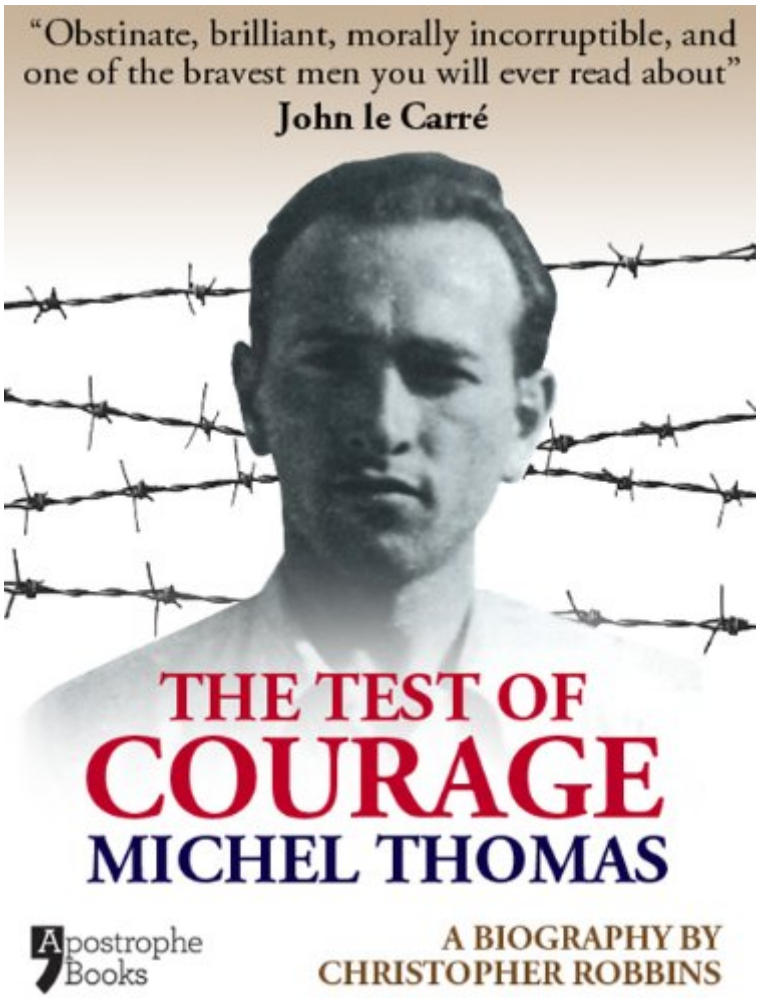
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The Test Of Courage: Michel Thomas: A Biography Of The Holocaust Survivor And Nazi-Hunter By Christopher Robbins



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Synopsis

The story of Michel Thomas reads like a thriller in which adventure and heartbreak combine to produce a unique form of wisdom. Until his death in 2005, he taught languages to ghetto kids, heads of industry and movie stars in a matter of days, succeeding even with people who considered themselves hopeless linguists. To those who have been taught by him, he seemed to be a miracle worker with a magical gift for unlocking the secret powers of the mind.This unique understanding was gained under extreme circumstances. Stateless in Vichy France at the beginning of the Second World War, he was incarcerated and starved in a concentration camp at the foot of the Pyrenees. Forced into slave labour in a coal mine in Provence, he avoided being sent to Auschwitz by hiding within the confines of a deportation camp for six weeks.He escaped death to join the Secret Army of the Resistance. He was arrested and interrogated by Klaus Barbie, Butcher of Lyon, whom he deceived into releasing him, and was later re-arrested by the French Gestapo and tortured. He held out by entering a psychological state in which he no longer registered pain and after six hours of torture, his tormentors threw him into a cell and he survived to re-join the Resistance. After the Allies invaded France he joined the American forces, fought his way into Germany and was with the troops who liberated Dachau. He personally interrogated the campÃ¢â ¬â„¢s hangman and oversaw his handwritten confession.At the end of the war he became a Nazi-hunter. Working for American Counter Intelligence he posed as a Nazi himself to infiltrate and expose underground networks of SS men dedicated to the return of a Fourth Reich.In spite of the fact that his entire family had been murdered in Auschwitz, and many close friends killed in combat, at the very end of the war he staged an elaborate gala evening in Munich which he called a Reconciliation Concert. Using German musicians, and in defiance of strict Allied non-fraternisation laws, he brought friend and foe together in the belief that there had to be a different and better future.Author Christopher Robbins has dug deep to explore and substantiate the details of the Michel Thomas story. He has authenticated every episode through camp records, Vichy documents, Resistance papers, US Army reports and hundreds of hours of interviews with this extraordinary man. The result is one of the most inspirational stories of the 20th century.

