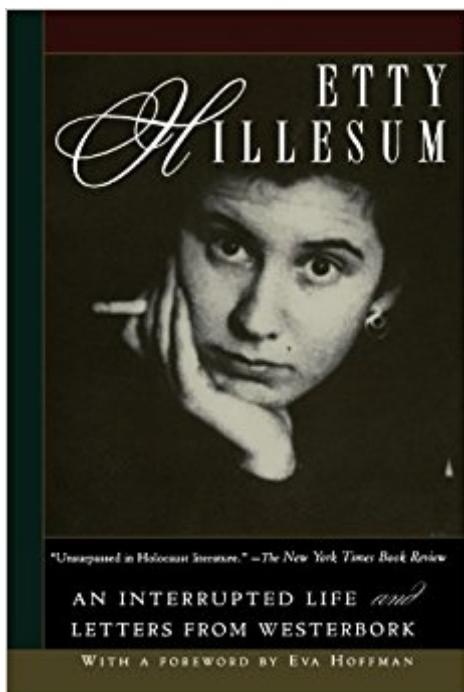


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Etty Hillesum: An Interrupted Life The Diaries, 1941-1943 And Letters From Westerbork



Synopsis

For the first time, Etty Hillesum's diary and letters appear together to give us the fullest possible portrait of this extraordinary woman in the midst of World War II. In the darkest years of Nazi occupation and genocide, Etty Hillesum remained a celebrant of life whose lucid intelligence, sympathy, and almost impossible gallantry were themselves a form of inner resistance. The adult counterpart to Anne Frank, Hillesum testifies to the possibility of awareness and compassion in the face of the most devastating challenge to one's humanity. She died at Auschwitz in 1943 at the age of twenty-nine.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

YA--Hillesum was in her mid-20s at the time of the Holocaust; her diaries consist mainly of musings about the confusion, perplexities, and struggles all around her and mature into a clear philosophy of love of God and all humanity. Her most intimate thoughts are played out at length, but perseverance results in a rewarding view of humanity. The young woman's letters (the second part of the book) reveal a great deal more detail about the day-to-day life at the transit camp of Westerbork (the last stop before Auschwitz). Here, individual people come into view more clearly, and the horrors and atrocities facing the Jews at that time emerge. That Hillesum could rise above hate and generalization in the midst of such horror and evil reveals a tremendous inner strength. Her courage, determination, and faith reveal her amazing spirit. An inspirational reading experience.

Bunni Union, Geauga West Library, Chesterland, OH
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“Remarkable . . . What made life meaningful to Etty was the rare combination of erotic, spiritual, and intellectual passions that made up her ‘thinking heart.’ A truly great book.”
The Washington Post Book World

I originally bought this in paperback in the mid-80's and it became the inspiration for a musical, fundraising show I produced called 'HEART STRINGS' which ended up making two 30+ city national tours raising millions of dollars to fight HIV/AIDS. Hearing Etty's words connected with popular songs helped me understand the fears, hope and love which anyone facing a life-threatening circumstance experiences. This book changed my life and indirectly, thousands of others.

In Etty I have found a kindred spirit. For the first time in my life I have encountered some of my own deepest questions and understandings in someone else's writing in such a familiar and yet haunting way. For this reason, the reading went straight to the Mariana Trench of my soul. No other book has seen so many of my tears and scribbles. She is someone who understood the meaning of true love, who experienced the unutterable richness love can introduce us to and it is poignantly revealed in her writing. She conveys the pain of her own along with the aching of her surroundings and time, yet she grows in the ever-prevalent joy that is gentle and light as a feather and stems right out of love. Therein lies the true strength of a human being that surpasses all understanding and all time. Nothing is as strong as true gentleness.

Mesmerizing and so interesting. I felt like I was beginning to personally know her and was devastated at her demise and that of her family. She was a woman with great strength and promise as a writer and I believe, had she survived the war, she would have become a famous writer.

As the author of two books that deal with women's lives during the second world war, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors* and *Where She Came From : A Daughter's Search for Her Mother's History*, and someone who has thoroughly researched the Holocaust literature, I can attest to the unique qualities of this book. Etty's insistence on her right to an inner life despite the insanity of the external world closing in around her is an inspiration to those of us engaged in intellectual or spiritual endeavors in this far easier time. Her account of continuing psychotherapy as the Nazis made the rudiments of ordinary existence impossible is a

testament to her passion for understanding herself and her world. Eva Hoffman's introduction is superb. This is a book I return to again and again.

This was an amazing young woman who continues to inspire courage, Love - yes, with a capital L - and self-reflection about how to be in the moment & in touch with the Divine, no matter your external circumstances. I'm honored to know her words & her thoughts. This book is a 'must-read' for anyone & everyone. It's an excellent primer on how NOT to hate. Something sorely needed in the age of terrorism. We must never forget that on the way to Auschwitz she threw a postcard from the transport train that said, "We left the camp singing."

Wow - what a moving and well written read. Humbled.

A fascinating life, I had never heard of Etty until Pope Benedict XVI mentioned her in his last audience talk. She was a seeker in our contemporary times of dis-integration and evil. Hatred could not destroy her, she followed and gave witness to the power of desiring the good. Like St. Augustine. centuries ago. Her work will also endure.

Etty is a hero for all, for both her courage in articulating the contours of interiority and for her hope in the face of political oppression/cruelty. Reading her diary changed my life.

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