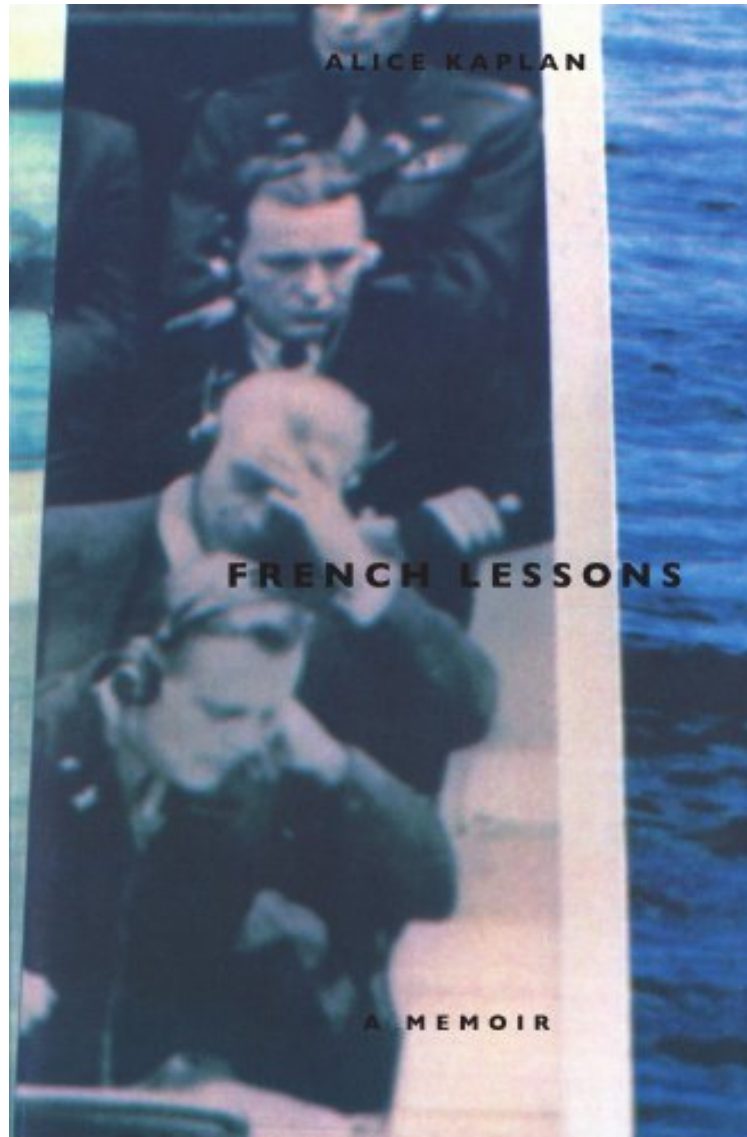


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French Lessons: A Memoir

Von Alice Kaplan

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Von Alice Kaplan : French Lessons: A Memoir before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised French Lessons: A Memoir:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Explains my own raison d'etreVon Ein KundeI read this book when it first came out and again this last week. What I find remarkable is not so much Kaplan's fascination with fascism, but the ways that she ferrets out much of what is at work in the personality of the academic and the way that she explains my own fascination with a foreign culture (for me it's

Germany) and learning a foreign language: the strangeness of finding basic affirmation in something so ultimately different from one's own circumstances. She also has a healthy distance from academia, which I wish more academics had. 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Francophilia and more - but without heart Von Ein Kunde I would have preferred either French lessons OR a memoir - but not both. If Mlle. Kaplan had developed her very interesting psychological insights - and taken them much further - this story might be more engaging. Her childhood memories and the way she eventually came to love France is fascinating. But there is too much in this memoir that is self-congratulatory. The name-dropping and annoying pedantry (discussions of verb tenses, for example) interfere. 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. for those who inexplicably miss France Von Ein Kunde a friend of mine lent me this book while i was writing my senior thesis on contemporary French history. although i should have been researching and translating my sources, this book introduced me to a kindred spirit. through the author's memories, my own sentiments surrounding France, literature and language acquisition were echoed by her story. this is a must-read for anyone who isn't French, but is still homesick for France.

Kurzbeschreibung Brilliantly uniting the personal and the critical, *French Lessons* is a powerful autobiographical experiment. It tells the story of an American woman escaping into the French language and of a scholar and teacher coming to grips with her history of learning. Kaplan begins with a distinctly American quest for an imaginary France of the intelligence. But soon her infatuation with all things French comes up against the dark, unimagined recesses of French political and cultural life. The daughter of a Jewish lawyer who prosecuted Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg, Kaplan grew up in the 1960s in the Midwest. After her father's death when she was seven, French became her way of "leaving home" and finding herself in another language and culture. In spare, midwestern prose, by turns intimate and wry, Kaplan describes how, as a student in a Swiss boarding school and later in a junior year abroad in Bordeaux, she passionately sought the French "r," attentively honed her accent, and learned the idioms of her French lover. When, as a graduate student, her passion for French culture turned to the elegance and sophistication of its intellectual life, she found herself drawn to the language and style of the novelist Louis-Ferdinand Celine. At the same time she was repulsed by his anti-Semitism. At Yale in the late 70s, during the heyday of deconstruction she chose to transgress its apolitical purity and work on a subject "that made history impossible to ignore:" French fascist intellectuals. Kaplan's discussion of the "de Man affair" the discovery that her brilliant and charismatic Yale professor had written compromising articles for the pro-Nazi Belgian press and her personal account of the paradoxes of deconstruction are among the most compelling available on this subject. *French Lessons* belongs in the company of Sartre's *Words* and the memoirs of Nathalie Sarraute, Annie Ernaux, and Eva Hoffman. No book so engrossingly conveys both the excitement of learning and the moral dilemmas of the intellectual life.