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Customer Reviews

It is a great book, more of a colorful history lesson than the biography I was expecting. Very well written, I was completely unaware for example of the French Resistance role during Nazi's occupation, I had only the classic heroic image from so many films.I first look up this book because I was intrigued by the man behind a method of teaching languages so innovative, but at the same time so obvious (relating everything to what you already know and taking off all pressure to be able to learn, for example) that is unjustly mostly almost unknown in most of the world. I confirmed what I guessed by listening Michel talking with his students: he was a fascinating guy.

This is one of the most riveting, exciting, amazing, informative books I have ever read!!! What an interesting man Michel Thomas was!....and what a life he led! His method for teaching French, or any language, is unparalleled! Since reading this book I have been trying to use this method in my teaching as far as I am able. And I learned more about World War II, in Europe at least, than I did in all my history classes.I highly recommend this book!!

I came across this book because of his language courses which are, by far, the best courses I've ever used for beginners. Even better than a native teacher because natives have a hard time breaking down what is second nature. That accomplishment is worthy enough on its own.After reading this, I now understand why in the advanced French course he teaches, "To understand all is

to forgive all. I do not agree". You can just feel the pain and frustration he felt through his life. I've personally had the same frustrations dealing with the education system in Colombia.Because of his extensive war record, a lot of his stories can appear to be gross exaggerations--and there's a lot of haters out there. I don't know what to think but my gut tells me he's the real deal. As a veteran of Afghanistan, I know full well how memory distorts itself and how my stories got more exaggerated with time. It just happens. But, like somebody once told me, "if you believe all the stories, you are a fool; but if you believe none of them, you have no heart".Totally recommended.

As an aftermath, what was most telling for me was that the LA Times in responding to Michel Thomas's law suit defended the paper on their constitutional right to print and totally dismissed defending the veracity of the article. I feel that the book was exceptionally well written. That it is a bio of a very unique man. The adventure, the risks, the commitment to the story as he uncovered it is without equal . It was a story of a "good" man...and a very brave man who thought of humanity before himself.at a virulent time in history. I was surprised at so much that happened as far as the US government and the protectionof Nazi high ups here. I ordered a few copies for family and friends.

This book was sad and inspiring at the same time. It is graphic in detail and I couldn't stop reading because it was so captivating!

This is a great book about a remarkable man and the period of Hitler and the death camps, not set up in Germany but in France. The Holocaust shames all our countries. I couldn't put this book down. Michael Thomas is an amazing man and a witness to the horrors of that era. Highly recommend.

I have always been interested in WW2 so when I came across this book I thought it would be interesting. I did not realize how it would change me and open my eyes. I had no idea that governments used these evil men as spies instead of bringing them to trial and punishing them. It also showed me how evil humans can be to other humans. No other species takes such delight in torturing others of their kind as do humans. On the other hand the spirit of human beings also is amazing. Michel Thomas is a remarkable human being that shows the best part of a manIt was a little long but worth the readGod Bless you, Michel Thomas.

The life of Michel Thomas is one of the most inspiring biographies IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve ever read.

When I was in my twenties I read several books written by people whoÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢d survived the Holocaust, but IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve chosen not to read them since then. They are too depressing, and I figured I knew enough as I wanted. This is the first one that I read, though, which told of someone escaping from a concentration camp. I also knew essentially nothing about Vichy France. I had no idea how easily France surrendered, nor how Vichy France so eagerly participated in the massacre of the Jews. The book describes World War II from a different vantage than IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢d ever encountered before. The other depressing thing which this book reveals is the extent to which the United States government hired former Nazi leaders, some of the most heinous such as Klaus Barbie, and protected them from prosecution. I knew that the U.S. had made use of German scientists in its missile program, but that didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t bother me especially. Scientists tend to be apolitical, but CIA helped some Nazis escape to South America, where they assisted brutal dictators establish power in their countries. With AmericaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s help. Noam Chomsky describes these crimes on the part of the American government also. I found it hard to believe, though I did believe it; now these crimes have been confirmed by a second source.One of the reasonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s I wanted to read to Michel ThomasÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s biography was to learn something of his techniques in teaching language. Of course, one learns nothing practical in reading this book, but the Christopher Robbins verifies the validity of ThomasÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s claims. These claims are hard to believe, and at least one person I know who checked into them dismisses these claims as bogus. I wondered as I read of ThomasÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s ability to teach people with language blocks to make phenomenal progress in just a few days if this relied upon ThomasÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s special ability, so that his technique could not be adapted by other teachers. IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢m still not sure. Since the language I want to learn, Khmer, is not available on ThomasÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s website, it doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t matter.

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