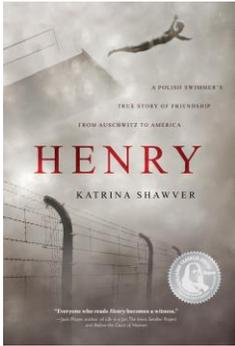


HENRY: A Polish Swimmer's True Story of Friendship from Auschwitz to America

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION



1. Henry grew up playing on the Planty in Kraków with his friends, mostly unsupervised. How did his experiences growing up differ from today? Has the modern integration of all things electronic into our daily lives restricted the ability to make lasting connections?
2. Much of the story takes place either prior to World War II or during the war when many groups were targeted for discrimination. Are these themes still current today? Have you ever felt targeted for who you are? What power do we have as individuals to stand up to similar events?
3. Yad Vashem in Israel defines the Holocaust as “the murder by Nazi Germany of six million Jews.” The US Holocaust Memorial Museum defines the Holocaust as “the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.” Neither definition recognizes or includes Henry Zguda, Christian Poles, and millions of others who perished under the Nazi regime and in German concentration camps. How can we recognize and honor other victims of the larger Nazi genocide?
4. What did you learn about Poland that you did not know before reading this story?
5. Henry and his friend Wilik Tomaszczyk stood only 100 yards away from the Germans who “sorted” an entire trainload of Jews into lines of the living and those doomed to an immediate death in the gas chamber. They could do nothing to help anyone. Can you describe a time you watched something terrible happen that you truly were unable to stop? How did that make you feel?
6. Were you surprised at the differences between Auschwitz and Buchenwald? Can you think of three main ways they differed?
7. What factors or traits contributed to Henry’s survival?
8. Friendship is a recurrent theme from Henry’s life and the retelling of his story. Have you ever met the right person at the right time? Can you describe an unexpected friendship with someone who was different than you?
9. Henry sometimes refers to food at different stages of his life as characteristic of the time and place. Can you think of favorite foods in your life that have symbolism, or that evoke strong memories? Do you have a favorite example from Henry’s life?
10. Katrina Shawver met Henry on a random phone tip, yet after one meeting with Henry, his story resonated with her. Have you ever met someone who made a lasting impression on you?

11. Have you ever told someone they have such a unique story they “should write a book?” If so, what made that story worth sharing with the world?
12. Henry stayed friends with the communists in Buchenwald, and served in the communist government after the war, but never believed in communism. Have you ever kept your own beliefs quiet in order to survive or to keep a job? Have you ever been threatened for your beliefs?
13. What would you say to someone who claims the Holocaust never happened? What would you say to someone who claims there were no Poles in the camps?
14. Do you think a war like World War II could happen again? Do you think your country would win?
15. What will you remember most about this story?