

**TO HONOR ALL CHILDREN  
FROM PREJUDICE, TO  
DISCRIMINATION, TO HATRED...  
TO HOLOCAUST**



Photo courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**5-8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE HOLOCAUST/GENOCIDE  
CURRICULUM  
STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
COMMISSION ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION**

**To Honor All Children  
From Prejudice to discrimination to  
Hatred....to holocaust**

**New Jersey State Holocaust curriculum guide For  
grades 5-8**

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January, 2004

Dear Educator:

The newly updated curriculum guide, *The Holocaust and Genocide Curriculum: To Honor All Children, Grades 5 - 8*, is the culmination of a process that began three decades ago and involved educators, the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, and many others. Those educators who contributed to this update of the original curriculum guide that was developed and disseminated by the Commission in 1995 are listed in the acknowledgment page. Primary direction for the guide's development was provided by the Commission, its past Chairs, and Chairperson of the Commission's Curriculum and Education Committee, Richard F. Flaim, under the direction of Executive Director, Dr. Paul B. Winkler.

The Commission's first Chair, Gerry Flanzbaum, established a firm interest and commitment to the teaching of the Holocaust and genocides and helped to make the Commission a viable entity. His guidance established the foundation for the future, including the development of the curriculum and related materials designed to guide educators in their design of effective instruction for students.

Murray Laulich, Esq., guided the Commission as it became a permanent body and through the legislative process that mandated the inclusion of instruction on the Holocaust and genocides at the elementary and secondary levels in all New Jersey schools. Based on his own personal interest and guidance, in 1995 along with present and past members, in particular Sister Rose Thering and Rabbi Bernhard Rosenberg, the first curriculum was developed. Laulich also provided invaluable editing assistance in the development of the new guide.

Steven Some, the Commission's next Chair, extended the Commission's activities into the international arena, with the introduction of such topics as Hate Speech, Hate Crimes and Hate on the Internet. Through his encouragement, Richard F. Flaim and Commission member Harry Furman, developed a new curriculum guide, *The Hitler Legacy: A Dilemma of Hate Speech and Hate Crime in a Post-Holocaust World*, published and disseminated by the Commission in 2002 and designed for use in upper middle and high schools. This guide is available from the Commission.

Hela Young, who served from June 2001 until her untimely death in early 2002, provided inspiration to the Commission and to school districts throughout New Jersey, as reflected in what she wrote following the tragic events of September 11, 2001. She wrote: "I know you will agree that educating our students on the range of issues related to prejudice, discrimination, bigotry and hatred are increasingly important, particularly at a time when our country has endured the hate-motivated terror attack on our people . . . It is our hope that, together, we can help our students learn the benefits of living in a democratic society and the responsibility we share to respond in meaningful ways to counter acts that threaten the human rights of all people."

The Commission strongly believes this newly updated curriculum guide will serve your students well. It will facilitate the teaching of tolerance, an appreciation for diversity and an aversion to bigotry and hatred. Please utilize it in your curriculum.

The State of New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education stands ready to assist you in any way. Please do not hesitate to contact the Commission.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Paul B. Winkler  
Executive Director  
New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education



# Remember

Remembrance is Continuing the Resistance





## A Message to Our Colleagues

*"A teacher gives himself to his students, a little bit every day."*

*Lena Kuchler-Silberman in My Hundred Children*

These words, drawn from the thoughts and emotions of a Holocaust survivor, speak for the sense of commitment and dedication that educators share in common. We recognize and appreciate the awesome trust and responsibility that has been placed in our hands - to teach a child and to play a role in the shaping of that life. The transmission of knowledge and morals from one generation to another holds both exciting and daunting responsibilities for educators. None of those responsibilities is more awesome or more important than the need to inculcate in our students a spirit of respect and appreciation for human diversity.

This curriculum guide is designed to provide information and lessons about prejudice, the abuse of human rights, genocide, and the Holocaust appropriate to the maturity and educational level of young people in the middle grades. It is also designed to provide them with information and activities that will assist them in clarifying their thinking and articulating their ideas.

Moral sensitivity is keenly developed during the middle school years. Middle schoolers are challenged to reflect and to make the transition from thought, to judgment, to action. They need opportunities and guidance in this time when they are so vulnerable to peer pressures and are beginning to test their wings in their search for independence. Sixth grade teacher Dr. Barbara Hadzima voices her thoughts and concerns: "As our society becomes more and more exposed to pluralism and realizes the benefits of it, young adults search for direction, reassurance, and comprehension of the whole picture."

The Holocaust and genocide are not accidents in history. They were planned and implemented with the will of a government and the people who supported them. They were the products of prejudice, hate, and discrimination that had - and continue to be - carefully taught. Therefore, we must instill in our students such a strong sense of the precious nature of human dignity that prejudice and bigotry and the violence to which they lead are indefensible. We must teach them the overwhelming importance of the simple human dignity bestowed upon each of us and to practice respect for all people expressed through our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

The vast numbers of victims of the Holocaust and genocide are almost beyond our ability to comprehend. Yet, somehow we must strive to comprehend and to teach our students to comprehend. With so many victims of the Holocaust and genocide denied the right to live, how can we now also deny them memory? What we - each of us - can comprehend is the single face, the single human life, behind each of these vast numbers. That is how we will teach the young people - one child at a time through one story at a time.

We continue to live in a world where human inflicted pain and tragedy abound. If we want to provide our young people with the tools to build a better and safer world for themselves and all of our neighbors at home and around the world, we must teach them to assign the highest value and to guard jealously the

simple dignity of each and every human life. It is an awesome responsibility that each of us carries. Yet no responsibility could have a richer reward than witnessing this lesson take root in the hearts, minds, and souls of the young people we teach. In concluding her statement about the importance of teaching her children who were survivors of the Holocaust, Lena Kuchler-Silberman concluded, *"...I wanted to give - and to receive what my pupils would give to me."*

We would like to extend a special note of thanks to the following school districts for granting committee members the professional time to attend those meetings held on school days: Crim Primary School in the Bridgewater-Raritan School District; Bobby Run's School of the Lumberton Township School District; Chatham Middle School of the School District of the Chathams; and, Central Middle School of the Parsippany-Troy Hills School District. We appreciate their support of this project and of our endeavors.

Our many meetings during school days, holidays, summer days, and evenings were greatly enhanced by the very hospitable and supportive environments in which we found ourselves gathering. We extend our warmest and most heartfelt thanks to the Waldor Memorial Library of the Jewish Education Association of MetroWest for their generosity in granting us space and to Bracha Weisbarth and Ron Weissman for their tremendous support and assistance. We would also like to extend a special "Thank you" to one of our own committee members and her husband for opening their home to us for many of our meetings. Thank you, Cecile and Norbert.

We want to acknowledge our special indebtedness to Dr. Paul Winkler, Executive Director of the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, for his endless encouragement and guiding spirit. Without his support, this curriculum guide would not have been possible.

The members of this committee have contributed many hours, endless thought, a great depth of personal commitment, and skill to this project. It is a work to which we are all strongly committed. As we conclude this project, but not our commitment to its work, we do so with the knowledge that we have had the good fortune to enrich our own lives through the friendships forged as we worked together and strangers and colleagues became friends. We hope that as you and your colleagues utilize this guide to teach your pupils that you too will find it a rich and rewarding experience.

We encourage you to remain committed to teaching the concepts of self-respect, respect for others, and a responsible, humane citizenship to your students. It is an extremely valuable personal and professional commitment - and one of the greatest services to our school, our community, our state, our nation, and our world. Most of all, it is a commitment to our children and to the future. We wish each of you well.

With our heartfelt best wishes,

Barbara Hadzima	Karen H. Levine	Molly
	Maffei	
Peppy Margolis	Cheryl Riley	Cecile Seiden

Colleen Tambuscio

Regina Townsend  
M. Simpkins

Helen

## About this Curriculum

You will find within the pages of **To Honor All Children: From Prejudice to Discrimination to Hatred....To Holocaust** many lessons using a wide range of books, poetry, artwork, music, photographs, and audio-visual productions. In addition to the materials and lessons on the Holocaust, there are also lessons addressing other incidents of prejudice, discrimination, and genocide.

