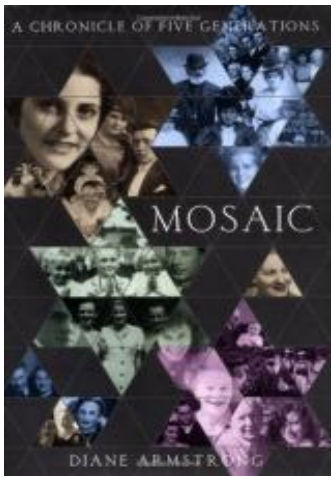
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Mosaic: A Chronicle of Five Generations

by Diane Armstrong



About the Book

Beginning in Krakow, Poland, in 1890, and spanning more than 100 years, five generations, and four continents, **Mosaic** , is Diane Armstrong's moving account of her remarkable, resilient family. This richly textured portrait follows the lives of Liela and Daniel Baldinger and their 11 children from the turn of the century through the Holocaust to the present, and comes to a powerful climax with the author's search for her heritage. With the language of a great storyteller and the eye of an historian, Armstrong illuminates the triumphs and tragedies of this extraordinary family.

Discussion Guide

1. It has been said that there is no history, only biography. Does **Mosaic** bear this out?

2. One of the themes of **Mosaic** is survival. What conclusion did you come to about this?

3. Choose one of the survivors, and assess what part chance, instinct, or resourcefulness played in their survival.

4. Family relationships and the 'dance of the generations' are other themes throughout the story. How are the patterns of the past repeated in later generations? How does the relationship between the author and her father mirror her father's relationship with his own father? Does your own life experience reflect this recurring pattern?

5. Do you think Wanda's statement (p. 443-444) that "Life isn't fair. The pleasures that parents give children are brushed away like crumbs, but the pains are absorbed into the psyche like inkblots" is true? Is it true for some of the characters in the book? How so?

6. What role does tradition and heritage play in the lives of the Baldinger children? In the author's life?

7. How does the author prepare us in Part I for what is to follow in Part II?

8. What do you consider to be the climax of the story? How does the author build up to it? br>
9. In Chapter 40, the author and her daughter visit Poland and the Ukraine in order to trace their roots and visit people and places of importance to their family's history. Do you think they found what they were looking for? Why or why not?

10. How did you feel about some of the modern opinions expressed about the treatment of Jews in Poland during WWII? For example, their guide Jacek's comment that, "They say people living around the ghetto walls didn't help. How could they help when the walls were so high? Anyway, helping Jews was dangerous." (p. 518)

11. What motivated Father Soszynski to help save the author's family? The townspeople of Piszczac? Is there a difference between the two? If yes, is this difference important?

Author Bio

Critical Praise

"A moving and poignant celebration of survival."

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