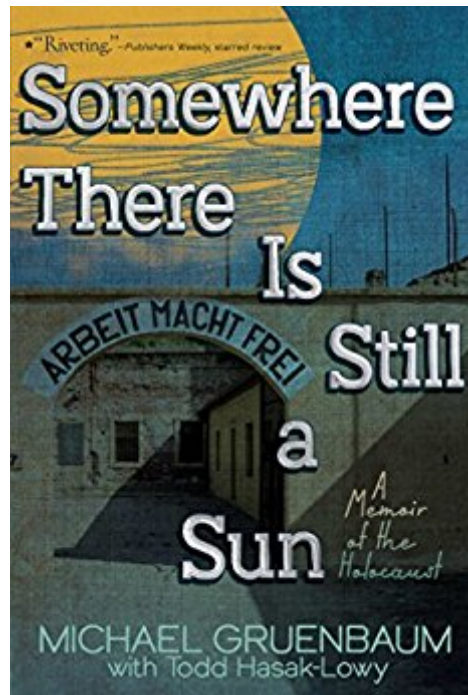




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# Somewhere There Is Still A Sun: A Memoir Of The Holocaust



## Synopsis

Resilience shines throughout Michael Gruenbaum's "riveting memoir" (Publishers Weekly, starred review) about his time in the Terezin concentration camp during the Holocaust, in this National Jewish Book award finalist and Parents Choice Gold Medal Award-winning title, an ideal companion to the bestselling *Boy on the Wooden Box*. Michael's "Misha" Gruenbaum enjoyed a carefree childhood playing games and taking walks through Prague with his beloved father. All of that changed forever when the Nazis invaded Prague. The Gruenbaum family was forced to move into the Jewish Ghetto in Prague. Then, after a devastating loss, Michael, his mother and sister were deported to the Terezin concentration camp. At Terezin, Misha roomed with forty other boys who became like brothers to him. Life in Terezin was a bizarre, surreal balance—some days were filled with friendship and soccer matches, while others brought mortal terror as the boys waited to hear the names on each new list of who was being sent "to the East." Those trains were going to Auschwitz. When the day came that his family's name appeared on a transport list, their survival called for a miracle—one that tied Michael's fate to a carefully sewn teddy bear, and to his mother's unshakeable determination to keep her children safe. Collaborating with acclaimed author Todd Hasak-Lowy, Michael Gruenbaum shares his inspiring story of hope in an unforgettable memoir that recreates his experiences with stunning immediacy. Michael's story, and the many original documents and photos included alongside it, offer an essential contribution to Holocaust literature.

## Book Information

File Size: 22034 KB

Print Length: 385 pages

Publisher: Aladdin; Reprint edition (August 25, 2015)

Publication Date: August 25, 2015

Sold by: Simon and Schuster Digital Sales Inc

Language: English

ASIN: B00TBKYLOQ

Text-to-Speech: Not enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #31,904 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #2

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Biography > Cultural Heritage #2

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Children's Nonfiction > People & Places > Family Life #2 in Books > Teens > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism

## Customer Reviews

Once I started reading the book, I really couldn't put it down. Except for the beginning, I essentially read it all in one sitting. People might wonder why we need yet another book in a field that has already been exhaustively researched and recorded from most every angle, but I think this story is truly unique and adds a fresh perspective. You see and experience everything through the eyes of a pre-teen. The use of the present tense really makes everything come to life. There is no hindsight, so it leads you step by step from a fairly pleasant, regular life in Prague down into a situation that goes from bad to terrible to worse. In this way, you start to vaguely grasp how this horror of horrors really can happen. And it did. The matter-of-fact storytelling, with its solid, realistic detailing, engages all five senses in a way that really fleshes out the physical and mental anguish of being thrown helpless into this condition. Without giving away anything, I can say there are certainly a few searing scenes from this book I will never forget. There are also cliffhangers along the way that ratchet up the suspense notch by notch as the story builds toward what appears to be an inevitable and final doom. And it's all true. This book is already a classic in my eyes -- a story well told, demonstrating how the values of teamwork, friendship, resourcefulness, and family love can prevail. I have never lived through anything at all like this, and I thank the author for sharing his experience in a way that has helped me gain a sliver of a grasp at understanding, in a more tangible and emotional way, what really did happen -- and can happen again if we're not careful. I will be processing what I have just read for years to come.

I work in the office of Massachusetts Senator Cynthia Stone Creem. Michael Gruenbaum lives in her district and was introduced to the Senate in January, 2016 when the Senate adjourned in memory of the January 27 liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp. After Senator Creem and some staff members read "Somewhere There Is Still a Sun", I agreed to submit the review below, which reflects many of our thoughts and impressions of his book. Michael Gruenbaum's story is moving, and effective. It is also unusual and riveting,

because it describes the impact of the Holocaust on Michael as a young child and then an adolescent, seen through his eyes at each stage of the onslaught. We learn what a 9-year old child thought when German troops first marched in formation through Prague in 1939, and when he and his family were harassed, then dispossessed, then transported to Terezin. Michael also describes the arrest and disappearance of his father. We want to warn him that each experience he describes was more sinister than he thought at the time, but he was only a child, and he eventually had to come to the realization of what was happening on his own. That emerges masterfully.

Simultaneously we learn of the resourcefulness of his mother, which enabled her, Michael, and Michael's sister, and him to emerge after the war. All of this experience is told without bitterness, but from the vantage of one who in adulthood appreciates what his family and Jews endured. Gruenbaum's book was written with Tod Hasak-Lowy, who includes a brief but fascinating description of the process which he and Gruenbaum went through in order to maximize the accuracy of thoughts and perceptions from the 1930s and 1940s. This is, indeed, a book we all will remember.

This is an excellent book about life in Terezin for a boy, his mother, his sister, and friends, where they were incarcerated for two and a half years. Before the advent of Nazi Germany, they had lived a fulfilling middle-class life in Prague with Michael's father, a prominent, well-connected lawyer, who was brutally murdered shortly after his capture by the Nazis. This is a story that contrasts the horrors and brutality of war and genocide with the solidity of the Gruenbaum family in the face of unthinkable evil and inhumanity. The book reflects a seamless collaboration between Michael and his co-author, Todd Hasak-Lowy, who crafted the fluent narrative based on his conversations with Michael about his experience, brief visits to Terezin and Auschwitz, and additional research to steep himself fully in what Michael, his family, and his friends likely experienced during their imprisonment and enslavement. The book, written for middle-school readers, is a quick read for adults yet relays Michael's experiences in appropriate ways for the adult reader as well as the teenage audience for whom it is intended. Kudos for an enlightening book that highlights how boys in bondage could work and play together under intolerable circumstances to manage their trauma as well as possible. Of course Michael's mother comes across as an amazing woman, and his relationship with his sister helps both of them survive.

As a librarian at an organization that educates about the Holocaust, Facing History and Ourselves, I highly recommend this memoir of Holocaust survival, told from an adolescent boy's perspective. It is

written in a very accessible and age-appropriate way, and makes the nearly unfathomable events of the Holocaust "real" for contemporary middle grade readers. Michael's story is presented in a fast moving, engaging format, and gives a glimpse into the events and feelings that "Misha" experienced as his family was forced from their comfortable life in Prague, first into the Jewish ghetto, and later, into the Terezin concentration camp. However, even during this grueling ordeal, Misha and his family demonstrate resilience and resistance against the Nazis and their murderous system. This book is an important contribution to Holocaust memoir, and a very engaging read for readers grades 5 and up.

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