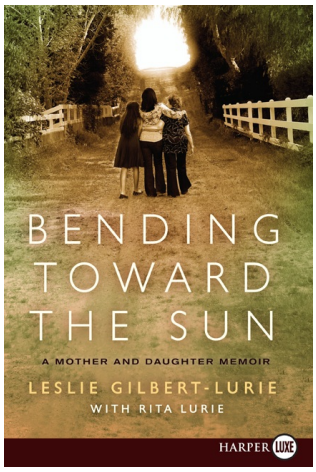

Bending Toward the Sun LP

By Leslie Gilbert-Lurie
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Introduction

A miraculous lesson in courage and recovery, *Bending Toward the Sun* tells the story of a unique family bond forged in the wake of brutal terror.

Rita Lurie was five years old when she was forced to flee her home in Poland to hide from the Nazis in a cramped, dark attic with fourteen members of her family. Young Rita watched her younger brother and her mother die before her eyes. But the tragedy of the Holocaust was only the beginning of Rita's story.

Decades later, Rita's daughter Leslie began probing the traumatic events of her mother's childhood to discover how Rita's pain has affected not only Leslie's life and outlook but that of her own daughter, Mikaela, as well. The result is *Bending Toward the Sun*, a collaboration between mother and daughter that brings together the stories of three generations of a family to understand the legacy that unites, inspires, and haunts them all.

Questions for Discussion

1. If you could have chosen to read the perspective of another character in the book, whose would you have chosen and why?

2. If you had the opportunity to ask your father or mother any question about his or her past, what would you ask?

3. What about Rita's past influenced her own mothering style? What about Rita's past contributed to Leslie's and Mikaela's determination and competitive spirits?

4. In what ways do you consider Rita to be a survivor? What factors do you believe contributed to Rita having been able to survive and overcome so many obstacles in her life?

5. How did Rita's parenting influence the way Leslie mothered her own children?

6. Do you consider Stashik and Maria Grajolski to be heroes and if so, why? Who were the other heroes in this story?

7. Would you have invited Rita's family to hide in your home? What do you think you would have done in that situation?

8. Why might children from the same family be impacted differently by trauma that their parents experienced? What traumatic event in your parent's life or your own impacted you or one of your children?

9. How might the limits of the human memory have influenced the story?

10. Is *Bending Toward the Sun* an appropriate title for this book? Why did Rita and Leslie select this title?

11. Do you feel sympathy for Rita's step mother, Clara?

12. Do you suspect that the impact of the Holocaust will diminish as the years go by? Will future generations be less affected by their ancestor's experiences? How can one limit the perpetuation of trauma to future generations?

13. What is unique about the bond between mother and daughter? In what ways do you think the mother daughter relationship between the authors in this book is like most mother-daughter relationships? In what way do you think it is different from them?

14. What is the significance of telling the story from the perspectives of three generations? Do you believe that the cycle of trauma explored in Bending Toward the Sun will inevitably continue beyond the third generation?

15. How is trauma transferred from generation to generation? Are there social or cultural factors that might perpetuate the transfer?

16. If *Bending Toward the Sun* became a movie, what actors and actresses would you cast to play the roles of the characters in the book?

17. How do you believe Rita's relationships would have been different were it not for the Holocaust? What key event that you experienced altered one of your primary relationships?

About the Author

Leslie Gilbert-Lurie has served as president of the Los Angeles County Board of Education. Formerly an executive at NBC, where she worked on such hit shows as *Cheers*, *Family Ties*, *Saved by the Bell*, and *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, Gilbert-Lurie lives in Los Angeles with her husband and two children.