The materials vary in nature. Some are works of fiction and some are non-fiction and the students should be made aware of the differences between the two. There are recollections generously shared with us by the people who lived them as well as those taken from archives and other works. Each is accompanied by a recommendation for appropriate grade level use. However, teachers are urged to use their professional discretion and judgment in making adjustments in the selection of lessons they choose based upon the maturity and academic level of their students. Teachers may also notice that variations in the spelling of some names and terms occur. Where possible, we have used the spelling currently being recommended. However, within the framework of an author's work, we have attempted to maintain the integrity of that work by observing the spelling used by the author.

There is an extensive bibliography from which you may choose to make other selections. We also would urge you to visit the web site of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum where there are many resources including guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust [<http://www.ushmm.org>]. Visit our Internet site list and review some of the web sites. The Internet is a treasure chest of information for the educator. However, again, we urge the educator to supervise student use of the Internet very carefully as there are individuals and groups fostering hate who use the web for their own destructive purposes.

The important issue is to teach your students about the Holocaust, prejudice, discrimination, and genocide. Discuss the human cost and moral concerns of these terrible times but give them the hope of a better world that can come from each person raising their voice to speak for justice and humanity. We hope and believe that the materials in this curriculum in the hands of a skilled and caring teacher can be an important part of the effort to achieve that goal.

In teaching young people about the Holocaust and genocide, let us keep in mind this thoughtful comment from Israeli educator and scholar Shalmi Barmore. "You don't teach the Holocaust. You touch it."

We hope that this curriculum will help you and your students to touch the Holocaust.

## Prejudice and Discrimination



Photo courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



**Unit I: Prejudice and Discrimination**

**Unit Goal:** Students will develop an understanding of the pervasive nature of prejudice and discrimination throughout history and world societies and the human costs of that prejudice and discrimination in the past, present, and future.

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students will be able to:	<b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b>	<b>Instructional Materials/Resources</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognize that each of us have reasons to be proud of ourselves.</li> <li>2. Describe and recognize positive and negative types of human behavior.</li> <li>3. Demonstrate an understanding that behavior reflects the choices and decisions that each person makes.</li> <li>4. Analyze and evaluate the influence of our personal values and beliefs on our choices and decisions.</li> <li>5. Analyze and evaluate the influence of peer pressure on our choices and decisions.</li> <li>6. Identify and explain some of the sources from which people learn their values and beliefs.</li> <li>7. Demonstrate an understanding of the influence that group dynamics such as mob hysteria have on individual choices and actions.</li> </ol>	<p>A. Using readings and activities as a basis, ask students to analyze and express their views on the historic and present impact of prejudice and discrimination on history and human suffering throughout the ages.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read and discuss the excerpt from <b><u>Nory Ryan's Song</u></b> by Patricia Reilly Giff. Apply the information regarding the suffering of the Irish people, the landlord system that existed in Ireland, the wave of immigration to the United States, the anti-Catholic prejudice, and the transference of those attitudes to the United States to the continued troubles and violence in Northern Ireland in recent times.</li> <li>2. Read and discuss the excerpt from <b><u>The Slave Dancer</u></b> by Paula Fox. Look for a Modern day story on the continued Existence of slave trading and slavery on The Internet at the site of <b><u>www.iabolish.org</u></b>.</li> <li>3. Read and complete the activities for the lesson on the reading from <b><u>The Diving Bell</u></b> by Todd Strasser. Make the Connections between two different cultures, each mired in sexism despite their differences. Also make the connections between ethnocentric and religious</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reading from <b><u>Nory Ryan's Song</u></b> by Patricia Reilly Giff. Make the book available to those students interested in pursuing further reading of the story.</li> <li>2. View excerpt of video "Out of Ireland."</li> <li>3. <b><u>The Slave Dancer</u></b> by Paula Fox.</li> <li>4. Access to the Internet. Visit the web site <a href="http://www.iabolish.org">www.iabolish.org</a> and search for other sites.</li> <li>5. <b><u>The Diving Bell</u></b> by Todd Strasser reading and book for those students wishing to do further reading.</li> </ol>

<b>Performance Objectives</b> The students will be able to:	<b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b>	<b>Instructional Materials/Resources</b>
8. Explain and apply the terms prejudice, discrimination, scapegoating, stereotyping, bigotry, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, religious discrimination, antisemitism, classism, ageism, etc.	<p>prejudice and discrimination and the violence of colonialism.</p> <p>4. Read and discuss the reading from the novel <b><u>Call Me Ruth</u></b> by Marilyn Sachs. Utilize the questions in the lesson to discuss the anti-immigrant attitudes in the United States, the economic classism that existed, the poor working conditions of the time and the struggle to change them, and the cultural conflict that existed often between the generations. Examine the antisemitism that drove many Jews from Europe to the United States and the attitudes they found here.</p> <p>5. Read and discuss the excerpt from <b><u>The Star Fisher</u></b> by Laurence Yep. Through the discussion and activities in the lesson, analyze the ethnocentrism that existed on both sides in this story. Evaluate the humor with which the author deals with important issues of prejudice, intergenerational struggle, and the sense of family in two different cultures.</p> <p>B. Examine the history of ethnocentrism and racism that runs through the history of the United States in contrast to the struggle to continuously expand and strengthen the belief and practice of democracy.</p> <p>1. Obtain the book <b><u>Amistad Rising</u></b> by Veronica Chambers and complete the</p>	<p>5. <b><u>Call Me Ruth</u></b> by Marilyn Sachs.</p> <p>6. <b><u>The Star Fisher</u></b> by Laurence Yep.</p> <p>1. <b><u>Amistad Rising</u></b> by Veronica Chambers.</p>

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students will be able to:	<b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b>	<b>Instructional Materials/Resources</b>
	<p>lesson. Emphasize the continued slave trading practices and the horror of those practices. Examine the struggle of slave issues in the United States and the views of the Supreme Court. Compare and contrast this story to the fictional <b><u>The Slave Dancer</u></b> previously read.</p> <p>2. Read <b><u>The Long Trail Home</u></b> by Elisabeth J. Stewart. Examine the role of racism and a form of "colonialism" in the story. Compare the role of the Supreme Court in the history of relations between the United States government and the Cherokee.</p> <p>3. Read the excerpt from <b><u>Pink and Say</u></b> by Patricia Polacco and discuss the issues raised in the lesson.</p>	<p>4. Obtain and view portions of the video "<b><u>Amistad.</u></b>" Compare with information in the book.</p> <p>5. Use the Internet to obtain further Information on the "Amistad" and its Kidnapped passengers. Go to <b><u>www.goggle.com</u></b> and type in Amistad.</p> <p>6. Obtain one of the following books and read For further information: <b><u>Bound for America the Forced Migration of Africans to the New World</u></b> by James Haskins and Kathleen Benson; <b><u>From Slave Ship to Freedom</u></b> by Julius Lester and Rod Brown; <b><u>They Came In Chains, the Story of the Slave Ships</u></b> by Milton Meltzer.</p> <p>7. <b><u>The Long Trail Home</u></b> by Elisabeth J. Stewart.</p> <p>8. Obtain and read for more information from one of the following: <b><u>Remember My Name</u></b> by Sarah H. Banks; <b><u>Soft Rain, A Story of the Cherokee Trail of Tears</u></b> by Cornelia Cornelissen. See the lesson for other suggestions.</p> <p>9. Read the remainder of this story by Patricia Polacco.</p> <p>10. View portions of the video "<b><u>Glory</u></b>" and compare the viewpoints offered in the book and the video.</p>



