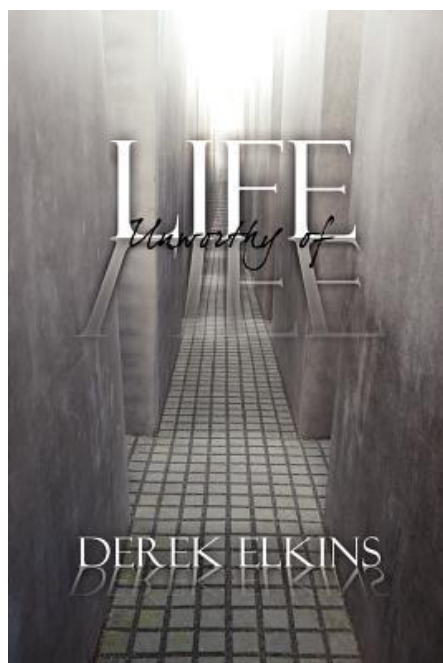




Life Unworthy of Life

Derek Elkins

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Before there was the Holocaust, there was the Action T4 program. This program quietly shipped disabled and mentally ill people of all ages to locations in Germany in attempt to 'sanitize' the German race. Such medical procedures need doctors; enter Dr. Viktor Gottlieb, an idealistic young doctor who finds himself practicing medicine in a way he had never anticipated. In this fictional portrayal of some of humanity's darkest days, award-winning author Derek Elkins raises questions about just how far we've left the concept of 'life unworthy of life' behind.

Life Unworthy of Life Details

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From Reader Review Life Unworthy of Life for online ebook

Kim H. says

I received and read this book for free thanks to Goodreads First Reads.

Viktor Gottlieb has just finished his medical training and is sent off to the remote German village of Sterlingaart where he will be part of the medical team advancing Hitler's Action T4 program. The Reich's program systematically rounded up the physically and mentally handicapped in order to study and perform tests on them, and then "cleanse" the German nation of those individuals Hitler deemed "life unworthy of life." In Sterlingaart Viktor rejoins his mother and brother, August. His interactions with his brother, the patients in his care, and the others running the T4 program in the nearby castle (including a stern SS officer, Captain Oster) provide the backdrop for the action and angst of the novel.

Elkins' novel is a short, quick read. With only 136 pages, there is little time to fully flesh out his characters. Most ended up feeling very stereotypical (if not caricatured) to me.

I felt it was very convenient that Viktor's brother was the local parish priest as August provides the perfect foil to Viktor's Nazi party ideology. Their encounters, however, left a very "preachy" aftertaste I found uncomfortable. While I do believe what happened in Nazi Germany was evil and atrocious, I also believe that the Christian church has been guilty of the same throughout the centuries. Conservative religion's view of homosexuals as "life unworthy of life" is but the most contemporary example.

I wanted to like the interactions between Viktor and Dieter, the blind boy. However, because the novel is short and much must be accomplished quickly, these scenes felt forced and contrived to me. What happened in the end to the blind boy (and to Viktor and August) came as no surprise and held little, if any, shock value.

Kathy says

I received this book through the First Reads giveaway program on Goodreads.

I really enjoyed the opportunity to read a pre-release book! The time period for the book was my favorite right now - WWII. I thought the idea for the book was a good one, and I wanted to love the book.

The book is about the Action T4 Program in Germany, where disabled and mentally ill people were moved to remote locations in Germany and terminated in attempt to 'sanitize' the German race. Dr. Viktor Gottlieb is a young doctor, new to the program, who begins to question the program's ideas on the value of life.

As I said, I wanted to love the book. And I did very much enjoy it. It was a nice quick read, engaging, interesting. It was nice to read a short book, but I agree with other reviewers that it made it hard to fully develop the characters. And then there were the inconsistencies in the characters, especially Viktor's roommate Robert. I just could not follow how one minute he was a total supporter of the program, then a few pages later he was having a mental breakdown over it. It just didn't seem believable.

That said, I did enjoy the book. I love learning new aspects of history, especially through fiction. Glad I got a chance to read this one :)

Erin says

This book was a quick read that raises the question, is any life really unworthy of life? The book is a fictional account based on the actual occurrence of Hitler's authorized Action T4 program in which they extinguished the lives of many mentally and physically handicapped Germans. Though I felt there could have been a bit more in developing the characters, I enjoyed Dr. Viktor Gottlieb. The book follows him as he moves to Castle Zarfuyls to take part in the Action T4 program. He struggles with what he is told to do by his superiors and what he feels is right. As he takes part in the initial interview process, he learns about each patient, especially Dieter Himmelbach. Dieter is blind but Viktor is in awe by his intelligence. Through Dieter and his brother August, who is the local parish priest, he begins to deeply question what he is doing and is it right.

I really enjoyed this book. The author did a great job at engaging the reader. Though it was a short read, I couldn't put down, and I finished it in one sitting. I really enjoyed how this book runs along the same lines as the "Milgram Experiment," could you follow orders from an authority figure even if you felt that what you were doing was wrong? This is the biggest conflict that Viktor struggles with from the very beginning to the very end. All through the book, Viktor is given different points of view from his coworkers, family, and others about how ethical the program is, which later allows him to come to a conclusion, but is it made for the right reasons?

I received a copy of this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

Brittany says

I received this book through the First Reads giveaway program on Goodreads.

Before the Holocaust, the Action T4 program quietly shipped all ages of disabled and mentally ill to various locations in Germany in an attempt to sanitize the German race of anything less than perfection. Doctors are called in to "study" these people, experiment on them to see how they came to be the way they are. Dr. Viktor Gottlieb is one such doctor that finds himself practicing medicine in ways he never imagined and questioning just how far to take the belief of "life unworthy of life".

I was a bit disappointed in this book. It was very short and therefor didn't give you an accurate grasp on the characters. The ending was not at all surprising, but expected with no shock at all.

Patti says

****Received free via Goodreads First Read****

Most people remember that the Nazis killed 6 million Jews. But do they remember that 5 million other "undesirables" were exterminated?

This book deals with the mentally and physically handicapped that lost their lives during the Nazi regime, specifically, the children. While the subject matter was intense and extremely disturbing, the writing was good, really drawing you into the story.

The characters were well written and behaved as you would expect, except for one major problem at the end of the book. You would think the character would have a bit more sense than to do what he did.

No happy ending, because there weren't many of those during that time, but still a good book.
