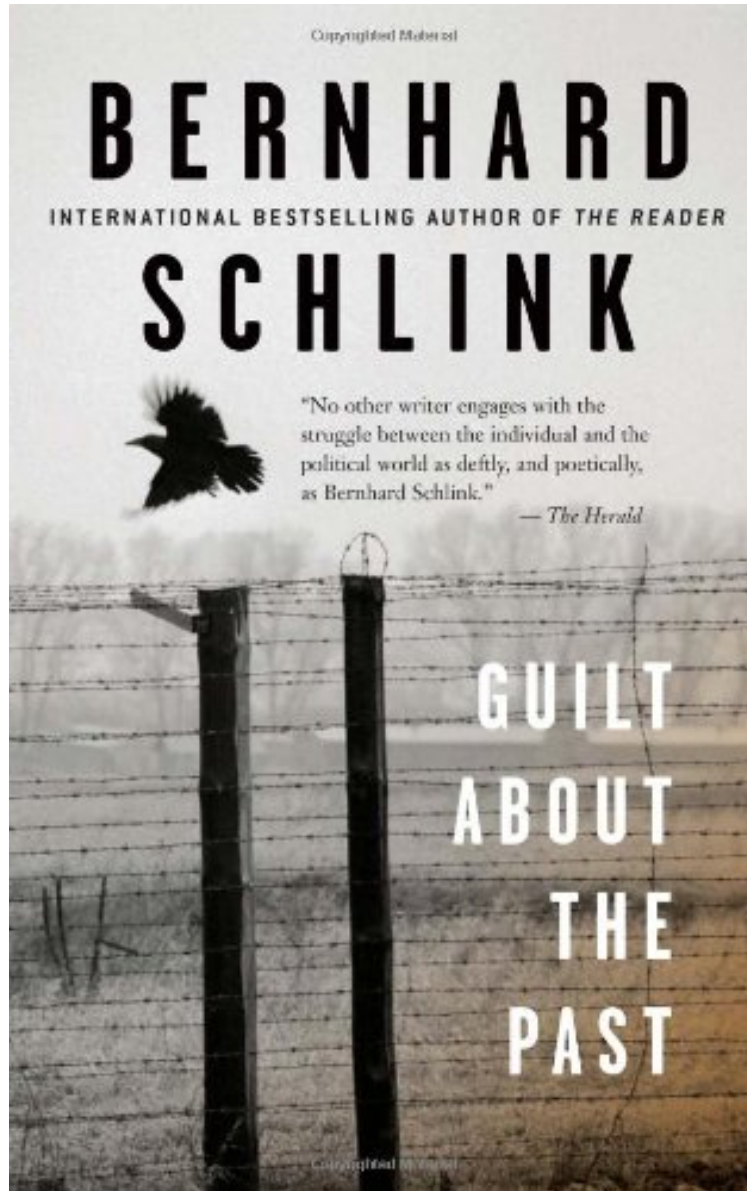


[Free pdf] Guilt About the Past

Guilt About the Past

Bernhard Schlink

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Bernhard Schlink : Guilt About the Past before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Guilt About the Past:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Profound and readable!By D. WatermanHaving read Schlink's book The Reader a while back, I decided to see whether he had written anything else and I am happy to say that this book

