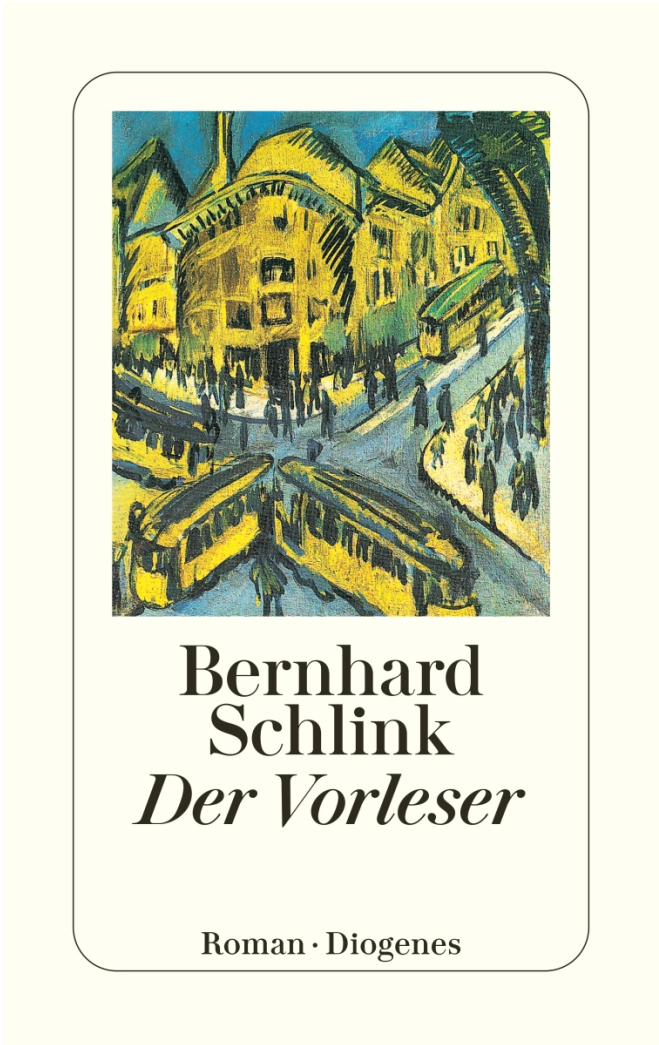
Diogenes

Book factsheet

Bernhard Schlink
The Reader

Published by Diogenes as *Der Vorleser*
Original title: *Der Vorleser*



On the way home, a fifteen-year-old boy called Michael Berg gets into difficulties. A woman in her mid-thirties helps him out. Some time later, the boy takes her a bunch of flowers as a way of saying thank you. He visits her again. Hanna is the first woman he has ever desired, and a secret love begins. But there is something dark and mysterious about Hanna, and she reacts irritably to his questions about who she is. One day she disappears. She vanishes from Michael's life, but not from his thoughts. As a student of law he encounters Hanna again in court. The young man gets a shock when he realises he has loved a criminal. He can see no rhyme nor reason in the way Hanna behaves during the trial. That is, until the scales fall from his eyes. For Hanna is not only guilty of a cruel crime, she also has a desperately well-protected secret. The past is unveiled – Michael's past love, and the past of Germany. Michael realises that he cannot escape from either of them. A woman who is difficult to understand or accept, either for Michael or the reader. And the dilemma of a generation.

Contemporary Literature, Compulsory Reading, Bestseller
208 pages
11.3 × 18 × 1.3 cm
May 1997

World rights are handled by Diogenes

Rights currently sold:
Albanian (Dudaj)
Armenian (Zangak-97)
Azerbaijanian (Qanun)
Bulgarian (Kryg)
Catalan (Enciclopèdia Catalana)
Chinese/CN (Yilin)
Chinese/TW (Crown)
Croatian (Vorto Palabra)
Czech (Euromedia)
Dutch (Cossee)
English/world (Pantheon)
Faroese (Sprotin)
Finnish (WSOY)
French (Gallimard)
Galician (Hugin e Munin)
Greek (Kritiki)
Icelandic (Forlagið)
Italian (Neri Pozza)
Japanese (Shinchosha)
Korean (Sigongsa)
Latvian (Zvaigzne)
Montenegrin (Nova Knjiga)
Norwegian (Gyldendal Norsk)
Portuguese/PT (ASA/Leya)
Romanian
Romanian (Polirom)
Russian (Azbooka)
Serbian (Plato)
Slovak (Slovart)
Slovenian (Cankarjeva Zalozba)
Spanish/world (Anagrama)
Tamil
Thai (Library House)
Turkish (Iletisim)
Ukrainian (Folio)
Uzbek (Faylasuflar)
Vietnamese (Nha Nam)

