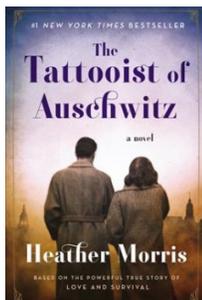


## Further Reading

### **The Tattooist of Auschwitz (Sep 2018)**

**by Morris, Heather**

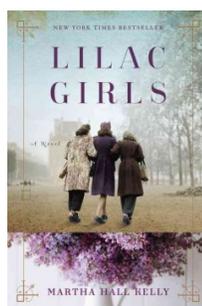
An international best-seller based on the true story of an Auschwitz-Birkenau survivor traces the experiences of a Jewish Slovakian who uses his position as a concentration-camp tattooist to secure food for his fellow prisoners.



### **Lilac Girls (Apr 2016)**

**by Kelly, Martha Hall**

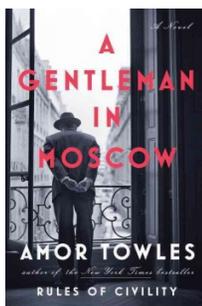
On a September day in Manhattan in 1939, twenty-something Caroline Ferriday is consumed by her efforts to secure the perfect boutonniere for an important French diplomat and resisting the romantic advances of a married actor. Meanwhile across the Atlantic, a Polish Catholic teenager, is nervously anticipating the changes that are sure to come since Germany has declared war on Poland.



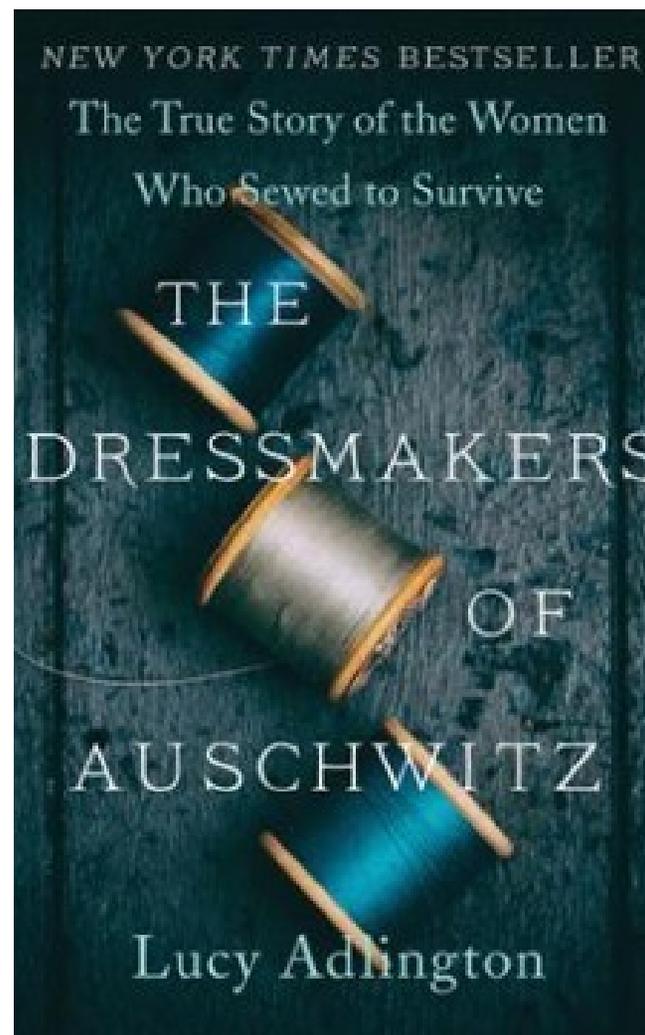
### **A Gentleman in Moscow (Sep 2016)**

**by Towles, Amor**

Deemed unrepentant by a Bolshevik tribunal in 1922, Count Alexander Rostov is sentenced to house arrest in a hotel across the street from the Kremlin, where he lives in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history unfold.



# BOOK DISCUSSION



## Discussion Questions

1. The author describes how discovering the history of the real dressmakers of Auschwitz was only made possible through connections made via a fictional story—The Red Ribbon. Is Holocaust fiction justified as a creative response to tragedy, or does such fiction distort reality?
2. Sewing skills were once a core part of girls' education, laying a foundation for domestic sewing and mending, and professional work. Is this one reason why textiles are often overlooked in mainstream history—because it has too often been dismissed as 'women's work'? Is there a tradition of home-sewing in your family? Is sewing and textile craft valued these days?
3. In 1930s Germany, consumers were bullied about their shopping choices: told Don't Buy From Jews, or to buy from 'Aryan Only' organizations such as ADEFA. How easy do you think it would be to resist such propaganda? Do you (can you?) make active choices about what you buy based on what you think is ethical?
4. When people arrived as inmates in Auschwitz and other concentration camps they were forcibly stripped of everything they wore. Does reading of such deliberate degradation by the SS make you aware of the humanizing power of clothes? How did prisoners attempt to regain a sense of dignity when issued with camp garments?
5. It's easy to say 'don't judge someone by appearances' but we often do make assumptions based on clothes and smartness. The Nazis understood this psychology. How did they make appearances work to their advantage regarding uniforms?
6. In Auschwitz-Birkenau Bracha Bercovič said, "If you didn't have any connections, you didn't have any luck". Through her friend Irene Reichenberg she got a position in the Upper Tailoring Salon. Camp commandant Rudolf Höss sneered at inmates who tried to get better work positions in the camp. How important do you think a network of relatives, friends and allies was for prisoner survival?
7. Marta Fuchs, clever and compassionate kapo of the Upper Tailoring Salon, was an active part of the camp underground. Were you aware that their resistance was prevalent in Auschwitz? What were some of the ways in which inmates asserted their humanity and defied their oppressors?
8. Commandant's wife Hedwig Höss described life in her Auschwitz villa as 'paradise'. She profited from plundered goods and enslaved labor, apparently without any moral qualms. Do you see parallels with other systems of slavery and exploitation?
9. The infamous motto on the gateway into the Auschwitz main camp is Arbeit Macht Frei— Works Sets You Free. It's clear that work for most inmates in the camp meant suffering and untimely death. For the dressmakers in the Upper Tailoring Salon, their work meant possible safety and good company. How do you think they coped with the knowledge that they were dressing the enemy?
10. Scholar and survivor Dr Lore Shelley née Weinberg dedicated many years to collecting personal testimonies, including accounts written by dressmakers from the Upper Tailoring Studio. Marta Fuchs, kapo of the Auschwitz fashion salon, was too ill to correspond with Dr Shelley when invited to do so in the 1980s. Marta had also declined to testify at post-war trials against Rudolf Höss and other SS criminals despite her intimate knowledge of life in the Höss household. What might be the challenges for survivors when speaking of their experiences after the war?
11. Clothes tell stories and hold memories. Many Holocaust museum exhibits showcase personal items that once belonged to concentration camp deportees, including shoes and clothing. Do you think they give a particular sense of connection with past lives? Do you ever think about who makes your own clothes, and what happens to them once they are discarded?
12. . The author was privileged to be able to interview the last surviving seamstress of the Upper Tailoring Salon - Bracha Kohút née Bercovič. Sadly Mrs Kohút died just a few months short of her 100th birthday. What would you have asked her if you could? What would you have wished to say to her?

Question issued by publisher.