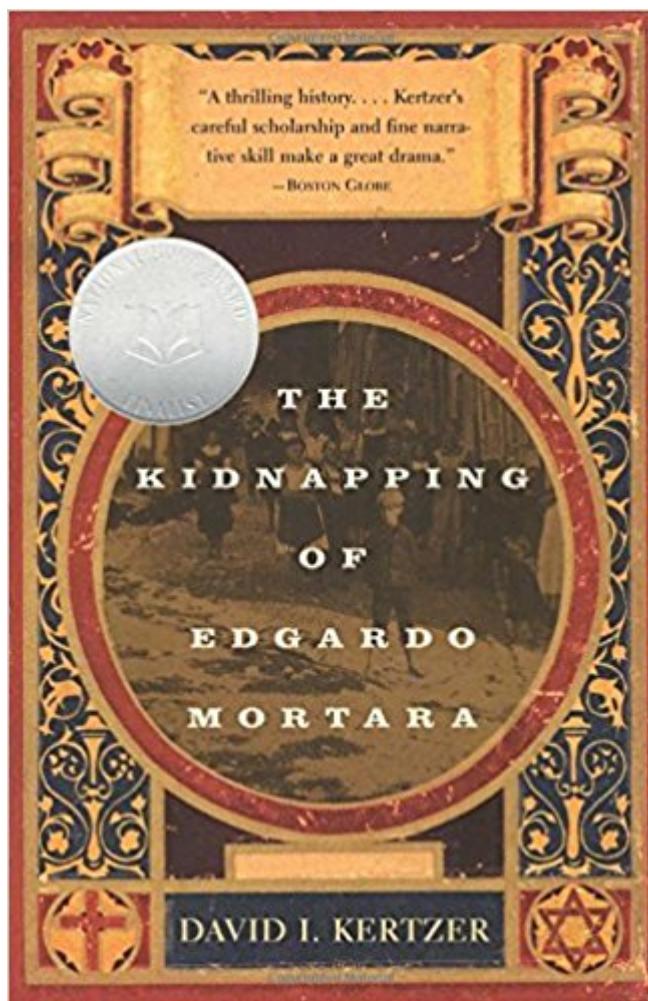


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# The Kidnapping Of Edgardo Mortara



## Synopsis

Soon to be a major motion picture from Steven Spielberg. A National Book Award Finalist The extraordinary story of how the vatican's imprisonment of a six-year-old Jewish boy in 1858 helped to bring about the collapse of the popes' worldly power in Italy. Bologna: nightfall, June 1858. A knock sounds at the door of the Jewish merchant Momolo Mortara. Two officers of the Inquisition bust inside and seize Mortara's six-year-old son, Edgardo. As the boy is wrenched from his father's arms, his mother collapses. The reason for his abduction: the boy had been secretly "baptized" by a family servant. According to papal law, the child is therefore a Catholic who can be taken from his family and delivered to a special monastery where his conversion will be completed. With this terrifying scene, prize-winning historian David I. Kertzer begins the true story of how one boy's kidnapping became a pivotal event in the collapse of the Vatican as a secular power. The book evokes the anguish of a modest merchant's family, the rhythms of daily life in a Jewish ghetto, and also explores, through the revolutionary campaigns of Mazzini and Garibaldi and such personages as Napoleon III, the emergence of Italy as a modern national state. Moving and informative, the Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara reads as both a historical thriller and an authoritative analysis of how a single human tragedy changed the course of history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Out of seemingly small events are sometimes born great historical moments. The case of young Edgardo Mortara is one. In 1858 the 6-year-old Jewish boy was taken from his parents' home in Bologna, Italy, by agents of the Papal inquisition. The year before, seriously ill, Edgardo had been