Performance Objectives Students will be able to:	Teaching/Planning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials and Resources
	<p>4. Read the excerpt and discuss the lesson for <b><u>Dragonwings</u></b> by Laurence Yep. Compare and contrast the tone the author creates in this novel with that of <b><u>The Star Fisher</u></b>. Compare and contrast the prejudice that exists between the "white demons" and the "Tang people." Examine the government policy in this. Analyze the way that personal experience can sometimes go beyond general societal views.</p> <p>5. Obtain and read a selection from the book <b><u>The Circlemaker</u></b> by Maxine Rose Schur. Discuss the policy of conscription in Czarist Russia and the use of pogroms. Analyze the purpose of the "Pale of Settlement."</p> <p>6. Read the excerpt from the novel <b><u>Esperanza Rising</u></b> by Pam Munoz Ryan and discuss the issues of prejudice and discrimination that are raised.</p> <p>7. Obtain the novel <b><u>The Gold Cadillac</u></b> by Mildred D. Taylor and complete the lesson.</p> <p>8. Read the excerpt from the novel <b><u>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</u></b> by Mildred D. Taylor. Discuss and analyze the forms that Discrimination and racial policy assumed</p>	<p>11. Reading from <b><u>Dragonwings</u></b> by Laurence Yep.</p> <p>12. Other novels and sources: <b><u>Dragon's Gate</u></b> by Laurence Yep; <b><u>The Journal of Wong Ming-Chung</u></b> by Laurence Yep; <b><u>Goodbye, Vietnam</u></b> by Gloria Whelan.</p> <p>13. Consult the Internet for information on the Chinese contribution to the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, to the mining industry in the west, and other contributions.</p> <p>14. <b><u>The Circlemaker</u></b> by Maxine Rose Schur.</p> <p>15. <b><u>Esperanza Rising</u></b> by Pam Munoz Ryan.</p> <p>16. Go to <b><u>www.google.com</u></b> on the Internet and type in the following for more information on the struggle of migrant workers and efforts to unionize: Dolores Huerta; Cesar Chavez; United Farm Workers.</p> <p>17. <b><u>The Gold Cadillac</u></b> by Mildred D. Taylor.</p> <p>18. <b><u>Mississippi Bridge</u></b> by Mildred D. Taylor.</p> <p>19. <b><u>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</u></b> reading excerpt by Mildred D. Taylor.</p>

Performance Objectives Students will be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials/Resources
	<p>in the first half of the 1900s. Compare and contrast this to the current era.</p> <p>8. Read from the novel <b><u>The Watsons Go To Birmingham</u></b> by Christopher Paul Curtis. Complete the lesson in the curriculum guide.</p> <p>9. Obtain and read excerpts from the novel <b><u>Children of the Wolf</u></b> by Jane Yolen. After reading from the book, complete the lesson in the curriculum guide. Discuss the prejudice and discrimination that often develops toward the unfamiliar and unknown.</p> <p>10. Read the excerpt from the novel <b><u>The Cure</u></b> by Sonia Levitin. This is a combination science/historical fiction novel that examines the antisemitism of the middle ages and the prejudice and repression that exists against anything or anyone who does not conform to the "norm" in a society of the future.</p> <p>11. Read the poetry of Diane Stelling in the curriculum guide and complete the lesson on various aspects of prejudice, discrimination, and the courage to do be yourself and to do what is right.</p>	<p>20. View excerpts from the PBS video series <b>"Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965."</b></p> <p>21. Obtain and read the novel <b><u>The Watsons Go To Birmingham</u></b> by Christopher Paul Curtis. Compare the story to the true story of the bombing of a church in the South and the small children who were killed and injured.</p> <p>22. Read the excerpts from the novel <b><u>Children of the Wolf</u></b> by Jane Yolen.</p> <p>23. Reading from <b><u>The Cure</u></b> by Sonia Levitin.</p> <p>24. <b><u>The Giant and the Mouse</u></b> and <b><u>One Little Voice</u></b>. Both books are collections of Poetry by Diane Stelling (a New Jersey Poet).</p>

## Prejudice and Discrimination

*Prejudice is the burden which confuses the past, threatens the future, and renders the present inaccessible.*  
- Maya Angelou, 1986

A dictionary will provide us with several definitions of prejudice and discrimination. It informs us that prejudice is a judgment formed before the facts are known; a suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred of others. Likewise, it can tell us that discrimination is an action or policy directed against the welfare of another group, usually a minority group. However, dictionary definitions cannot give us a true understanding of the incalculable harm and injury that humans have visited upon each other down through the ages because of prejudice and discrimination.

No single person, group, nation, or historical age can assume sole ownership or responsibility for these destructive forces of human attitudes and behaviors. It has been the misfortune of humankind that the ills and injuries that we have visited upon each other can be found not only throughout history and but also throughout the world. The fear of the "other," the "unknown," the "different" weaves through the history of human relationships like an ugly thread weaving through the fabric of an otherwise beautiful cloth. It lurks in the dark corners of our minds and twists our relationships with "friends", neighbors and strangers. It haunts us daily with the damage it causes to the hearts and minds and souls of individuals and whole societies. Left unchecked, prejudice and intolerance can lead us down the slippery slope from discrimination, to destructive acts of hate, to witch hunts and pogroms, and, ultimately to "ethnic cleansing" and genocide.

Yet, despite the relentless appearance of prejudice and discrimination in human history, we are not without the tools and skills needed to meet and dispel them. It lies in our own sense of fair play, good will, and basic respect for the human dignity to which each of us is entitled. It requires each of us to nurture in ourselves, in our family, and in all of our relationships a sense of our common humanity and a willingness to work together to resolve our problems. It also requires us to be able to acknowledge and respect our differences, to understand that respect does not necessarily mean agreement, and to be able to take simple pleasure in each other's company. It lies in our own ability to fill our days with acts of simple kindness, basic consideration, and human decency rather than a mean-spirited attitude of uncaring indifference to others. It means caring enough to become involved and taking a stand for what we believe is right. In its most realistic and basic sense, it may be a simple question of good triumphing over evil. It is most certainly a choice that each of us must make for ourselves.

*The tolerance and understanding necessary to heal must come from each and every one of us, arising out of our everyday conduct, until decency reaches a flood tide.* - Muhammad Ali, 1996

## **Nory Ryan's Song**

A Novel by  
Patricia Reilly Giff

Delacorte Press, New York, 2000.  
Recommended for Grades 5-8

### **Synopsis**

Set in Ireland in 1845, **Nory Ryan's Song** is the story of a young girl and her family, friends, and community caught up in the horrendous disaster known as the Irish potato famine. Before the famine, life was difficult for the poor people living on the west coast of Ireland. Although Nory's family had lived there for many generations, land and the English lord controlled life. He wanted to find a way to expel the people from their cottages so that he could clear the land for grazing sheep. Da (Father) had gone to sea to earn money to pay the lord's rent but there had been no word from him in a long time. The family made a subsistence living from their potato crop augmented by things such as seaweed and poaching fishing to eat. Other family members and neighbors had gone to America and young Nory is desperate to save her family from eviction. Nory makes a bargain with scary old Anna Donnelly to work for her in exchange for some money (which is then lost). With no word from Da, Nory must find a way to care for her little family - sister Celia, little Patch, and Granda - and to keep all of them from starvation and eviction.

*from Chapter 8 pps. 44-47*

The sun was high now, the dew gone. The stubble of weeds was prickly under my feet. I took the shortcut across Mallons' field.

Sean Red and the rest of the Mallon family were outside, almost all. Liam was gone, probably fishing at the edge of the bay, but the others were in the back field. Even Granny Mallon in an old woolen nightgown torn up the side was propped up against the stone wall. Mrs. Mallon, her hands on her thick hips, looked grim; she didn't answer when I called, "Bless all here."

Sean raised his hand. "Someone is screaming in the next valley."

I crossed my arms over my chest, beginning to shiver.

"She's being taken by a *sidhe*." He was trying to smile. "Pulled down under the earth."

"Don't say that."

"Do you think someone is screaming because of the potatoes?" he asked.

I opened my mouth to tell him about Anna but Mrs. Mallon was moving quickly down the field, her red skirt pulled up around her large legs. She knelt over one of the beds, groaning, digging at one of the plants with her hands. I followed Sean and his brother Michael to see what she was looking at. It hardly seemed like much. It was just the tiniest edge of the leaf that had shriveled and curled under, but it was enough to see that the stem underneath was soft and pulpy.

"Look across," Mrs. Mallon said in her harsh voice. "There." She pointed with one thick finger. "And there."

It was everywhere. A leaf lying back against a stem as if it had no strength to stand up by itself. Another stem seemed to lose color in front of our eyes. I backed away, stepping on one plant, shaking the edge of my skirt where the plant had left a smear of brownish ooze. I tried not to take a deep breath because the smell was stronger now.

I took another step, seeing Granny Mallon, her pile in one hand. "Without potatoes we will starve to death," she said, beginning to rock back and forth.

"I have to go home," I said.

But no one listened. The Mallons were walking across the beds, and Mrs. Mallon began to cry with a hard, deep sound.

"I'm sorry for your trouble." I bit my lip. I didn't know why I said it. It was something Da and Maggie [her older sister in America] whispered at wakes, when someone had died. I picked up my skirt and ran toward home.

My breath came in ragged gulps as I climbed over the stile, looking at our own potato plants. They were too close to Mallons' field. If it had been the *sidhe* with their long fingers, they could have reached across the fields and touched and turned everything black.

