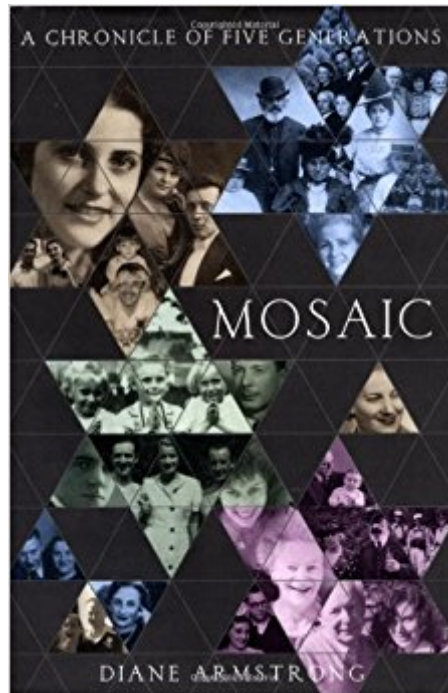




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# Mosaic: A Chronicle Of Five Generations



## Synopsis

Starting in Krakow, Poland in 1890, and spanning more than one hundred years, five generations, and four continents, *Mosaic* is Diane Armstrong's moving account of her remarkable, resilient family. This story begins when Daniel Baldinger divorces the wife he loves because she cannot bear children. Believing that "a man must have sons to say Kaddish for him when he dies," he marries a much younger woman, and by 1913, Daniel and his second wife Lieba have eleven children, including six sons. In this richly textured portrait, Armstrong follows the Baldinger children's lives over decades, through the terrifying years of the Holocaust, to the present. Based on oral histories and the diaries of more than a dozen men and women, *Mosaic* is an extraordinary story of a family and one woman's journey to reclaim her heritage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although it has the epic sweep and emotional depth of a 19th-century novel, Diane Armstrong's absorbing family memoir centers around the 20th-century Holocaust that consumed the lives of six million European Jews. She begins with the dramatic moment in 1890 when grandfather Daniel Baldinger divorced his childless first wife because, the devout orthodox Jew explained, "if I can't doven in shule beside my sons, I won't have fulfilled my duty to God." Those sons and daughters (Daniel's second wife bore 11 children) came to maturity as the Nazis were exterminating Jews, often with the enthusiastic assistance of the Baldingers' Polish neighbors. Armstrong's father changed his name to Henryk Boguslawski, and her parents spent the war with baby Diane (born in 1939) pretending to be Catholics; their siblings employed other desperate tactics to escape the

anti-Semites' grasp. Armstrong seamlessly weaves a narrative history of those terrible years with the first-person recollections of her elderly parents, aunts, and uncles. This mosaic is further enriched by the meditations of Diane and her cousins, who scattered after the war with their surviving parents to Canada, the United States, Israel, and Australia (where Armstrong still lives). Giving their children a Jewish identity poses a challenge for Diane and her equally secular husband, and the book closes movingly with their son's fiancée telling them she wishes to convert: "Your religion has continued for thousands of years, and so many Jews have died because of it," Susan tells her in-laws. "I don't want to be the one to break the continuity." Armstrong's memoir vividly conveys that continuity, even as it is threatened by political events and personal conflicts. Her skillful blending of vibrant individual voices across the generations makes this memoir a touching tribute to the healing powers of storytelling as well as to the unquenchable human spirit. --Wendy Smith

Armstrong's vivid, heartwarming family memoir begins with a shocking divorce. In 1890, in Krakow, her grandfather Daniel Baldinger asked for and received a divorce from his wife of 10 years, Reizel, because they had not yet had a child. (This was permissible under Jewish law.) Five years later, Baldinger's second wife gave birth to their first son, Avner. When her uncle Avner died in 1985, Armstrong decided to interview her five living aunts and uncles to piece together a "mosaic" of five generations of her family. Using novelistic techniques both in the arrangement of her material as well as her liberal use of imaginative details Armstrong offers a sprawling family history covering more than 100 years, several continents and scores of characters. Relying on the memories of her relatives (some of whom were in their 70s and 80s when she interviewed them), she displays strong dramatic instincts and can play a scene for all it's worth. Indeed, the book has a cinematic quality to it, particularly when it comes to her family's varied situations under the Third Reich: her immediate family posed as Catholics to escape the Nazis, but other relatives were not so lucky. Although Armstrong's tale is crammed with incident the secret of her mother's abortion in 1938; a tale of relatives in Auschwitz who met Anne Frank and her sister in the concentration camp where she died; a Catholic priest who helped her family in hiding the plot and her characters move along in a fast-paced, tightly woven narrative. Although readers looking for strictly documented history may find it wanting, Armstrong's story is likely to entertain and grip most readers. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

