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Causes; The Death Camps

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These are the first two of a series of four books which examine the subject of the extermination of European Jewry by Nazi Germany: the others are **Survival and Resistance** and **After the Holocaust**. Levy carefully charts the ideological, political and economic currents that came together with such appalling consequences in the Third Reich. She gives equal weight to the character and ambition of Hitler himself, the specific circumstances of his rise to power, and to the deep seated and virulent nature of European anti-Semitism. She argues that, because of the latter, the Nazis' persecution of the Jews found ready collaborators in some of the occupied countries and provoked an inadequate response from the Allies. Sheehan's book looks closely at the organisation of genocide in wartime Germany and the experience of the death camps for the prisoners and their guards.

Both books have been written with young adults in mind and address them with informed clarity. Levy's text in particular is a model of lucidity. Much space is given to the actual words of the perpetrators, victims and other witnesses of the terror. Although none of the horror of what was done is concealed, it is neither dwelt upon nor manipulated for effect. The photographs that support the texts demonstrate to a generation growing up in a new century how, in the last, the unthinkable became, for a time, the commonplace. There are excellent guides to further reading, most of it necessarily adult, including scholarly works, records of personal experience, and web sites.

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