Bestseller

1 New York Times Bestseller
Spiegel Bestseller

Movie adaptations

2011: Das Wochenende
Director: Nina Grosse
Cast: Katja Riemann, Sebastian Koch, Barbara Auer

2009: The Reader
Director: Stephen Daldry
Screenplay: David Hare
Cast: Kate Winslet, Ralph Fiennes, David Kross, Bruno Ganz, Karoline Herfurth, Volker Bruch, Hannah Herzsprung und Alexandra Maria Lara

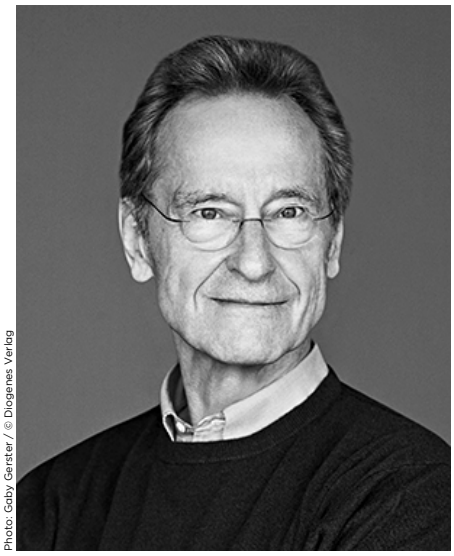


Photo: Gaby Gerster / © Diogenes Verlag

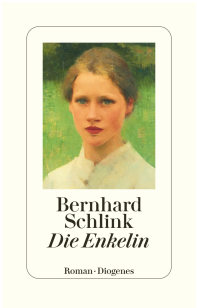
Bernhard Schlink, born in 1944, was a Professor of Public Law and Legal Philosophy and a former judge at the Constitutional Court of North Rhine-Westphalia. His first novel, *Self's Justice*, was published in 1987; his 1995 novel *The Reader*, translated into more than fifty languages and adapted by Stephen Daldry into a film starring Kate Winslet, established his worldwide renown. He has been awarded with national and international prizes like the German ›Bundesverdienstkreuz (Order of Merit) 1st Class‹, the French ›Chevalier dans l'Ordre de la Legion d'Honneur‹ and the Italian ›Grinzane Cavour Prize‹. His latest novel is *The Late Life*.



Justice
208 pages
2026



The Late Life
240 pages
2024
Bestseller



The Granddaughter
368 pages
2021
Award winner
Bestseller



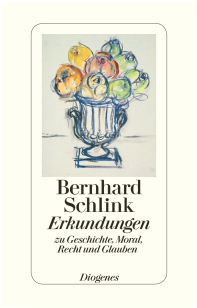
The 20th of July
96 pages
2021



Colours of Farewell
240 pages
2020
Bestseller



Olga
320 pages
2018
Bestseller



Explorations
288 pages
2015



The Woman on the Stairs
256 pages
2014
Bestseller

Movie adaptations (cont'd)

2008: The Other Man
Director: Richard Eyre
Screenplay: Richard Eyre
Cast: Liam Neeson , Laura Linney und Antonio Banderas

1991: Der Tod kam als Freund
Director: Nico Hoffmann
Cast: Martin Benrath, Hannelore Elsner, Heino Ferch, Marianne Hoppe

Awards

2024 Spanische Übersetzung von *Die Enkelin* mit dem ›Premio de las Librerias de Navarra‹ ausgezeichnet
2014 ›Pak Kyong-ni Prize‹ der südkoreanischen Kulturstiftung Toji für sein schriftstellerisches Schaffen
2003 ›Bundesverdienstkreuz 1. Klasse‹ für *Der Vorleser*
2002 ›Preis des German-British Forum‹ für sein Gesamtwerk
2001 Finnischer Literaturpreis ›Eeva Joenpelto-Preis‹ der Gemeinde Lohja
2001 Ernennung zum ›Chevalier dans l'Ordre de la Légion d'Honneur‹
2000 ›Ehrengabe‹ der Heinrich-Heine-Gesellschaft in Düsseldorf
2000 ›Sonderkulturpreis‹ der japanischen Tageszeitung *Mainichi Shinbun*, der jedes Jahr an einen japanischen Buchbestseller vergeben wird, für *Der Vorleser*
2000 ›Evangelischer Buchpreis‹ des Deutschen Verbandes Evangelischer Büchereien für *Der Vorleser*
1999 Erstmals verliehener ›WELT-Literaturpreis‹ für sein literarisches Schaffen
1997 ›Grinzane-Cavour-Preis‹ (Italien) für *Der Vorleser*
1997 ›Prix Laure Bataillon‹ (Frankreich) für *Der Vorleser* (Auszeichnung für den Autor sowie für den Übersetzer Bernard Lortholary)
1997 ›Hans-Fallada-Preis‹ der Stadt Neumünster für *Der Vorleser*
1993 ›Deutscher Krimi-Preis‹ des Bochumer Krimi Archivs für *Selbs Betrug*