I stopped to look at one plant, and then another. Green. Firm. Lovely.

Safe?

"Granda," I called as soon as I saw our roof and the smoke drifting away from it. "Celia." I ran down the path, ducking my head, as I burst in through the open doorway.

"Granda."

It was dark inside the cottage, the fire low. Celia sat at the hearth, knitting, her eyes closed, counting the pattern in her mind.

"It's the potatoes," I said.

"Anna's?" [Anna is the old women for whom Nory works.]

"No. At least not yet." I shook my head. "It's Mallons' field."

Granda pulled himself to his feet. "Then ours." He limped to the doorway, pulling the spade off the hook on the wall.

Celia and I followed him outside, Patch's hand in mine. We walked along between the beds just as the Mallons had done. The spade dug into the earth. We held our breath as Granda lifted up the small potatoes, then patted them under the earth again.

He rubbed his hands against his sides and smiled as he saw us staring at him. But his smile was a terrible one, and his eyes were wild.

Celia walked ahead of us. Inside, she reached into the bin for potatoes. She had to scrape the bottom for them. The last of the old harvest was on us.

I looked at Granda. He was terrified and trying not to tell us.

\* \* \*

*from Chapter 9 pps.49-50*

I was dreaming, rocked in the currach on Maidin Bay, small fingerless waves underneath me. There was a pull on Sean Red's hook. Drops of water ran off the line as it came in, the fish a flash of silver under the surface.

But what was that smell? I opened my eyes. It had been my turn for the hearth side, so there was no need to climb over Celia and Patch. I rolled out of

bed, the straw cracking under me. The glow from the hearth was just bright enough for me to see Granda huddled in the bed on the other side of the room.

I stood there to be sure they were still asleep. But how could they sleep with the smell that was drifting in under the door?

Three steps, then I eased the door open. Outside it was bright as day. The moon was up full, full and white, throwing sharp shadows away from me. I heard thunder somewhere, though, and the air was damp and heavy.

Nighttime belonged to the *sidhe*, so I was afraid to take more than a few steps, but it was far enough. The potato stalks leaned against each other, limp and wet, the leaves shapeless and dripping. I pulled up the edge of my petticoat to cover my nose and backed against the wall of the house. In my mind was Granny Mallons' voice: "*Without potatoes we will starve to death.*"

\* \* \*

*from Chapter 15 pps. 87-94*

Celia came back that dark night and slid onto the straw of our bed without stopping to kneel for her prayers. She didn't say a word to me but twisted and turned, pulling our covers one way and then another. I thought we'd never get to sleep.

Days later she told me Cunningham [the English landlord whom Celia had gone to ask for work as a cook] had laughed at her feet without shoes, and the stain on her dress. "You won't be here long enough to work," he had said. "You'll be out of your house and onto the road because you cannot last, and I will see sheep grazing where your house had been."

I knew I'd never forget the terrible look in her eyes. "Celia," I said. "Do you know what Maggie said about you?"

She shook her head.

I put my hand on her thin shoulder. "She said you are loyal and true. And that is what I say. No one could ever ask for more."

She blinked, trying not to let the tears fall. "I always worried," she said. "Worried when it rained that the thatch would leak, worried when the sun was hot that the thatch would burn." She brushed the back of her hand over her face. "But if we live through this, I'll never worry about things like that again."

"You might even sing," I said, trying to change what I saw in her eyes.

\* \* \*

We walked slowly [after seeing two of the Mallon brothers off at the crossroads as they left to try to find a way to go to America]. Mrs. Mallon weaved back and forth on the path, trying to hold old Granny up. She looked as old as Granny herself, with sunken cheeks and loose gray flesh.

And Patch couldn't keep up either. His arms were like sticks and his legs white and bowed where they hung out of his skirt. "Come, Patcheen," I said. "We have to go home."

Instead of hurrying, he sank down on the ground and put his arms out to me.

People walked around him. That was another thing, the people. Where had they come from? They wandered along the roads in twos and threes. They were mostly women carrying babies. Little children held on to their skirts.

It was such an effort to walk to Patch, to put my arms around him and pick him up. And when I did, there was nothing to him. All we'd been eating were the few fish we'd managed to poach from Cunningham's stream and once in a while a wild onion or an old potato. I sank down next to Patch on the wet ground and watched the people. Some of them had circles of green around their mouths.

I wondered what it was.

I wondered how I could get some.

And then I knew. "They are eating grass," I told Patch.

"Me," he said. "I will have grass."

I stood up again and looked at the sea grass that bent itself over the rocky road. I pulled a piece up and put it in my mouth. "Sharp enough to cut your tongue," I told Patch. I pulled another piece off for him. "Be careful."

He leaned against a rock, and I leaned back with him. We lay there, sucking on the blades of grass. Clouds rushed against the blue of the sky, changing shapes as we looked...

Across the fields was Anna's house. Suddenly I realized there was no smoke coming from the roof. I held my face up to feel the wind. The smoke should have been drifting toward me. I pulled myself up and waited until a bit of dizziness passed.

Next to me, Patch was asleep now, his thumb in his mouth.

"Stay then, and rest," I whispered. "I will come back for you."

The walk across the field seemed much longer than usual. I stumbled against potato plants, dry now, crumbling underneath me. Then I was at Anna's door. Her cow was nowhere in sight; neither was her pig. "Anna," I called, feeling my lips crack. They had been as sore as Celia's for days now. I ducked inside to see Anna lying in her straw bed, stiff and unmoving.

For a moment I felt as if I couldn't breathe; then she turned toward me. "Are you all right?" I asked.

"An old woman can lie in her bed if she wishes," she said. "And there's milk. I saved it for you."

My mouth watered. "I didn't come for milk." I wanted it so much I felt weak.

"I've had so much milk today," Anna said. "I couldn't drink another drop."

"Well, then, I will," I said. "And if you don't mind, I'll take a wee drop for Patch."

I went to the pail in the corner. I was too weak to lift it and pour some into a cup, and there wasn't that much in the pail anyway. I bent over and tipped until I felt the warmth of it on my tongue. I had to make myself stop. Patch was so hungry on the road, and Anna...

"Did you really have enough to drink?" I asked.

Her eyes were closed but I could see her nod.

"Where is your cow?" I said next, still tasting the milk.

"I sent her away this day."

I went closer. "Sent your cow away? What do you mean? Sold her?"

"Gave..."

"Gave her to..." I repeated, and then I knew. "Devlin?" [Devlin worked for the landlord.]

She made a small sound. "I cured his stomachache with a blackberry root, but he forgot that."

I leaned closer. "Devlin took her for the rent?" I swallowed. All the milk would be gone now. What would Anna eat? "And the pig? Did he take the pig?"

She didn't answer. She turned again, the straw settling under her. I stood there, heart pounding, remembering the coin. It would have paid the rent.

I took a wooden cup and poured a mouthful into it. I knelt by her bed with it until she turned her head and drank. "You are a good girl," she said.

\* \* \*

I hooked the pail's handle under my fingers and went to the door with it. "I know so much about the plants now." I stopped, looking down at the milk. "I'll never forget." I'd be like Anna now, able to heal.

"And something else," I said. "I will never leave you. I will stay with you always, and take care of you."

She raised her head, smiled, and shook her head the slightest bit.

I took the pail to the end of the field, glancing around to be sure no one on the road might take it away from me. I kept calling until at last Patch raised his head and came to me cross the wall.

\* \* \*

*from Chapter 21 pps.130-134*

Every day was a day to get through, a day to wonder about Celia and Granda [who had gone to the port to look for Da], a day to long for Da. Anna watched me, shaking her head. She was stronger now, and one morning at last she left her bed and went slowly to the doorway. She looked toward the cliffs. I knew she was looking for Maeve [her dog]. "It is all I need," she said, nodding at me. "A dog at my hearth, a few weeds for medicine, and a field of growing potatoes."

I felt a quick pain in my chest. I knew where Maeve was. I opened my mouth, wondering what to say, but then I saw Sean and his cart coming down the road toward us.

Sean was stronger too. I had climbed down the cliff again and again. We had cooked birds, tasting horribly of the sea, eaten their eggs, and Sean had dipped his hands into the bay every day until they began to heal.

It wasn't that we weren't hungry. We were hungry all the time. And Patch was still thin, still white, his skirt big enough for two boys his size.

I went outside to take a breath of the damp air and there was Sean, coming down the road, waving, and his mother lumped up on the edge of the cart, holding a small chest on her lap. "We are leaving," she called. "Leaving for Galway to find a ship."

Sean leaving? Not Sean, too! My fist went to my mouth, hard against my teeth. We had always been together, the two of us.

He reached out and took my hand from my mouth. "A friend of Liam's," he said, "stopped with the papers last night. He told us that Liam and Michael had worked on the docks before they sailed to America."

"And what of Da and Celia and..."



Before I could finish, he shook his head. "There are so many people at the dock." He reached for my other hand. "There is one extra ticket, Nory. Granny's ticket. And it is for you."

*Smith Street. Brooklyn. Horses clopping down the streets. Maggie waiting at the door. Food.*

"Come with me, Nory," he said.

Anna spoke from the doorway. "I will keep Patch for you. He will be safe with me."

But even as she said it, I shook my head. I would never leave her. It was Patch who had to go to America, Patch who had to have that chance. "Will you, Sean Red...", I began, and he knew what I was going to say.

Mrs. Mallon knew too. "How can we take someone so small?" she asked, but Sean held up his hand.

We looked at each other, the two of us, and I remembered walking to Patrick's Well together. How many times? I had danced with him at Maggie's wedding, making faces at Celia. *Dear Celia*. I remembered singing and sharing dulse with him. I remembered the cliffs.

Sean nodded. "You can trust him with me."

"Don't I know that?" I told myself I couldn't cry now, not until they were gone. I went to the side of Anna's house. Patch was there, bent over, humming to himself, piling one stone on top of another. I sat down next to him and touched his hair and his little shoulders, and his neck that was almost too thin to hold up his head. "Someone is waiting for you," I said.

He looked up at me with blue stone eyes. "And who is that, Nory?"

I could hardly talk. "It is your own Maggie," I said. "You will climb up on the cart with Mrs. Mallon. You will take your best stones and your coat. And a ship will be waiting for you in Galway."

"The *Emma Pearl*," he said dreamily. "And you, too, on the cart."

I shook my head. "I must stay here. I will find stones for you and send them someday."

He shook his head, beginning to sob, reaching out for me. I held him, his hair fine under my hands, his arms tight around me. He was the last one left.

I pried his fingers away. "You must go," I said, my voice hard. "Maggie is waiting, and there will be food."

"No." He pulled at my arm, at my skirt. "Let me stay."

"Maggie will be waiting at the port of New York for you. She will lift you up, hug you. She will be so happy to see you."

He was on the ground now, sobbing, his face buried in the earth. I pulled him up on his knees, looking into that little face. "You will find stones in America. You will build a house and tall buildings."

He shook his head hard.

I cupped his cheeks in my hands, kissed his tiny nose. "You will remember something, when you are an old man like Granda." I said it slowly, each word above the noise of his crying. "You will say that your own Nory sent you because she loved you. You will say that no one ever loved you more."

He shut his eyes over his tears, the lids swollen.

"Patcheen with the blue stone eyes," I said, and stopped. I could not cry. Not yet. I darted into the house, trying to think. An egg hard-boiled for one pocket, another for his hand, a pile of stones. And Anna grabbed up the old black coat to cover him.

I went out to the cart, looking at Sean, looking at Mrs. Mallon. "You will put him into Maggie's hands, then," I said.

"It is where we are going, after all," Mrs. Mallon said in her harsh voice, but moving over, making room for him on the edge of the cart.

I bent over him and pulled him up, his legs kicking out, and his arms. "No, Nory, no," he cried as Sean took him from me and put him up on the cart.

Sean turned back to me. "I will see you on Smith Street," he said. "We will climb cliffs if they are there to be climbed."

I reached out to touch his forehead. "*Dia duit.*" Then I stepped back and Sean began to pull the cart.

"Remember," I called to Sean. "Remember me." I waved to them all the way down the road, even though I could hardly see for the tears. I could hear Patch crying for me a little longer. Then they were gone. I stood there, my forehead against the wall of Anna's house, feeling its roughness against my skin, sobbing, as Anna rested her hands on my shoulders.

At last I turned to her. "Gone," I said. "All of them."

She gripped her clay pipe in her mouth. "I don't know why life is so hard," she said. "But I do know this, Nory Ryan. It is a lucky house to have you in it."

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- On a map, locate the following places: Ireland, England, and Brooklyn, New York. Compare and contrast the distances among each of these places.
- Define the terms: potato famine, limpet, *sidhe*, *fuafar*, landlord
- Look up information on immigration to the United States. Obtain and graph the following information: the years of the greatest immigration to the United States, the places from which the immigrants were coming, the numbers coming from each place, and the causes of the immigration. Compare the information you learn about Irish immigration to what you read in the excerpts from **Nory Ryan's Song**.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. The potato was the mainstay of the diet of the Irish people. What foods did they try to find and to eat when the blight struck the potato fields? Why was it so risky for Nory and Sean [and any other Irish folk] to poach the fish from the landlords' streams and lakes?
2. If the people could not pay the rent, what did the landlord and his agents do about it? What choices did the people have? What choices did a landlord have?
3. Anna had a reputation as an herbal healer and was teaching Nory about the herbs and remedies. Why do you think it was important to her to do this? Nory had believed many of the stories about Anna being a witch or, at the

very least, a mean, scary old woman. What did she learn as she began to know Anna better?

4. Nory's mother had died some years before this time and Nory is unsure of her father's situation at the beginning of the story. Then her oldest sister Maggie departs for America leaving Nory and Celia with their little brother Patches [Patrick] and their Granda. Other friends and neighbors also die, leave or are driven out. Finally, even Celia and Granda go to look for Da as the family's situation has grown so desperate. Now she has a chance to go to America also - but still, little Patches is there. Imagine yourself in Nory's place. How would you be feeling about all of this loss and uncertainty in your life? What would you have done in her place?
5. How would you describe Nory's character? Would Nory be the type of person that you would want for a friend - or a relative? Why or why not?

### **Activities**

1. Read about the potato famine in Ireland and how it affected the people. Ireland had much food even without the potato crop. What happened to this food? Why wasn't it given to the people?
2. Make a Venn diagram showing the following information: (1) the population of Ireland before the Irish potato famine; (2) the number of people who emigrated to America; (3) the number of people who were left homeless; (4) the number of people who died of starvation and related diseases; and, (5) the number of people remaining in Ireland by the time the famine finally had drawn to an end.
3. One of the themes that runs through the novel is the dream of America and being free. Explain why this dream was so important to the Irish and other immigrants to America. In fact, how were the Irish treated when they first arrived in the United States? Describe the types of jobs they were offered and how they worked to improve their lot in life. Why was there so much prejudice against the Irish in America?
4. Make a list of things that the Irish have contributed to the United States and its development.
5. Imagine that you are Nory and write a series of diary entries. Include information and your feelings about the following: (1) Leaving Anna behind; (2) finding Da, Granda, Celia, Patches, and the Mallons in Galway; (3) the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean; (4) meeting with Maggie and her husband on Smith Street in Brooklyn, NY; and, (5) going to find your first job in America.

**For the teacher:** Shortly after Patches leaves with Sean and his mother, a man comes to Anna's with two tickets for a ship to America. He was sent by Nory's father. In the meanwhile, Nory had made a bargain with the landlord's man Devlin for the return of Anna's dog, some food, and seed potatoes to plant the following spring. In return, Anna and Nory were to provide herbal medicine to try to cure an illness the landlord had developed. Now there were two tickets to America and the knowledge that her father was alive, waiting in the port at

Galway with Celia and Granda. Nory wants Anna to use the extra ticket but Anna declines. She does not want to leave her old house, her dog, or the world that she knows. Nory does not want to go without her but Anna convinces her to go and to give the extra ticket to someone in Galway who is in need of it. Anna tells Nory, "I belong here. But you belong in America, Nory Ryan. And you'll bring something with you. My cures. My medicine. A gift to that young free country."

## The Slave Dancer

by

Paula Fox

Bantam Dell Doubleday Books, 1991

Recommended for grades 5-8

### **Synopsis**

Thirteen-year-old Jessie is kidnapped from New Orleans and taken aboard a slave ship where he is forced to work and to play his fife so the kidnapped Africans would exercise by dancing as the ship carried them to be sold as slaves. Jessie is stunned and horrified by the cruelty, greed, and degradation that he sees as he struggles to survive and to maintain his humanity. However, looking into the eyes of one of the young captive Africans, Jessie also finds kindness and friendship.

