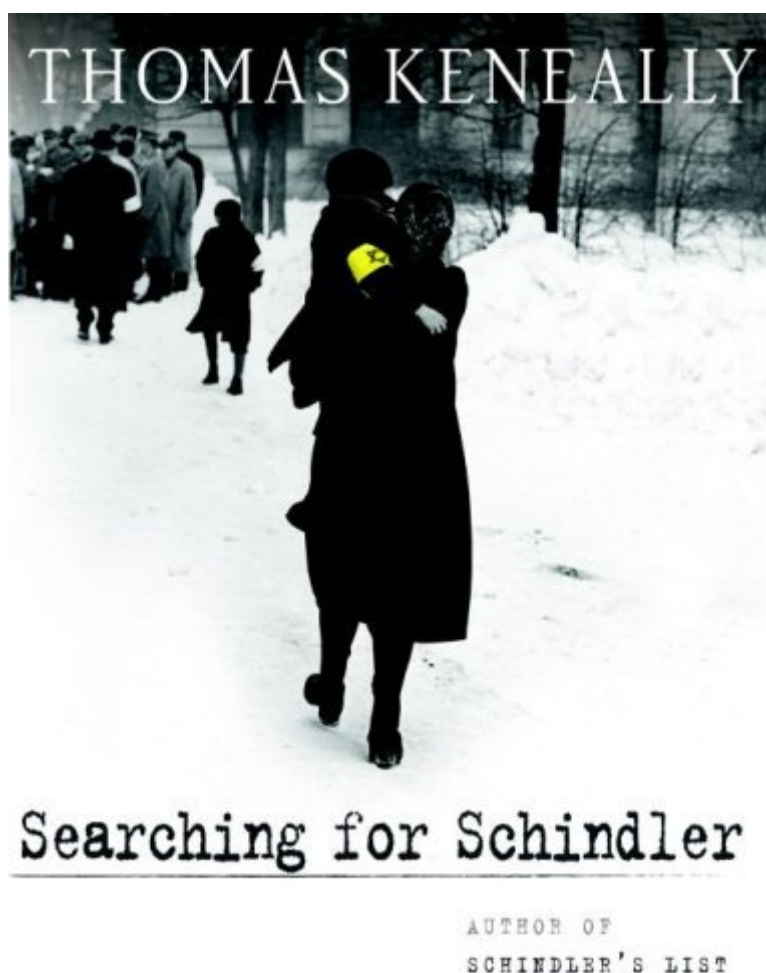


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Searching For Schindler: A Memoir



Synopsis

This is the captivating story behind Schindler's List, the Booker Prize-winning book and the Academy Award-winning Spielberg film. Keneally tells the tale of the unlikely encounter that propelled him to write about Oskar Schindler and of the impact of his extraordinary account on people around the world. Thomas Keneally met Leopold Poldek Pfefferberg, the owner of a Beverly Hills luggage shop, in 1981. Poldek, a Polish Jew and a Holocaust survivor, had a tale he wanted the world to know. Charming, charismatic, and persistent, he convinced Keneally to relate the incredible story of the all-drinking, all-screwing, all-black-marketeering Nazi, Oskar Schindler. But to me he was Jesus Christ. Searching for Schindler is the engrossing chronicle of Keneally's pursuit of one of history's most fascinating and paradoxical heroes. Traveling throughout the United States, Germany, Israel, Poland, and Austria, Keneally and Poldek interviewed people who had known Schindler and uncovered their indelible memories of the Holocaust. Keneally's powerful narrative rose quickly to the top of bestseller lists. Steven Spielberg's magnificent film adaptation went on to fulfill Poldek's dream of winning an Oscar for Oskar. (Keneally's anecdotes about Spielberg, Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley, and other cast members will delight film buffs.) Written with candor and humor, Searching for Schindler is an intimate look at Keneally's growth as a writer and the enormous success of his portrait of Oskar Schindler.

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Customer Reviews

Thomas Keneally is among the finest, most versatile and prolific writers in the world. His fiction and non-fiction range from the American South, to Ireland, to Eritrea, to World War I Europe, to Antarctica, and to contemporary and 'convict' Australia, his native country. And, of course to the Holocaust and his Booker Prize winning "Schindler's List" ("Schindler's Ark" everywhere but in the United States). "Searching for Schindler" is a moving account of how Keneally first heard of Oskar Schindler, how he crossed the globe to do the research necessary to write the novel, and how he participated in the making of the Academy Award winning film. "Searching for Schindler" is also intensely personal and the reader comes to know many of the survivors Keneally interviewed and the author himself, a writer with a staggering capacity for work and an unquenchable thirst for understanding humanity. I recommend this book and everything Keneally has written. I have, for many years believed Thomas Keneally deserves consideration for the Nobel Prize; this book is confirmation of that belief.

