

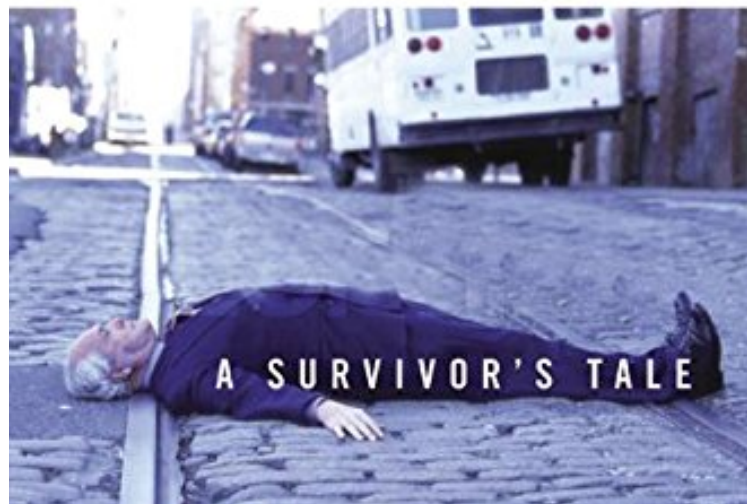
[PDF] My Life in the Middle Ages: A Survivor's Tale

My Life in the Middle Ages: A Survivor's Tale

James Atlas

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my life in the middle ages
JAMES ATLAS



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James Atlas : My Life in the Middle Ages: A Survivor's Tale before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised My Life in the Middle Ages: A Survivor's Tale:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Like a college bullsession almost 40 years later By Inquiring Mind Having been a contemporary of Atlas's at Harvard nearly 40 years ago, I was pulled back to that time when we spent hours in the womblike campus setting --priviliged to fantasize about where we were headed. In the blink of an eye, here we are, still trying to make sense of our lives -- but now dealing with all these losses of opportunities, loved

ones, energy, dreams and illusions. Atlas hits all the big issues -- death of parents, loss of job, stiffening joints, anxieties about money and marriage and status amongst peers. It's poignant and provocative and, as Atlas has himself done many times, I, too, teared up -- facing up to the reality that there's likely a lot more living behind me than ahead. All in all, a wonderful collection of thoughtful, poignant, sweet, and revealing musings on the beginning of the endgame from a guy who writes about the kind of stuff we'd prefer to ignore, but know we need to reflect on.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. In touch with all of us
By Red Pen
Since Mr. Atlas wrote this timeless piece, the stock market has crashed, our 401Ks have shrunk and some of us no longer have our 5 figure monthly salaries. When I picked the book up at my local library - I was not sure if I would read it - but I have devoured it and will recommend to my book club... many of whom have either lost jobs, lost partners, parents, siblings, or even children, and of the least, have lost our retirement pensions and will be working for the next 10-15 years even though we are coming 'round to 60. Mr. Atlas has written what all of us have felt and he does it superbly. The inclusion of various pieces of fiction, plays and such that he references, inspires us to go back to our own bookshelves and re-read. One does not have to be uber-rich to relate to the petty day to day - nor today - relate to Bernie Madoff victims. This book is a must read for anyone who goes to bed at night and spends several hours tossing and turning and wondering "what if"... "what if"... "what if" or maybe just asking "why"??? It grabs you in the gut.⁰ of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fun to read through and explained my propensity to line ...
By Richard Scott
Not really a survivor of the 12th century, but one who survived the middle years in life. Fun to read through and explained my propensity to line my shelves with books, and floors, and tables.

What is the most baffling period in our lives? Not childhood, not old age, but the decades of our forties and fifties, the period now generously known as middle age. It's both an occasion for regret and an opportunity for coming to terms, the moment when we come up against our limits and discover -- for better and worse -- who we are. *MY LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES* is a portrait of what that unnerving experience is like. A collection of unified essays about the pleasures and pathos that attend the threshold of old age, it charts an original course between reportage and confession. Drawn from the author's own life, from the testimony of parents, children, teachers, and friends, from the books he's read and the life that he chose -- and that chose him -- *MY LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES* is a comic, poignant memoir that's both personal and generational. Whether he is struggling with God (or trying to find out if he believes in one), celebrating the books he's loved and regretting those he'll never read, or leafing through the snapshots in his family album and marveling at the passage of time, James Atlas is always alert to the surprises of everyday life. He parses the fine points of success and failure among New York's "lower upper-middle class" (several of the chapters began as essays in *The New Yorker*) and expresses the largest themes: "I tried to remind myself that death was a part of life. I was here, then I wouldn't be here." Atlas writes movingly about watching his parents age and his father die. In a wry and soul-searching piece, he recounts his perplexing quest for spiritual meaning after a secular lifetime, a quest that takes him to a private synagogue and a Buddhist meditation center. On the tennis court, he ruefully capitulates to his teenage son's blossoming athletic prowess, recalling a similar passing of the torch with his own father forty years earlier. At once pensive and funny, lighthearted and profound, *MY LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES* is a tale of survival, but also a meditation on how it feels to flourish -- how to live.

From Publishers Weekly
Penguin Lives' founding editor Atlas (Bellow; Delmore Schwartz) offers 11 rather self-involved essays about being in his 50s. The collection hits on various midlife themes—"Mom and Dad" describes Atlas's father's illness and its effects on the family; "Home" explores the joys and pains of owning a country house; "Money" focuses on, well, money—and brings out the author's envious and insecure side. In his introduction, Atlas confesses that he writes from within a "highly rarified segment of society," but hopes all readers will find something of themselves in each piece. Despite exploring such universal themes, Atlas often steers away from their common aspects to instead dwell on his own personal disappointments. In "Failure," he recounts receiving a negative review of his novel, and in "The Body," he gets sullen when his son trounces him on the tennis court. Atlas's strength lies in his extensive literary allusions, and each of these essays is buoyed by examples from both well-known and obscure authors, which often serve to augment the lackluster revelations ("The rich, the powerful, the well-known made it because they had the drive to make it"; "Depression is like an illness—it is an illness"). Thoughtful but self-conscious, these pieces seem more like exercises in catharsis than meditations on a period in life when we are "on the verge of reaching our limits." Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
From Bookmarks Magazine
The author evaluates his rites of passage—both the successes and the failures, from his 25th anniversary to his father's death—with good humor, affection, and honesty in this "generational memoir." An amiable book, some sections may seem short on specifics and long on generalizations, even to the point of being preachy. Not all reviewers found universal appeal in Atlas's reflections; some found them self-indulgent and of interest mostly to other upper-middle-class literary urbanites. Copyright © 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc.
From Booklist
Atlas takes stock of himself at midlife--as son, husband, father, and writer--and provides a probing look at what it means when youth is definitively over and old age has not yet arrived. With an accomplished career at major

magazines, including the New York Times Book , Time, and Vanity Fair, Atlas is nonetheless candid about his personal disappointments: the novels not published, the assignments not offered or accepted, the books not read. Covering such topics as parents, kids, real estate, money, shrinks, failure, work, friends, books, God, vows, and death, Atlas looks at the major challenges and realizations of midlife. His father's illness and death figure prominently as he examines his own youth, marriage, and relationship with his children. Looking back on reminiscent reports for the twenty-fifth anniversary of his college graduating class, Atlas notes assorted shortfalls and reduced expectations, lamenting the American worship of material success and the lack of appreciation for the self-revelation that can be found in failure. A humorous, eloquent, and poignant look at the aging process. Vanessa BushCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved