

Inherit the Truth 1939 - 1945

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch

About the book

Inherit the Truth is the testimony of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Bergen-Belsen survivor Anita Lasker-Wallfisch. The story is told partly through recollections of her experiences and partly through family letters. We follow Anita's experiences from her experience of anti-semitism and persecution to imprisonment in Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she was member of the camp orchestra, through to her liberation.

About the author

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch was born in Breslau, Germany in 1925. Her father was a lawyer and her mother a violinist. Anita's sister Marianne escaped to England in 1941 and her parents and grandmother were deported in 1942 and it is believed they died near Lublin that year. Anita was a talented cellist and on her arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau became a member of the camp orchestra. After Auschwitz-Birkenau Anita and her sister Renate were transported to the Bergen-Belsen camp from where they were liberated in April 1945. The following year the sisters came to the United Kingdom. Anita continued her musical career and joined the English Chamber Orchestra. Anita's son is a renowned cellist and her grandchildren are following in the family tradition by pursuing music careers.

Discussion Questions

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

1. is it just Anita's children who Inherit the Truth or do all readers have a duty to protect her memory?
2. why do you think Anita and Renate experienced a taboo on discussing their Holocaust experiences when they came to Britain?
3. how did the Lasker family manage to keep an element of hope – described by Anita as 'an elixir that kept us going' despite the continued setbacks in their quest to leave Germany?

4. throughout Anita's story she refers to the bureaucracy that she encounters and questions why it is necessary. Can you understand why record-keeping was so important to the Nazis?
5. how important to Anita's physical and mental survival was her identity as 'The Cellist'?
6. can you understand why Alma Rose was such a disciplinarian with the members of the camp orchestra?
7. what does Anita mean when she says to Marianne 'It is hard – very hard – to cope with being unhappy and miserable but happiness is even harder to cope with'?
8. why were Anita and Renate so keen to receive photographs from Marianne?
9. Anita says that it cannot be expected that the average British army officer be able to grasp fully the significance of the term 'displaced person' – what do you understand by this term?

You can use HMD resources to find out more about Anita Lasker-Wallfisch

<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/survivor-stories/holocaust-testimony-anitalaskerwallfisch>,

the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp

<http://www.hmd.org.uk/news/item/63rd-anniversary-liberation-of-bergenbelsen> and

life in concentration camps <http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/the-holocaust/life-in-the-camps>.