Excerpt from Chapter "*The Bight of Benin*" pp. 50-67

\* \* \*

I crawled into my hammock with much on my mind.

Life had turned upside down. My friend was a man who'd pressganged me. I disliked the man who'd befriended me. For all that talk of papers, I could see clear enough that two governments were against this enterprise [slaving], even though my own was, according to Purvis, weak in its opposition. Purvis had said the native kings sold their own people willingly, yet he'd also told me there were chiefs who would sink the ship and kill us all if they had the chance.

"Play us a tune." Purvis' voice floated up to me with a certain melancholy note. "We haven't had a tune from you all these weeks, and soon enough you'll be playing, but not for us."

I peered over the edge of the hammock. Smith and Purvis were looking up at me expectantly. I took my fife and jumped down and played as fast and loud as I could. The two men danced in the small space, circling each other like two dreaming bears, their faces as serious as though they were reading from the Bible.

\* \* \*

"You've been on slavers before," I said.

"All of us have," he [Smith] replied. "It's nasty work. And it's not everyone has the nerve for it." His mood suddenly changed for he gave me a big grin. "Perhaps you'll be carrying a pistol yourself, runt that you are!"

"A pistol!"

"Aye. We're all armed as long as we're in sight of the coast. If the blacks try anything, it'll be then, when they can still see where they came from. Oh, they've done terrible things I could tell you about! Killing a crew and master and all, then flinging themselves back into the sea, even shackled!"

I thought suddenly of the stories I had heard at home about slave uprisings in Virginia and South Carolina. My breath came short - here, within eyesight, was the very world from which such slaves had been taken. Here, on this small ship,

we would be carrying God knows how many of them, and I, without at this instant being able to conceive in what manner, was to make them dance.

"Why must the slaves dance?" I asked timidly, for fear of annoying Smith. At that moment, I was afraid of everyone on *The Moonlight*, just as I had been when I first set my foot upon her deck.

"Because it keeps them healthy," said Smith. "It's hard to make a profit out of a sick nigger--the insurance ain't so easy to collect. And it makes the Captain wild to jettison the sick ones within sight of the marketplace after all the trouble he's gone to."

Smith went off and left me to my apprehension...

\* \* \*

Our holds were pits of misery. Two men were found dead the second morning, and Stout dumped their bodies over the side as I dumped waste. Curry cooked up messes of horse beans on deck. Many of the slaves spat them out. They were given yams, a store of which had been brought aboard by the *cabociero*. These seemed to suit them better. But the yams, I learned, were only doled out while we were still in sight of land. Once at sea, they were doomed to a diet consisting largely of the beans with an occasional piece of salt beef taken from our own stores. Along with their two daily meals, they received a half pint of water.

"More than we'll get," Purvis said. "When the supplies run low, it's us who'll go without. There's no loss to Cawthorne if we starve to death or die of thirst."

On our last morning, the little girl - the first to be brought aboard *The Moonlight* - was carried to the rail by Stout. He held her upside down, his fingers gripping one thin brown ankle. Her eyes were open, staring at nothing. Foam had dried about her mouth. With one gesture, Stout flung her into the water. I cried out. Ned smacked me across the face with such force I fell to the deck. When I got up, I saw a boy close to my own age, staring at me from among the group of silent slaves squatting beneath the tarpaulin. I could not read his expression. Perhaps he was only looking past me to the shore of the land from which he'd been taken.

\* \* \*

excerpt from Chapter "*Nicholas Spark Walks on Water*" pp. 72-77

If the ship's wild pitching made me ill, it drove the blacks below into frenzies of terror. Howls and cries rose out of the holds increasingly. The ship herself seemed to protest the violence of the water, whining and creaking more loudly than I'd ever heard her.

Ben Stout, the Captain and Spark appeared untouched by the suffering of our cargo. I can't say the rest of the crew took pity on the miserable creatures in their dark places below the deck, but the men were silent, and avoided the holds as much as they could.

The Captain had had his chair lashed close to the wheel and did not leave it until we were free of this convulsion of the sea. Spark had joined Stout near the holds, wearing his pistol and carrying the same tarred rope with which Purvis had been flogged. Spark never looked down no matter what sounds issues from below. Then I forgot my sick stomach, forgot everything.

As he left his chair, the Captain shouted, "Tell Bollweevil [Jessie] to get his pipe." Gardere glanced briefly at me from his position at the helm. I could not read his expression.

With a small smile, Stout said, "Get ready to play your music, lad," then reached out his hand to pat my shoulder. I moved back quickly as though a cottonmouth had struck in my direction. I saw, as clearly as I could see the cat-o'-nine tails in his other hand, those fleshy fingers gripped around the ankle of the dead little girl.

I went below and got my fife, but stood unmoving in the dark until I heard them shouting for me.

The slaves from one of the holds were being hoisted one by one to the deck. Only the women and the youngest children were unshackled.

In just a few days, they had become so battered, so bowed by the fears that must have tormented them, that they could barely stand up. They blinked in the bright white light of the growing day. Then they sank to the deck, the women clutching weakly at the children, their shoulders bent over as though to receive the blows of death.

All hands were present; even Ned was ordered to leave his workbench and stand to attention.

The slaves were given their water rations and fed rice with a sauce of pepper and oil. When they saw the food and water, sighs rose from them like small puffs of wind, one following so close on the other that in the end, it seemed one great exhalation of air.

"Some of them think we eat them," whispered Purvis to me. "They think that first meal was only to fool them. When they see we intend to keep on feeding them, they grow quite cheerful."

I saw no cheer. The adults ate mournfully, the food dribbling from their lips as though their spirits were too low to keep their jaws firm. The children spoke among themselves. Sometimes a woman held a child's head as though she feared its voice might draw down punishment upon it, and rice from the child's mouth would spill across her arm.

When they finished their meal, the Captain said to Stout, "Tell them to stand up. And tell them we have a musician for them and that they are to dance for me."

"I can't tell them all that, Sir," Stout replied. "I don't know their words for dancing or for music."

"Then tell them *something* to get them to their feet!" cried the Captain angrily as he flourished his pistol.

Stout began to speak to the slaves. They did not look at him. Some stared up at the tarpaulin as though there were a picture painted on it; others looked down at their feet.

We had formed a circle around them, dressed, shod, most of us armed. Many of them were naked; a few had ragged bits of cloth around their waists. I glanced at the sailors. Ned's eyes were turned upward toward heaven. I supposed he was reporting to God on the folly of everyone else but himself. But the rest were staring fixedly at the slaves. I felt fevered and agitated. I sensed, I saw, how

beyond the advantage we had of weapons, their nakedness made them helpless. Even if we had not been armed, our clothes and boots alone would have given us power.

\* \* \*

At the increasingly harsh shouts of Ben Stout, some of the black men had risen, swaying, to their feet. Then others stood. But several remained squatting. Stout began to lay about him with the cat-o'-nine, slapping the deck, flicking its fangs toward the feet of those who had not responded to his cries with even a twitch. At last, he whipped them to their feet. The women had risen at the first word, clutching the small children to their breasts.

"Bollweevil!" called the Captain.

Ned suddenly lit up his pipe.

I blew. A broken squeak came out of my fife.

"Tie him to the topmost crosstrees!" screamed Cawthorne. Stout, smiling, started toward me. I blew again. This time I managed a thin note, then some semblance of a tune.

The cat-o'-nine slapped the deck. Spark clapped his hands without a trace of rhythm. The Captain waved his arms about as though he'd been attacked by a horde of flies. A black man drooped toward the deck until Spark brought his heel down on his thin bare foot.

I played against the wind, the movement of the ship and my own self-disgust, and finally the slaves began to lift their feet, the chains attached to the shackles around their ankles forming an iron dirge, below the trills of my tune. The women, being unshackled, moved more freely, but they continued to hold the children close. From no more than a barely audible moan or two, their voices began to gain strength until the song they were singing, or the words they were chanting, or the story they were telling overwhelmed the small sound of my playing.

All at once, as abrupt as the fall of an axe, it came to a stop. Ben Stout snatched the fife from my hands. The slaves grew silent. The dust they had raised slowly settled around them.

That morning, I danced three groups of slaves. In the last, I saw the boy who I thought had looked at me when I cried out at Stout's heaving the child overboard. He wouldn't stand up. Spark dealt him a mighty blow with the tarred rope which left its tooth on the boy's back, a red channel in the tight brown flesh. He stood then, moving his feet as though they didn't belong to him.