secretly baptized, by the Mortaras' Catholic servant (or so she claimed); it was against the law for baptized Christians to be raised by Jews, and so, in the eyes of the Church, the kidnapping was only just. Secular Italians did not agree, and thus was set in motion a series of reforms that ended the Church's temporal power in Italy and forged the creation of a liberal, near-democratic state. For his part, young Edgardo became a priest and lived in a Belgian abbey until 1940--just before the invading Germans began to deport and execute all those tainted with Jewish blood. David Kertzer has shaped a remarkable narrative from almost forgotten events. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Kertzer (Sacrificed for Honor, Beacon, 1993) has uncovered fascinating new information about the unification of Italy. He recounts here the kidnapping of a six-year-old Jewish boy from Bologna who was then raised as a Catholic under the supervision of Pius IX. The incident altered both Italian and church history. What Cavour, Garibaldi, and Victor Emmanuel II could not accomplish in the halls of Versailles and London, and even on the battlefield, the kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara did by arousing antichurch feeling in the cause of national unification. This case is an example of the Catholic Church's institutionalized suppression of the Jews. Kertzer weaves the story into a vivid tapestry that will be appreciated by historians and Italian specialists. Recommended for academic and public libraries with 19th-century revolutionary European or Jewish studies collections.?Harry V. Willems, Southeast Kansas Lib. System, IolaCopyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

My father was sent by his parents to boarding school when he was five. He is Navajo and had to go to an Indian boarding school. My cousins went on the Mormon Placement program for American Indians. I am a historian of American Indian history and education and I found this study very enlightening for my work. I not only learned of Italy, Catholic, and Jewish histories in this book. I began to consider new questions concerning the role of education and upbringing in the acculturation and identity of youth. What are the possibilities of conversion and transformation in relation to the "thickness of cultures"? This read is fascinating and helpful

An excellent presentation of real events in 19th century Italy. Mr. Kertzer had done a lot of research and deserves much credit for summarising the events. Well written and grippps your attention. You will not want to put the book down.

I was not aware of this action by the Catholic Church. Pope Pius IX had a harsh and vindictive contempt for the Jewish people and their families. A 14 year babysitter "baptized" a one year old Jewish baby. When the church learned of this, this immediately seized the seven year old boy, and kept in isolation. Pius was involved in this kidnapping and made sure this child was raised as a Catholic. The Papal States was directly governed by the Vatican. Their abuses of these states were great enough to lead to a revolt and takeover by the Italian Government. I was deeply angered by this kidnapping and its long term consequences.

I learned about Edgardo Mortara's story while reading The God Delusion (Richard Dawkins). I found very hard to believe that somebody would basically kidnap a 6-year old child on the basis of faith. It is very hard to believe, and it is also true. Kertzer's book starts directly on the night of the incident. From there, you can't stop wishing for the boy to return to its family. Momolo Mortara's efforts are time and again neglected by an inflexible catholic church. The story is so encompassing that, as a father of a 1-year old child, I found myself sad, angry and frustrated at the turn of each page. I would recommend this to anyone willing to take a critical view of the catholic church's history.

I thought this book was not only very interesting, telling a true story which read like a thriller, but it also focused on the human cost of a kidnapping, the attitude of the Church at the time, and the way the Jewish people were not respected in their faith and life. It was a story I had heard before, but only in basic outline. This told the full tale in such a way that the absolute anguish of the Mortara family was communicated, together with the sense of helplessness before a very powerful Church. By putting this story within the whole ambiance of Italian history it showed how the kidnapping of one small boy helped to change the history of Italy.

Long winded and full of endless historical relations. Gets boring quickly.

Great important dramatic true story (unbelievably documented) that was an international cause. I don't know how the author managed to read the voluminous actual sources. Sometimes, while reading, I realized that almost every sentence in a paragraph was backed up and based on fact. Reads like a mystery. Would make a terrific movie.

Although very detailed and dense for the reader not used to academic literature, it is a fascinating true depiction of life in Italy and the rest of the world during the 1850's. The author was able to

depict daily life for the Jews of the time as well as the political atmosphere for Catholics and Pope Pius IX. Although difficult at time to plow through the details,it's an important book.

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