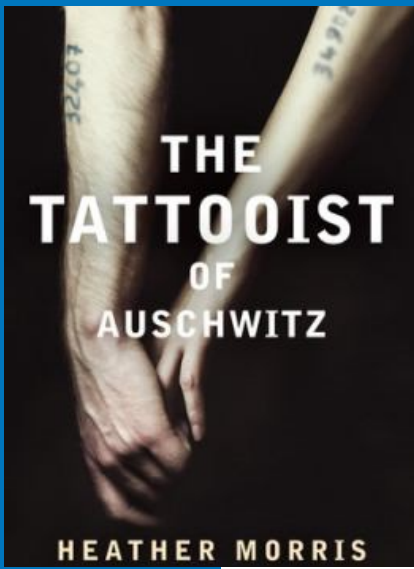


The Tattooist of Auschwitz



Author Background

Heather Morris

Born: Te Awamutu, New Zealand

Lives: Melbourne, Australia

Heather was born in Te Awamutu, New Zealand, educated at Pirongia Primary School and Te Awamutu College. In 1971 she moved to Melbourne, Australia, and then moved between the two countries before settling in Melbourne in 1987

She completed her B.A. at Monash University in 1991 and in 1995 she began work in the Social Work Department at Monash Medical Centre in Melbourne where she stayed until 2017.

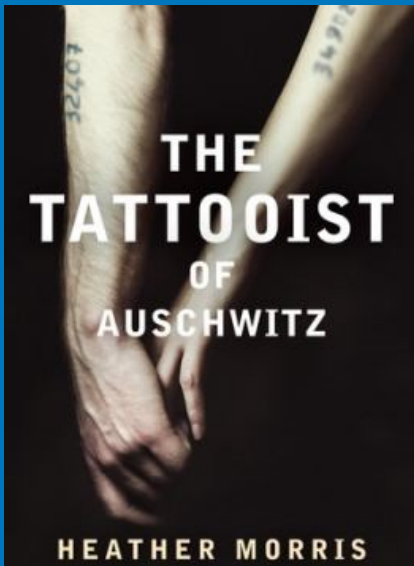
In 1996 Heather decided to follow her passion for storytelling and enrolled in The Professional Scriptwriting Course through the Australian College of Journalism. She attended many screenwriting courses, seminars and workshops in both Australia and the U.S.

Heather's first screenplay was optioned by Academy Award winning writer Pamela Wallace (*Witness*) and in 2003 she was introduced to Lale Sokolov and subsequently wrote *The Tattooist* as a screenplay.

The screenplay won many awards but has not yet been produced so, inspired by the comments from competition readers, Heather embarked on a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds to publish her story as a novel instead.

Source: Publisher website

The Tattooist of Auschwitz



Book Summary

In December 2003, I was introduced to Lale Sokolov. His wife had recently died and I was told he had a story that might be worth telling. That was the first of many, many days I would spend with the *Tätowierer*, the tattooist of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

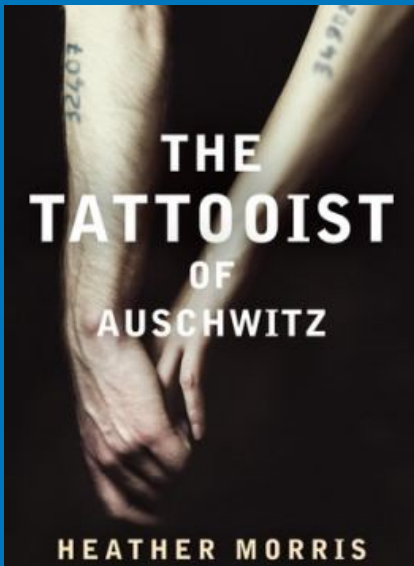
Lale's life was forever changed the day he looked into the eyes of a young girl as he tattooed her left arm. In return, as he told me, she tattooed her love into his heart.

What I got from Lale was a love story set in the horrific world of the Holocaust. The possibility of survival for our lovers was remote. But prisoners 32407 and 34902 did survive. They survived a place now etched in history as a Dante-esque circle of hell; they survived a death march; they were separated, reunited; they married and lived happily in Melbourne, Australia, for 58 years.

The Tattooist of Auschwitz is the story of Lale and Gita.

Source: Publishers website

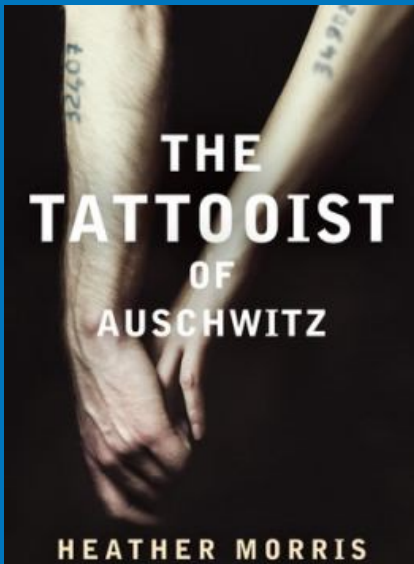
The Tattooist of Auschwitz



Discussion Questions

1. How did you feel about Lale when he was first introduced, as he arrived in Auschwitz? How did your understanding of him change throughout the novel?
2. What qualities did Lale have that influenced the way he was treated in the camp? Where did those qualities come from?
3. Survival in the camp depended on people doing deeds of questionable morality. Lale became the tattooist, but how did Gita's choices affect her survival? What about her friend who befriended a Nazi?
4. Inmates in the concentration camp had to make life-or-death decisions every day. Why did some make the "right" decisions and survive while others did not?
5. How did the small acts of kindness have greater implications? Did it make you reconsider what you believe to be brave or heroic? Did this make you think differently about the impact of your own everyday actions?
6. *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* makes clear that there were also non-Jewish prisoners in the camp. How did the treatment of Jews differ from that of non-Jews? How did these differences manifest themselves?