Praise

The Reader

»Schlink writes sparkling novels with political relevance and an awareness of the German past.« – Der Tagesspiegel, Berlin

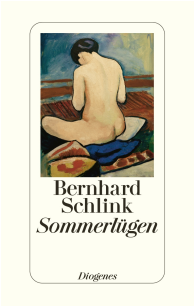
»A literary event.« – Volker Hage / Der Spiegel, Hamburg

»A formally beautiful, disturbing and finally morally devastating novel. ›The Reader‹ ensnares both heart and mind.« – Los Angeles Times

»*The Reader* is a very fine novel, as far above a Holocaust genre as ›Crime and Punishment‹ is above the average thriller, a sensitive, daring, deeply moving book about the tragic results of fear and the redemptive power of understanding.« – Ruth Rendell



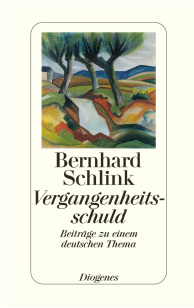
Thoughts on Writing
96 pages
2011



Summer Lies
288 pages
2010
Bestseller



The Weekend
240 pages
2008
Movie Adaptation
Bestseller



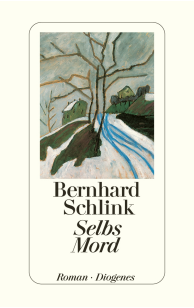
Guilt of the Past
192 pages
2007



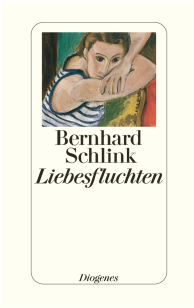
The Homecoming
384 pages
2006
Bestseller



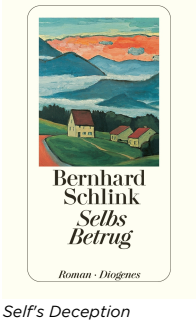
Verifications
368 pages
2005



Self's Murder
272 pages
2001



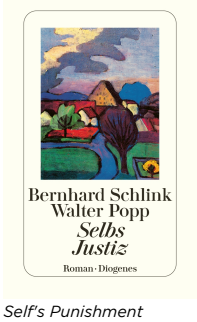
Flights of Love
320 pages
2000
Movie Adaptation



Self's Deception
304 pages
1992
Award winner



The Gordian Knot
272 pages
1988



Self's Punishment
352 pages
1987
Movie Adaptation

Praise (cont'd)

»For generations to come, people will be reading and marvelling over Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader*.« – Evening Standard, London

»Arresting, philosophically elegant, morally complex. Mr. Schlink tells his story with marvelous directness and simplicity.« – Richard Bernstein / The New York Times

»The book's strength is that it does not evade any of the questions that arise from the clash between the present and the past, between love and contempt, between the desire to understand and the need to condemn.« – Pierre Deshusses / Le Monde, Paris

»A moving, suggestive and ultimately hopeful work.« – Suzanne Ruta / The New York Times Book Review

»The arrival, almost unheralded, of a masterly work. The reviewer's sole function is to say as loudly as he is able ›Read this‹ and ›Read it again‹. ›The Reader‹ is rapidly becoming a touchstone of moral literary throughout Europe.« – George Steiner / The Observer, London

Bernhard Schlink

»Schlink has won his huge popular following by bringing to bear a penetrating intelligence about the psyche of his characters and an empathy for their dilemmas. Professor Schlink may be an expert on the letter of the law, but writer Schlink is an intrepid explorer of the much trickier terrain of the human heart.« – Andrew Nagorski / Newsweek, London

»[Schlink] writes instructive tales that adeptly raise difficult questions and propose appealing answers.« – New York Times Book Review

»The German novelist Bernhard Schlink is pretty much second to none when it comes to storytelling.« – Helmut Atteneder / Oberösterreichische Nachrichten, Linz

»Schlink knows the depths of the human soul all too well. The writer and judge proves with each of his books that he knows how to transform German history into literature.« – ZeitPunkt, Leipzig

»One of the most successful and versatile German writers of our time.« – Volker Hage / Der Spiegel, Hamburg

»The truly masterly aspect of Schlink's prose is its intelligence – an intelligence that is firmly rooted in common sense.« – Welt am Sonntag, Hamburg