



Primo Levi: A Life

Ian Thomson

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Primo Levi, author of *Survival in Auschwitz* and *The Periodic Table*, wrote books that have been called the essential works of humankind. Yet he lived an unremarkable existence, remaining until his death in the house in which he'd been born; managing a paint and varnish factory for thirty years; and tending his invalid mother to the last. Now, in a matchless account, Ian Thomson unravels the strands of a life as improbable as it was influential, the story of the most modest of men who became a universal touchstone of conscience and humanism.

Drawing on exclusive access to family members and previously unseen correspondence, Thomson reconstructs the world of Levi's youth-the rhythms of Jewish life in Turin during the Mussolini years-as well as his experience in Auschwitz and difficult reintegration into postwar Italy. Thomson presents Levi in all his facets: his fondness for Louis Armstrong and fast cars, his insomnia and many near-catastrophic work accidents. Finally, he explores the controversy and isolation of Levi's later years, along with the increasing tensions in his life-between his private anguish and gift for friendship; his severe bouts of depression and passion for life and ideas; his pervasive dread and reasoned, pragmatic ethic.

Praised in Britain as "the best sort of history" and "a model of its kind," *Primo Levi: A Life* is certain to take its place as the standard biography and a necessary companion to the works themselves.

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