offers both some insight into the personality of the author as well as a better understanding of the ethical questions he is interested in. In addition, I found his exposition of the German legal system and its limitations in dealing with Nazi war crimes very interesting and a little disturbing. Schlink is an accomplished writer but he is above all a conscientious thinker who has taken the time to explore the at times uneasy relationship between the (German) legal system, justice and existential questions.³ of 5 people found the following review helpful. Bernhard Schlink From the PodiumBy Grady HarpFor those readers captivated by the extraordinary prose and gift for relating involving stories ('The Reader', 'Flights of Love: Stories', 'Self's Punishment', 'Self's Deception', 'Homecoming', 'Self's Murder') this book of essays from the writer who also happens to be a professor law. Presented as a series of lectures in 2008, they are such fine reading and deserve publication in book form. These six short but pungent essays explore Guilt - both as a personal feeling and as a collective shroud. Grouped together they comprise some of the more enlightening book on the subject, using of course the German people and the aftermath of WW II. In both his introduction and the first essay Schlink appropriately delves into history going back to the 1300s when law were in force that punished members of families for something one member of a family did; entire families could be by law put in a sack and drowned for the malfeasance of one person. He then rather quickly reminds us of the collective guilt of the British in India, of Americans and slavery, of Canadians and First Nations and so on. According to Schlink 'when some members of a collective commit crimes, its other members have a duty to identify them and expel them from the group. If they don't, they become "entangled" in the perpetrators' crimes and share their guilt; the behavior of the few is then credited to the many. After 1945, Germans should have identified the Nazis in their midst and severed ties with them. When they didn't - when they preferred to forget Nazism - they became guilty as a collective for what had been done.' It is the courage to accept the past and at the same time investigate how to restore pride in a nation bludgeoned by the world for atrocities for the past. Schlink discusses moral consequences in his fourth essay addressing how ridiculous for politicians to apologize for things done in the past 'when it's not them who should bear any guilt for anything, and perhaps those being apologized to are not there to offer forgiveness. Given racial slaughters, of course, some reconciliation is always beneficial.' When members of a collective (such as Germany in WW II) commit crimes as in the Holocaust it is the onus, the obligation to identify the perpetrators and segregate them from the collective: those who did not come forth share the guilt and become equally guilty as a collective. In the final chapter of this book the author addresses the books and films that he believes to be accurate and responsible and also points out those he considers inferior and misleading. Being a writer of one of the more popular of these books gives him an edge in critiquing the writings of others. And even in this role Bernhard Schlink remains a figure of fairness, a man of opinions that matter. This book is a reliable survey of Guilt about the Past, whether that be counted in centuries, in decades or in days. It is pertinent information for us as well as a fine documentation of the philosophy of collective guilt. Grady Harp, June 11 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A very intellectual treatment of post-war guilt. This puts ...By Jeanne D. TaylorA very intellectual treatment of post-war guilt. This puts the book above the realm of screaming and yelling "why did it all have to happen?!!!".

The six essays that make up this compelling book view the long shadow of past guilt both as a uniquely German experience and as a global one. Bernhard Schlink explores the phenomenon of guilt and how it attaches to a whole society, not just to individual perpetrators. He considers how to use the lesson of history to motivate individual moral behavior, how to reconcile a guilt-laden past, how the role of law functions in this process, and how the theme of guilt influences his own fiction. Based on the Weidenfeld Lectures he delivered at Oxford University, *Guilt About the Past* is essential reading for anyone wanting to understand how events of the past can affect a nation's future. Written in Bernhard Schlink's eloquent but accessible style, it taps in to worldwide interest in the aftermath of war and how to forgive and reconcile the various legacies of the past.

From BooklistThe author of the best-selling Holocaust novel *The Reader* (1997) moves to nonfiction as he discusses Germans' guilt about their past in a series of six lectures he delivered at Oxford University in 2008. The academic jargon is sometimes heavy (the norms considered in the course of my deliberations), but readers can skip the minutiae of legal scholarship and get to the gripping moral issues of collective guilt. What about those who did nothing? And what about those who, afterward, did not renounce the perpetrators? What about the children and grandchildren today: Can there be forgiveness and reconciliation? Has the obsession with the Holocaust resulted in banality? Can there be retroactive justice? Schlink admits that he, too, feels guilty that he has gone along with things because he does not want to escalate the conflict and irritate the silent majority. And fans of *The Reader* will welcome his reply to the critics who say he should not have humanized his character, Hanna, the former camp guard who committed monstrous acts. His answer is that every book does not have to tell the full truth, as long as it doesn't pretend to be more than it is. He hates *Life Is Beautiful* but praises *Shoah* and Primo Levi. This is great for book-discussion groups, especially those engaged with *The Reader*. The issues of authenticity and literary truth are universal, and so is the haunting guilt. -- Hazel Rochman