



Guilt About the Past

By Bernhard Schlink

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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.

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Editorial Review

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The 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

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Banks:

Book is to be different for every grade. Book for children till adult are different content. As we know that book is very important for us. The book *Guilt About the Past* was making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is very advantages for you. The reserve *Guilt About the Past* is not only giving you a lot more new information but also to become your friend when you feel bored. You can spend your current spend time to read your publication. Try to make relationship with all the book *Guilt About the Past*. You never feel lose out for everything should you read some books.

Miguel Penix:

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Rene Hudson:

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