

And the Violins Stopped Playing: A Story of the Gypsy Holocaust
Alexander Ramati

About the book

And the Violins Stopped Playing tells the story of a Kumpania of Gypsies fleeing from the Nazi regime of hatred. Following the Mirga family from their safe, musical life in Warsaw and their flight to their homestead of Brest Litovsk, and the subsequent journey to safety in Hungary, this novel culminates in the imprisonment of what remains of the community in Auschwitz. The book speaks of the importance of family and community, the comfort of music and the courage of individuals.

Discussion Questions

Please note that some of these questions will act as spoilers for the book.

1. What encourages the Mirga family to leave Warsaw?
2. Why do you think the Council of Elders do not wish to leave Brest Litovsk? What encourages them to do so?
3. Roman Mirga is given the task of counting the number of caravans and individuals during the journey. Why did his father ask him to do this?
4. We read of a number of friendships that Roman has in the book – including those with Pawel, Koro and Zoya. What do you think these brief relationships teach us?
5. What event is signified when the violins stop playing? Do you think the use of music throughout this book has contributed to your overall feelings about it?
6. Were you shocked by Dymitr's actions when he threw Mara from the truck?
7. The novel shows us a number of stances which were taken by individuals during the Nazi regime of hatred. We meet a partisan, a number of rescuers, collaborators, prisoners and perpetrators. How important is it for our knowledge of this era of history to understand the range of experiences during this time?

You can use HMD resources to find out more about the experience of the Roma and Sinti under the Nazi regime (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/the-holocaust/victims-of-nazi-hatred>), you can listen to historian Donald Kenrick on our podcast (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/podcasts/victims-of-nazi-persecution-roma-and-sinti-donald-kenrick>) or you could read the story of Amalie Schaich (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/education/case-study-amalie-schaich>) who survived Auschwitz-Birkenau (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/assets/downloads/1150929842-66.jpg>).