This beautifully written following of five generations of a Jewish family was absolutely riveting as it reflected the writer's love of her Jewish ancestors as she searched for the truth of their existence

and any evidence of their lives.. Even though she was aware that it would be impossible to find many of her contemporaries alive and that the horrors of her ancestors' deaths in World War II and the Holocaust would await her, she fought through their histories with a determined spirit, looking for and interviewing any survivors to find the real truths. She did not approach the war (and pre-war and post-war for that matter) with a gory, sensationalist approach as many writers do.. She was simply realistic and factual, truthfully shocking. The Holocaust happened and I imagined so much of it must have happened just as she described it because of her impeccable research.. An incredible hatred exists in the world but she overcomes it with caring for the discovery of the truth and she writes of it not in a revengeful manner but simply as a history of her family... Every student of history should read this book to get a real feeling for anti-semitism and examples of how it has affected so many, how it existed in different nations, and how it was "justified" by the offenders, how it exists today. I put this book at the top of my best read books ever because I believe in it and I believe in her message. I want to add that I am not Jewish so I am not stating this from what some might still consider to be a biased point of view. I am stating the above because I am a lover of excellent books and brave people who overcome hatred with love and who have the courage to look into their past regardless of what they know they might find. Diane Armstrong is a superb writer. In gifting us with her history, she has been catapulted to the top of my best-read writers of all time... .

As a self-styled student of the Holocaust, I have read many memoirs of survivors. None has touched me, though, in quite the way that "Mosaic: A Chronicle of Five Generations" has. Diane Armstrong's 100 year record of her family's history is breathtaking in its depth and heart-stirring in its breadth. She tells of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends whose lives were closely entwined with hers and her parents, almost all lost to the Final Solution. There are no heroes or heroines, only an average family living in the darkest of times. This fact is perhaps what I liked most about the book. They were ordinary people trying to survive an extraordinary era by whatever means necessary. I won't give a synopsis since other reviewers have done so. I will only urge anyone with a social conscience, an interest in history, a belief that "those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it" to read "Mosaic: A Chronicle of Five Generations."

This is one woman's story about her search for family history. There were eleven children in her father's family. It begins in Poland in the 1890's and goes to the present. It is a story about the barbarism of the Holocaust but it's much more. It's the story of the family before, during and after WWII. The family Members are so well described both by the author and through some of their own

letters you feel you know them and they all led very interesting lives. Living through the atrocities of the Nazi's changed them forever. But their lives went on and they settled all over the world. It's the story of their day to day lives and a story of strength and endurance. Every person mentioned in this book from her family to the 20 something Polish tour guides, to the Catholic priest is a reminder that we can never never forget the past.

It was interesting to see how the human spirit can survive through a horrible time in our World History. The Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi's was not only a dark time in history, but for humankind. To see how the Polish people actually treated the Jews was as despicable, if not worse, than what the Nazi's did. Because they knew and did nothing to help their fellow man. (Woman or child for that matter). There was a documentary I saw once about the Mathausen concentration camp, which a survivor spoke after the showing of the documentary. Many prisoners hid jewelry and photos they did not want the Nazi's to get. (Not only would they never see it again, but they would sell it to further their own greed)A group took metal detectors over the camp grounds and found all the jewelry, and goods that had been buried. One young German man, who was helping the group, began to cry. He said, "I am so sorry! Even though I was not even born, I am embarrassed for my people, what they did, how they thought. It is unthinkable!" It was all taken to the Holocaust museum in Washington, D.C.

This story is full of family,love,courage,heartbreak,and joy. There were times when I needed a Kleenex and woke up with swollen eyes. I can't imagine going through what this family went through. Not knowing what happened to loved ones never seeing them again. I cannot fathom what some people can do in the worst way and others in the best,least selfish way.

Fascinating and troubling story of the fate of a large extended family during the Holocaust, one of the most interesting I've ever read due to the enormous detail and skill of the writer as she embarks on a journey to find out what happened to them all. Highly recommend.

The author did a really good job drawing the reader into the lives of her family as they go through the times before, during and following the Holocaust. One of the best books I've read describing in detail what the Jews went through and how they managed during and after the war. I appreciated how she presented both the victories and the sorrows, both the good and the not so good relationships between siblings and other relatives. I was fascinated with all the research she did and

how she managed to weave it all together into a well-documented, flowing history of her family into which the reader becomes drawn and emotionally involved with.

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