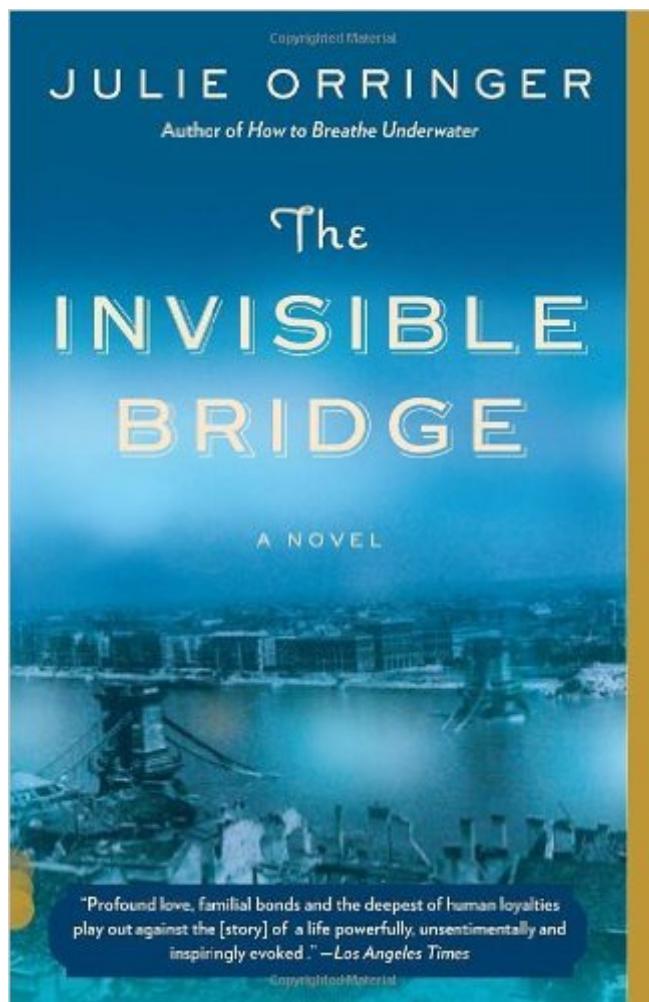


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# The Invisible Bridge (Vintage Contemporaries)



## Synopsis

Paris, 1937. Andras LÃ©vi, a Hungarian-Jewish architecture student, arrives from Budapest with a scholarship, a single suitcase, and a mysterious letter he promised to deliver. But when he falls into a complicated relationship with the letter's recipient, he becomes privy to a secret that will alter the course of his "and his family's" history. From the small Hungarian town of KonyÃ¡r to the grand opera houses of Budapest and Paris, from the despair of Carpathian winter to an unimaginable life in labor camps, *The Invisible Bridge* tells the story of a family shattered and remade in history's darkest hour.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

World War II and the Holocaust have been covered so extensively in so many formats, and yet there are so many under represented stories. This book takes up one of these side stories, the story Jews in Hungary, that didn't make the textbooks or documentaries. And unlike textbook or documentary coverage, it brings the day-to-day realities of the war to life and will touch you in the way, only a personal story can. Obviously this is a historical fiction, which is different from a primary source, but the writing is authentic and either very well researched or edited by a very knowledgeable historian. So many historical fiction books lose credibility on historic slips, but this book never does. When a new radio is described, it is Bakelite, not plastic. The words painted vivid pictures that had me craving croissants in Paris and Paprika and Potato dumplings in Hungary. But the power of this book is that it will make you appreciate your warm bed, your clean sheets and

each meal and trip to the grocery store by portraying what it was like when all these things were unavailable. It has been hard to get all of these deprivations out of my head since I finished the book. I have read remarkably few books that describe the hunger of those living in Europe as eloquently as this book. It did take me a while to get into this book. 600 pages is pretty intimidating and it is dense in Jewish and Hungarian names, but after 100 pages I was hooked and drug along. The writing is immensely readable and I felt a connection to the characters (enough so that I have to admit I flipped to the back to make sure at least someone made it through.) The book culminated in a marathon session when I just couldn't put it down.

If it is an author's highest goal to fully absorb her reader into the novel, then Julie Orringer's "The Invisible Bridge" stands as a marvel. When her characters joyed, I smiled. When they faced terror, my mouth went dry and my breath grew short. As they suffered, I found myself pushing back tears. As a reader I am rarely sentimental, yet something here seized my heart, and through almost 600 pages, this author artfully cupped it in her hands. As Europe races towards war, a young Jew young Andras Levi travels to Paris to study architecture. Through school where he is a star, and the theatre where he works, Andras meets a parade of colorful characters. When set up with a girl, he instead falls in love with her mother, Klara. The two become swept up in a passionate affair, and in time she reveals the dark secret which forced her to flee Hungary sixteen years earlier. Orringer weaves a web of gripping digressive sub-plots, each of which pulls us along, but there is never any real doubt where these characters will end up -- Andras and Klara will spend the war back in their native Hungary. With the library of novels written describing the Holocaust in Poland and Germany, and more seeming to appear every day, I found it fascinating to read Orringer's well researched descriptions of the experience of Hungarian Jews. Hated by the Fascist Arrow Cross Party, yet "protected" from Hitler by the regent Horthy they suffered abuse, humiliation, and often murder, but through much of the war were spared becoming grist for the mill of Nazi genocide. Hungarian Jews, as the last of Europe's great communities to be destroyed, as well as being perhaps the least considered, here receives a very fine elegy from the descendant of one survivor.

The Invisible Bridge is an amazing book. An amazing, extremely long book--so you'll get your money's worth out of it! Set primarily in Paris and Hungary just prior to and during World War II, the book follows Andras Levi and his family and friends as they live their lives as European Jews during this era. To be quite honest I kept expecting to get bored with the book; again, its length seemed as though it might be a barrier to a story with a riveting plot. However, given the subject matter and the

outstanding writing, I never found my interest waning. Does the book add anything new to the already-dense library of WWII novels? In my opinion, yes. First, the experience of Hungarian Jews was far different in many ways from those in Germany, Poland, or other countries that seem to be highlighted in greater detail in previous books. In this sense the book reminded me of *The Glass Room*, by Simon Mawer, which was set in Czechoslovakia during the same era. The story provided a lot of information about what happened in Hungary that may have been overlooked in prior works. Next, the writing and characters were remarkable. If there were ever a book that conveyed the everyday life and fears of the Jewish population during this time, this is it. The author manages to deftly unwrap the experience of Hungarian Jews as they moved slowly and inexorably toward their fate. And the author did so without it becoming snooze-worthy, by vividly describing how it was to live when life or death was often decided by the smallest of cruel details.

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