The Tattooist of Auschwitz

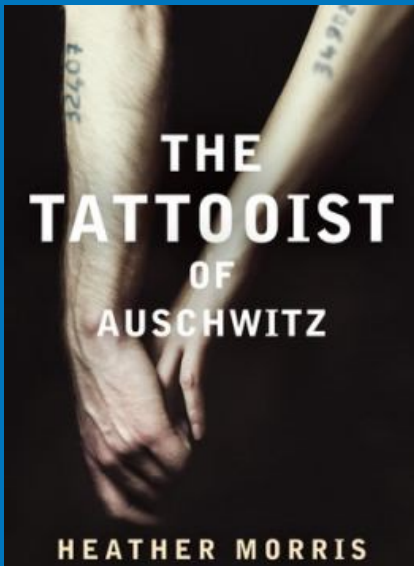


Discussion Questions (continued)

7. Had Gita and Lale met in a more conventional way, would they have developed the same kind of relationship? How did their circumstances change the course of their romance?
8. In what ways were the relationships between Gita and her friends different from the usual friendships between teenage girls? In what ways were they similar?
9. In what ways was Lale a hero? In what ways was he an ordinary man?
10. Lale faced danger even after the camp was liberated. How did his experiences immediately after liberation prepare him for the rest of his life?
11. How does *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* change your perceptions about the Holocaust in particular, and war in general? What implications does the story hold for our own time?

Source: LitLovers website

The Tattooist of Auschwitz



Reviews

In Lale's story, Morris offers an Auschwitz narrative that may be more accessible than other Holocaust stories. Her focus is Lale's level-headed bravado and his deep love for Gita. Morris restrains the violence, and Gita and Lale's moments together provide relief from the stark brutality that necessarily characterise many Holocaust memoirs. Still, the horror of the concentration camp is inescapable. On one occasion, the SS forces Lale to enter the gas chamber of Crematorium Three. The Sonderkommando stands aside as Lale distinguishes the numbers of a faded tattoo among the pile of naked corpses. Morris originally crafted Lale's story as a screenplay, and the novel, quick-paced and in present tense, retains a cinematic feel. While her afterword provides substantiating details, the extent to which she has fictionalised Lale's experiences remains unclear. Regardless, *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* captures an incredible love story and celebrates the humanity of an extraordinary man.

Ashley Kalagian Blunt, *The Australian Newspaper*

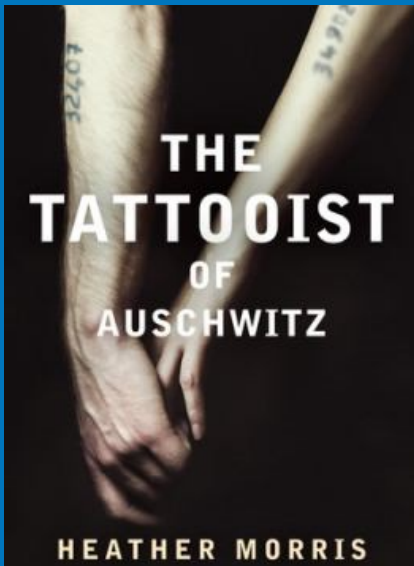
These books call the reader to an appreciation of, on the one hand, clear distinctions between good and evil and, on the other, fine shades of grey in between. If they have lessons to teach, those lessons need the full story.

Michael McGirr, *Spectrum SMH*

The Tattooist of Auschwitz has the quality of a dark fairytale. It is both simple and epic, shot through with compassion and love, but inescapably under the shadow of the most devouring monsters our civilisation has known. Everyone should read it.

Hugh Riminton – journalist, foreign correspondent, TV newsreader, and author of *Minefields*

The Tattooist of Auschwitz



Reviews (continued)

One advantage to fiction is that sometimes provides the only way to convey the full emotional impact of events on the characters. It can flesh out, give dimension to memories that otherwise would remain distant. And knowing the story is true allows the reader to accept the otherwise implausible effects of accident, coincidence, and simple luck that so often change people's lives. And Lale had more than his share of each.

One strength of the book is its simple portrayal of the humanity of the prisoners and how they bonded in ways they wouldn't on the outside.

The result is a novel that is at once sobering and poignant, both weighted with unspeakable horrors and uplifted by the unique hope of love.

Timothy Niedermann, *New York Journal of Books*

While one may rejoice that love flourished even in the darkest pit of humanity, I felt uneasy at an apparent glossing over of the concentration camps' unremitting misery with sugary romance. The choice to tell Lale's story as fiction distances the reader from the terrible reality and makes it difficult to judge what really happened at the level of human interactions. A non-fiction account might have been a better option, though perhaps less beguiling to readers.

Jane Housham, *The Guardian Australia*