It was to perform this service every other morning that I had been kidnapped and carried across the ocean.

\* \* \*

excerpt from the Chapter "*The Spaniard*" pp. 97-101

When, one morning, I could not find my fife, I thought Cooley or Wick, longing for distraction, had hidden it from me. They swore they had not touched it. And no one else had either, said Purvis, because he would have heard anyone sneaking about and reaching into my hammock where I always kept it. But Purvis had been on watch the night before.



I searched frantically throughout the ship. Porter came looking for me and told me I was wanted on deck. I found Stout waiting aft, the Captain standing a few feet away looking through his spyglass at the horizon. There had not been a word between Stout and me since the night I'd run away from him.

"We're going to bring up the niggers, Jessie," he said. "Where's your music maker?"

The instant he spoke, I knew Stout had made off with the fife.

I was dumb with fear; it rushed through me like heat from a fire.

"He's not got his pipe, Captain," Stout said gravely.

Cawthorne turned to look at me.

"What now?" he asked impatiently.

"I say, the boy is refusing to play--"

"I'm not!" I cried to Cawthorne. "It was beside me in my hammock last night! It's been *taken* from me!"

"Taken?" repeated the Captain. He scowled. "What are you bothering me with such foolishness for, Stout? And what is this creature howling about? Take care of it yourself, man!" With that, he went back to his spyglass.

"Come along," Stout said to me. "We'll look for it together."

I caught sight of Purvis watching from across the deck. He'd been mixing up a batch of vinegar and salt water with which we sometimes cleaned out the holds. But he'd stopped his work to keep an eye on me. Without even looking in his direction, Stout called out, "Get on with it, Purvis!"

"I've already looked everywhere," I mumbled without hope.

"I can't hear you, lad," said Stout.

"I've looked everywhere!" I shouted.

"Well...I think it's in one of the holds," he said. "Yes. That's what I think. Someone has taken it and dropped it down to the niggers so's they can play their own tunes." As he spoke, his thick fingers circled my throat. He pushed me to the forehold.

"You go down there and fetch it up," he said softly. "You're sure to find it there. Purvis likes such tricks, you know. It would be just like Purvis, wouldn't it? To have dropped it down there? Say you agree with me!"

He gave me a mighty shove and I fell to the deck.

"Hurry, Jessie! It's no good, your resting like that!"

I clung to the hatch coaming. Stout bent down and loosened my fingers.

"Just drop down," he whispered. "They won't hurt you, lad." He swung me to my feet and pushed me so far I could not but look down. A patch of daylight washed across the twisted limbs of the slaves. I saw nothing that was not flesh.

"Hurry, now!" said Stout. Suddenly, Purvis was at his side.

"I'll look for it," he said.

"No. You won't. He must take care of his responsibilities, Purvis. And what do you mean, neglecting your own, and listening in on what doesn't concern you?"

The hope that Purvis would save me had made me go slack. Then Stout lifted me up in the air the way a heron grips a fish, and suspended me over the hold.

"Oh, Lord! Don't drop me!" I screamed.

"You'll climb down as I want you to," he said. "And you'll look here and there until you find your pipe. After that, we can get on with things." As he spoke, he slowly brought me back to the deck. I caught sight of a black face turned up toward the light. The man blinked his eyes, but there was no surprise written on his face. He had only looked up to see what was to befall him next. I went down the rope knowing my boots would strike living bodies. There was not an inch of space for them to move to.

I sank down among them as though I had been dropped into the sea. I heard groans, the shifting of shackles, the damp sliding whisper of sweating arms and legs as the slaves tried desperately to curl themselves even tighter. I did not know my eyes were shut until fingers brushed my cheeks. I saw a man's face not a foot from my own. I saw every line, every ridge, a small scar next to one eyebrow, the inflamed lids of his eyes. He was trying to force his knees closer to his chin, to gather himself up like a ball on top of the cask upon which he lived. I saw how ash-colored his knees were, his swollen calves narrowed nearly to bone down where the shackles had cuts his ankles, how the metal had cut red trails into his flesh.

All around me, bodies shifted in exhausted movement. I was a stone cast into a stream, making circles that widened all the way to the limits of the space that contained nearly forty people.

Suddenly, I felt myself dropping, and I heard the wooden thunk of the two casks which I had, somehow, been straddling. Now I was wedged between them, my chin pressed against my chest. I could barely draw breath, and what breath I drew was horrible, like a solid substance, like suet, that did not free my lungs but drowned them in the taste of rancid rot. I tried to bend back my head, and I caught a blurred glimpse of Stout's face in the white sunlight above. With what I was sure was the last effort of my life, I heaved up the upper part of my body, but my legs had no leverage. I sank down. I began to choke.

Then arms took hold of me, lifting and pushing until I was sitting on a cask. I couldn't tell who'd helped me. There were too many entangled bodies, too many faces upon which not even an acknowledgment of my presence was written. I peered into the dark.

"You'll find it, boy!" Stout's voice floated down.

I sat without moving. To search the hold meant that I would have to walk upon the blacks. My eyes were growing accustomed to the shadowed corners not reached by the light from above. But my brain slept, my will died. I could do nothing. I felt a soft surge of nausea. I clapped my hand over my mouth as I tried to keep in whatever it was that so violently wanted to come out. Then, through my wet eyes, I made out a figure rising from the throng. It sank, then rose again. In its hand, it held aloft my fife. In the steaming murk, I recognized the boy. He pointed the fife at me. Another hand took hold of it, then another, until a third passed it to the man on the cask who had managed to free one hand. Someone groaned; someone sighed. I looked up at Stout.

"I was sure you'd find it, Jessie," he said.

I stood on the cask and flung out the fife. Stout reached down and took hold of my shoulders and dragged me up until I lay upon the deck.

"Now that you've found your instrument, we'll get on with the dancing," he said. "They must have their exercise."

I danced the slaves, aware that the broken notes which issued from my pipe were no more music than were the movements of the slaves dancing.

Later, too weak and miserable to climb into my hammock, I sat on Purvis' sea chest, my head cradled in my arms. I heard the men moving around me but I did not look up...

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Examine a map showing the slave trade routes followed from the United States to Africa and the return to the United States. What are the distances involved? How long did such a journey take in the early 1800s?
- Read a description of the conditions usually found on the slave ships.
- Read a description of the life of a common sailor during that time.
- Define the terms: fife, pressganged, kidnapped, slaver, slave trader, cat-o'-nine tails, flogged

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Jessie was pressganged into the slave ship's crew. Was pressganging a common practice in the 1700s and 1800s? Why was it done?
2. Jessie is horrified by the brutal treatment handed out to the sailors and later to the slaves that are brought on board the ship. What did the cat-o'-nine tails do to a person's back when it was used in flogging? What kinds of incidents or actions could cause a sailor to be flogged?
3. Although Captain Cawthorne viewed the Africans as a "valuable cargo," he treated them quite cruelly. Why did he treat them so cruelly?
4. Describe the conditions in the hold of the ship for the imprisoned Africans. Were these the usual conditions on slave ships?
5. Why was Jessie kidnapped? What was the purpose for his music?
6. The Captain and sailors were afraid to be caught by the American and British navies. Why were they afraid?
7. Jessie and the young African boy Ras seem to be reaching out to each other. What are some of the signs of this? How do they communicate?
8. Why did some of the African tribes assist in the kidnapping and selling of other Africans?
9. How did kidnapped Africans try to resist their captors and their sale into slavery?
10. Stout can be identified as a bully or perpetrator. What is some of the evidence for this? How does he torment Jessie?
11. Do you consider Jessie more of a bystander or a rescuer? Explain your answer.

### **Activities**

1. Draw a sketch showing the hold of a slave ship and the way the slaves were placed in the hold.
2. There are slave journals that have been preserved in history. Try to find such a journal in the library or on the Internet and read an excerpt on slave life. Compare and contrast what you read about slave life in the journal to the harshness and cruelty described in this story.
3. Read an excerpt from Harriet Beecher Stowe's **Uncle Tom's Cabin**. Compare the cruelty of slave life described in that famous book to the cruelty on the slave ship. How were they similar? How were they different?
4. *The Moonlight* was destroyed in a storm and only Jessie and the young African boy Ras managed to survive and reach shore--with the help of a runaway slave. After they had recovered, Ras was smuggled away and Jessie was told how to reach New Orleans. Jessie said that never again, even as an old man, could he listen to music. Why do you think he could not play or listen to music?
5. Imagine that you are Ras and have reached safety in Canada. You are going to take a ship back to your home in Africa but you have an opportunity to send a message to Jessie. What would you say in your message?
6. Imagine that you are Jessie. You have the opportunity to write a newspaper account about your experience and to comment on the practice of slavery. What would you say in your story?
7. Although he was from a southern state where slaveholding was practiced, Jessie went North to fight on the side of the Union during the Civil War. How do you think his experience as a boy on the slave ship influenced his decision?

