

**Book review: "Dictionary of Life-Saving Words".
Edited by Michał Paluch, Warsaw, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW 2022¹.**

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Abstract

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Keywords

peace, war, trauma, coping, conflict, love

¹ Open Access: <https://wydawnictwo.uksw.edu.pl/img/cms/e-booki/S%C5%82ownik%20wyrzo%CC%81w%20ratuja%CC%A8cych%20z%CC%87ycie.pdf> (Accessed 16.06.2025).

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"That is why this book was created, to preserve the moments of victory that have already taken place"³

Since February 24, 2022, when Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, three years and three months have passed. This period represents not only a time of Ukraine's heroic struggle for sovereignty, but also of profound losses, suffering, and uncertainty. At the same time, it is a moment of reflection on forms of support for people affected by war trauma, who despite their pain maintain faith, hope, and love. Key challenges include helping soldiers on the front lines, in hospitals, or in captivity, as well as their families. Mothers with children who have found shelter in Poland require special support, as do teachers in Ukraine who, in the face of alarms, explosions, and life-threatening situations, serve not only as educators but also as psychologists and caregivers. Their work requires extraordinary psychological resilience to support students whose hearts are often far from school subjects. A great challenge has also emerged for teachers in Poland, who were not prepared for such a large number of students with war experience.

The reviewed publication, *Dictionary of Life-Saving Words* (2023), edited by Michał Paluch, is largely a response to these challenges. This is the second book edited by M. Paluch devoted to the war in Ukraine. The first, *Lessons of Peace in (Post)War Time* (2022), was published shortly after the outbreak of the conflict, being an immediate reaction by Polish researchers to Russian aggression. The title and content of the book encourage reflection on the lessons that can be drawn from the war in Ukraine, as well as on actions that should be taken both now and in the post-war period to build peace and support reconstruction. The Dictionary continues these considerations, offering practical tools and concepts supporting people affected by the consequences of war, making it a valuable contribution to the discourse on international solidarity and humanitarian aid. The Dictionary is atypical, as it does not meet the canonical requirements for this type of book. It contains four parts that are coherently connected.

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The first is an introductory part, beginning with "Memento for those who provoke war". Michał Paluch notes in it: "In a good word, in a life-saving word, some mystery lies dormant, and at the same time some dimension of truth about man and his humanity".⁴ The text is also provided in Ukrainian translation. The introduction is a very important part of the book because it contains explanations on how to use the dictionary and what the prospects are for updating the dictionary in the future.

The second part of the book consists of essays that have been grouped by topics into 10 chapters. Each of them begins with the word "Experience." These experiences are acts of speech; spaces of encounter; moral imagination; the reality of war; extraordinary everyday life; field of glory; overcoming trauma; experience of word culture; transcending one's own boundaries; and the spirit of the nation. The essay authors are Polish and Ukrainian researchers, including educators, psychologists, philosophers, and sociologists. Each essay contains key concepts that are life-saving words. They are presented in the essays in bold font and thus draw the reader's attention. This idea by the Editor is very creative and commendable, as it serves to update reflection on those words or concepts that are important for humans during life-threatening situations, helping to fight and survive in difficult circumstances. Each essay has rich illustrations in the

³ Michał Paluch's comment on Facebook from February 24, 2024, on the second anniversary of the war in Ukraine about the "Dictionary of Life-Saving Words." (Accessed 24.02.2025. Facebook Profile Feed of Michał Paluch).

⁴ Paluch, M. (Ed.). (2023). *Dictionary of life-saving words*, p. 11.

form of photographs and children's drawings. Often these are testimonies from people who witnessed military actions in Ukraine or who, as Polish citizens, supported war refugees. Among the essay authors are also academic teachers who, in the form of reflection, discuss difficult problems related to life and death, trying to find solutions for future generations.

The next, third part, consists of key concepts. There are 33 of them in the Dictionary. The authors who develop and define the definitions are also indicated. Each definition is also provided in Ukrainian. The description of concepts is specific, not characteristic of dictionaries in which definitions of concepts are given. These are texts that express the authors' approach to specific concepts in a certain way based on appropriate sources.

The appendix – methodological materials – is the fourth part of the Dictionary. The alphabetical index contains 1,203 words and phrases that were submitted to the Editorial Office by people from Poland and Ukraine⁵. This is a great work by the Editor that facilitates readers' work with the Dictionary.

A very important value of the reviewed book is that it can be downloaded in electronic version⁶. The content of the Dictionary is valuable material for the work of academic teachers, school teachers, and school educators, psychologists for working with students, pupils, and their parents both in Poland and Ukraine. It serves the integration of cultures of neighboring nations, which certainly gained great experience in spontaneous mobilization of forces, and in today's times in the need for planned actions for the humanization of society and human subjectivity. The content of the Dictionary has great significance not only in educational context, but also intercultural, political, and social.

⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

⁶ Link to download the Dictionary of Life-Saving Words in electronic version: <https://wydawnictwo.uksw.edu.pl/img/cms/e-booki/S%20C5%82ownik%20wyrazo%CC%81w%20ratuja%CC%A8cych%20z%CC%87ycie.pdf> (Accessed 16.06.2025).