I was really looking forward to this book based on a review in this newspaper. Started out gangbusters! It lost its focus after awhile and maps to show the various locations visited would have been very helpful. Still glad I read it as an adjunct to the book and the movie.

Was good the first few chapters, but after a while, the story becomes stagnant. We get it already. I would have preferred more information on the individuals that were involved in the research rather than the brief scan we get and the focus on Keneally. More about Schindler.

In October 1980, Thomas Keneally, with time to kill in Los Angeles before catching a plane back to Sydney, stopped to window-shop at the Handbag Studio in Beverly Hills. The owner of the store came out to schmooze Keneally, coaxed him into the store, and ultimately sold him a briefcase. When the owner found out that Keneally was a writer, he also began to sell him on the story of Oskar Schindler. The owner was Leopold Pfefferberg, who had been one of the Jews on Schindler's List, as had his wife Misia. It was through the irrepressible Leopold ("Poldek") Pfefferberg that Thomas Keneally learned about Oskar Schindler and the Schindlerjuden. In *SEARCHING FOR SCHINDLER*, Keneally tells the story of that serendipitous meeting, how Pfefferberg squired him

around the world introducing him to other Schindlerjuden and their stories, how he wrote his book (entitled "Schindler's Ark" in the U.K., the Booker Prize winner of 1982, but "Schindler's List" in the U.S.), how Steven Spielberg bought the movie rights to the book and then waited for ten years to make the film, and finally about the making and success of the film, which, of course, won beaucoup Academy Awards and ultimately influenced the popular perception of the Holocaust. It is a moderately interesting story, though, to my mind, not sufficiently so to warrant book-length treatment. The story is told with zest, but not much subtlety. There are occasional instances of annoying repetition. At times the prose seems to be straight out of "People" magazine. Two inserts of photographs are a nice supplement. For dedicated fans of the book and/or the movie, this might be a five-star read, though they should be forewarned that there is a fair amount of material personal to Keneally and unrelated to the book or movie.

I actually bought this book by mistake. Kindle and the 1-click shopping being the culprit. I figured I would eventually read this book after I read the actual Schindler's Ark/List anyway, so went ahead and read this (which I'm regretting right now... should have read the actual book first!). This memoir details how Keneally came to write the book, Schindler's List/Arc. In a way, it was pretty dry, just a recount of things happening, places they went... but I actually found this Poldek guy very amusing. Half way through, after the time when the actual book got published, it came to cover about the making of the movie. This part was actually more boring than the first part of the book, in terms of the legal/compensation/discussion of various things... however, interesting tidbits are sprinkled here and there, like how the actor Ralph Fiennes, in his Amon Goeth uniform had looked so much like the real deal that a woman survivor (they allowed "Schindler Jews" survivors to visit the set apparently) actually stepped back in horror when she saw him. I think this would have been a better book AFTER having read the actual Schindler's Arc book... and not the other way around, but it was interesting nonetheless.

Interesting "back story" about the author and how he stumbled upon a survivor that was determined to preserve the Schindler legacy. This is an interesting and delightful companion piece, to be sure, but a good read on it's own. There are a number of Schindler survivor stories out there, but this one was alive and real. Captured me, perhaps not unlike the way the story captured Keneally.

This is a most frustrating book. Keneally starts off in top gear, explaining how he first learned about Schindler from a luggage salesman (who was also a Holocaust survivor) in a California store. The

description of the first meeting is very well done and the author clearly put in a lot of effort to show how he was gradually pushed into the idea of writing about the list. My suspicions that Keneally's heart wasn't fully in this book came early on when I wondered why he was detailing virtually every meeting he held with those people who had been helped by Schindler. He could have cut some of the less interesting encounters and kept the heart of the book. Things only deteriorate from this point as the author descends into a "Look at me, look what I did, aren't I smart?" mode. We learn far too much about his lecturing commitments and how he flew from A to B to C and then back to B and how, when a film was going to be made, the studio flew him first class across the Pacific. For me the lowest point was actually a picture caption which explains how Keneally and wife were getting into a stretch limo arranged by Universal Studios. I don't care about the limo and couldn't care less who provided it, but Keneally wants us to know. He's also partial to explaining which star actor and director he met at which occasion and what they said to each other. The end of the book drops off badly and it strikes me that at this stage, the author couldn't wait to hand it over to the publisher. Overall, this work was a major disappointment.

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