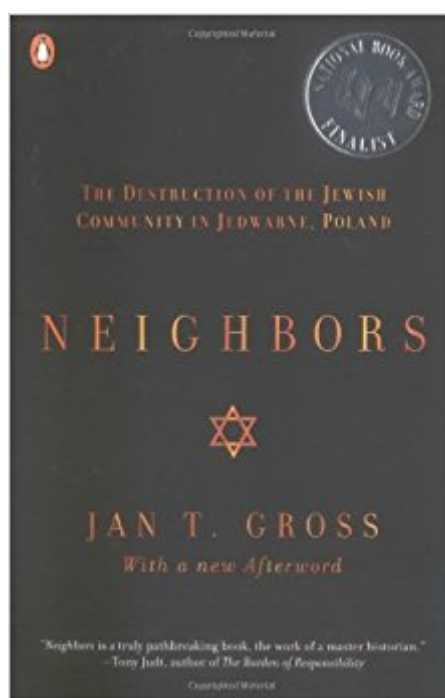


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# Neighbors: The Destruction Of The Jewish Community In Jedwabne, Poland



## Synopsis

On a summer day in 1941 in Nazi-occupied Poland, half of the town of Jedwabne brutally murdered the other half: 1,600 men, women, and children—all but seven of the town's Jews. In this shocking and compelling study, historian Jan Gross pieces together eyewitness accounts as well as physical evidence into a comprehensive reconstruction of the horrific July day remembered well by locals but hidden to history. Revealing wider truths about Jewish-Polish relations, the Holocaust, and human responses to occupation and totalitarianism, Gross's investigation sheds light on how Jedwabne's Jews came to be murdered—not by faceless Nazis, but by people who knew them well.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"One day, in July 1941, half of the population of a small east European town murdered the other half—some 1,600 men, women and children." This short sentence summarizes the subject of *Neighbors*, historian Jan Gross's account of a massacre that occurred in Jedwabne, in northeastern Poland. Gross describes the atrocities of Jedwabne in almost unbearable detail. Men and women were hacked to death with knives, iron hooks, and axes. Small children were thrown with pitchforks onto a bonfire. A woman's decapitated head was kicked like a football. Historians before now have blamed the massacre on the Nazis—whose participation in and responsibility for these crimes has been exaggerated, Gross says. In fact, he argues, a virulent Polish anti-Semitism was liberated by German occupation. Instead of explaining the horrors of Jedwabne, which would be impossible, *Neighbors* sets the record straight as to the identity of the criminals. In doing so, Gross has ensured that future histories of the Holocaust, particularly in Poland, will be more honest, because future

historians will be answerable to his argument that the evil of the Nazis was not only forced on the Poles. In places such as Jedwabne, it was welcomed by them. --Michael Joseph Gross --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Claude Lanzman's myth-shattering documentary film Shoah demonstrated that some Polish peasants were keenly aware of the Nazis' mass murder of Jews on Polish soil. This volume takes the real-life horror story a step further, documenting how nearly all of the Jews of Jedwabne, Poland, were murdered on one day most of them burned alive by their non-Jewish neighbors. Drawing on testimony that prompted and emanated from a 1949 Polish trial, Gross carefully describes how apparently normal citizens terrorized and killed approximately 1,600 Jewish villagers. Gross, a professor of politics and European studies at New York University, also attempts to place this heinous crime in historical and political context, concluding that he can explain but not fully understand. How to understand the Polish villagers, led by their mayor, exceeding the July 10, 1941, command of conquering German soldiers to annihilate the Jews but spare some tradesmen? Immediately, according to Gross, local townsmen-turned-hooligans grabbed clubs studded with nails and other weapons and chased the Jews into the street. Many tried to escape through the surrounding fields, but only seven succeeded. The thugs fatally shot many Jews after forcing them to dig mass graves. They shoved the remaining hundreds of Jews into a barn, doused it with kerosene and set it ablaze. Some on the outside played musical instruments to drown out the victims' cries. Yet *Neighbors* isn't as terrifying as one might expect, since Gross, a Polish &#x82;migr&#x82; himself, guides the reader along an analytical path. By de-emphasizing the drama, he helps readers cope with the awful incident, but his narrative occasionally bogs down in his own thoughts. Still, he asserts hopefully that young Poles are "ready to confront the unvarnished history of Polish-Jewish relations during the war." (May)Forecast: The always heated question of the role of Poles in the Holocaust comes to a head here. The book is bound to generate controversy (it has already garnered mention in the New York Times), though its sales will probably be limited.Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

This is really a must read. And must ponder, feel about and think about. For anyone who wants to push away visions of hatred and what it can do, and people can do under its power, this is a mandatory reminder.It should, I feel be read with the humility that it can happen to many if not all of us.I wanted to push away my experience of other Jews having spoken about Polish antisemitism

(mind you I know personally of heroes in Poland as well) and I didn't want to even consider the validity. It's impossible not to. This is written extremely well, and a small book is appreciated. The author's attention to implications and roots of the phenomena described here, is also appreciated.

Recommend this alongside Browning's "Ordinary Men" and Goldhagen's "Hitler's Willing Executioners." It is important to know the truth, even if death cannot be undone. We owe it to the victims to know what they went through, and who was responsible. This book is a dark and yet revealing portrayal of human nature.

This tells the story of a town in Poland that you may not have heard of. It is hard to believe that people can treat others in that way. It is another book of the Holocaust and worth reading to learn more about that period that often goes unheard of.

An excellent and hideously detailed account of an almost forgotten chapter of the Holocaust.

Reading this for one of my college history classes. This book gives insight to how war has an effect on local populations.

Gripping

Outstanding!

Good exploration of why we do what we do and excellent recounting of a horrific event in human history.

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