### **Other suggested sources**

- **Pink and Say** by Patricia Polacco. New York: Philomel Books, 1994.

## The Diving Bell

A Novel by  
Todd Strasser

Scholastic Inc., New York, 1992  
Recommended for Grades 5-6

### Synopsis

Culca, a descendant of the Mayan people, desperately wants to be a diver like her brother and the other young men in her village. However, in her culture, women are not permitted to be divers and she is constantly pressured to take an interest in things that are considered proper for a girl. One day her world is badly shaken when a Spanish ship sails into the harbor and the young men are kidnapped. The Spanish want their diving skills so that gold and treasure can be retrieved from shipwrecked treasure ships. The villagers are terrified because they know that their young men face death looking for shipwrecks that are far too deep beneath the sea's surface. The Spanish care little for the value of native lives. They want the treasure. Culca, with the help of an old Spanish priest, must convince her own people and the Spanish that she has an idea that will save lives and make it possible to retrieve the treasure.

### *Chapter Eight pp. 57-60*

[Culca and the friar have traveled to the mainland with some village boatmen and the friar is showing Culca around the city.]

The friar led Culca to a long whitewashed building. Inside the air was cool and quiet. Two dozen native boys sat at desks and studied while a man dressed like the friar watched from the front of the room. Each boy wore a black and white gown and leather shoes. A few looked up and stared at Culca, but the teacher cleared his throat and they quickly looked down at their books again.

"This is a school," the friar whispered. "Just as you study with me, these boys are learning to read and speak Spanish. When they finish their studies, they'll become teachers to other natives."

"Is there a school like this for girls?" Culca whispered back.

"Yes. They are taught to sew and cook and have good manners."

"Why aren't they taught what the boys are taught?" Culca asked a little too loudly, causing the instructor to frown at her.

The friar sighed and led Culca back to the hall. "Just like your people, my people have rigid ideas of what girls and boys are expected to do," he explained.

"Then the Spanish want to change us in some ways," Culca observed. "But not others."

The friar only smiled.

From the school they walked to the church in the center of the city. Culca looked up at it in awe. It was taller than the tallest palm tree. The point of its spire seemed to scrape the clouds themselves, and she had never seen anything as beautiful as the large round stained-glass window in front. Sitting on the ground near the entrance was something that resembled a great bronze cup. It was as tall as the friar and etched with beautiful designs.

"Why does this cup sit here?" she asked.

"It's a bell," the friar said.

Culca thought of the tiny bells the peddlers tied to the legs of hawks and falcons. Surely this couldn't be the same thing.

The friar pointed up at the church's spire, where several smaller bells hung.

"The bells remind people to come and pray. Because this was the first Spanish church built in the New World, the cardinal of Seville sent this bell as a gift."

"Then why don't they ring it?" Culca asked.

"It's far too large for this church," the friar explained. "Like many of my countrymen in Spain, the cardinal doesn't understand what life is like here...but come, let's go inside."

\* \* \*

The friar left and Culca sat on a pew in the back of the church. It was so quiet she could hear every breath, every scrape of a sandal on the stone floor. Near her a woman wearing a black Spanish dress and shawl stood up and turned to leave. She was short with brown skin and long black hair. Culca looked at the woman's face and was startled. She was a native!

A little while later the friar returned.

"Friar," Culca said. "I saw a woman. One of my people. She was praying."

"Then she's become a Christian," the friar said.

"Does that mean she's Spanish now?" Culca asked.

"No, she's still a native," the friar said. He could see that Culca was confused by this. "Come, there's more I want to show you."

The friar took Culca down to the docks where many slaves were loading a Spanish galleon with wooden casks of cocoa beans, and bales of tobacco and indigo. The dock was lined with crates of squawking chickens, and a dozen sad-eyed sea turtles lay helpless on their backs.

"Food for the sailors during their trip back to Spain," the friar said.

Culca marveled at the amount of goods still waiting on the dock to be loaded. Although the ship was very big, it didn't seem large enough to carry everything.

"Is there another ship to take some of these goods?" she asked.

"There are many," the friar said. "All the ships in the harbor are part of a fleet that will sail back to Spain soon. Many of my countrymen will also be on board." The friar sounded wistful.

"Do you miss your country?" Culca asked.

The friar nodded. "I'm an old man and I've been away from home a long time. I have dedicated my life to God's work, but I would like to see Spain once more before I die."

"Then you shall," Culca said.

The friar smiled weakly and placed his hand on her shoulder. Suddenly they heard a commotion. A column of Spanish soldiers wearing metal helmets and carrying long spears was marching toward them. The soldiers were shouting and pushing natives out of their way as they made for the docks. Behind them were carts drawn by oxen. Culca stretched up on her toes to watch.

"There are only wooden boxes on the carts," she said, disappointed.

"Treasure chests," the friar whispered, "filled with gold and silver."

Culca stretched up on her toes again. Each cart carried three chests, and there were many carts. They were followed by more soldiers and a man riding a tall white horse. He wore a gilded olive jacket and a black hat with a red feather. His cheeks were round and red, and his hair was the lightest Culca had ever seen.

"The governor," the friar said. "He wants to make sure that the treasure is properly loaded onto the ship."

Another Spaniard rode alongside the governor. He sat very tall in his saddle and had red hair.

"It's him!" Culca gasped. "The one who came to our island and struck you."

"Yes," said the friar. "The king's treasure-master from the House of Trade. It's his responsibility to see that the treasure leaves the New World safely."

The treasure-master shouted orders at the soldiers who in turn shouted at the slaves. All other work on the dock stopped while the heavy chests were loaded onto the ship.

"Why do they need so much treasure?" Culca asked.

"Because," the friar replied, "they have forgotten what is truly important."

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#### *Chapter Twenty-One pp. 149-155*

[Culca's brother and the other village divers have been taken prisoner and forced to dive to retrieve the sunken Spanish treasure. Culca has convinced the governor that her scheme to find the treasure will work. Using the church bell like an inverted cup with air trapped inside, she and her brother have found the chests of treasure.]

Once they had caught their breaths, Tulone and Culca swam back to the *Santo Cristo* and tied a rope to one of the chests. They guided it through the hatch and out of the captain's cabin. The chest began to rise to the surface as the sailors pulled the rope from above. Tulone and Culca followed.

On the ship's deck, they joined the crowd as the treasure-master opened the latches and pulled the lid up. Inside, hundreds of gold coins glistened in the sunlight.

"Excellent!" shouted the treasure-master. Once again Culca hugged Tulone. At last they were free! They would go back to their village and never be bothered by the Spanish again.

The treasure-master turned to Culca and Tulone. Culca thought he would thank her, but instead he said, "Go! Bring me another chest."

Culca was stunned. "You said when we found the treasure we could go."

"When it is here on this deck," the treasure-master replied.

"But there are too many chests," Culca said. "It will take weeks to bring them all up. The friar is very ill. He won't last."

"Then I suggest you hurry," snapped the treasure-master.

"No!" shouted Culca. "You gave me your word."

The treasure-master squinted with anger. "Raise your voice again, Indian girl, and you *and* the friar will be lunch for the sharks. Now dive...or die."

Culca stared numbly at him. The treasure-master had lied. Tulone touched her arm.

"Come, little sister," he said softly. "It's better to dive than be food for the sharks."

That afternoon they brought up three chests of gold, but dozens more remained in the treasure room. Culca carried the bitter taste of broken promises in her mouth.

As evening approached, she crouched beside the friar.

"The treasure-master lied," she said. "If only the governor knew. He would keep his word and let us go."

The friar nodded and grimaced with pain. His leg was terribly swollen. Small beads of perspiration clung to his brow.

"Does it hurt very much?" she asked.

"It's a dull throb," the friar replied, "but not as bad as the pain I feel for you."

"Don't worry," Culca said, patting his hand. "We'll find all the chests. Then we'll be free to go."

The friar smiled and took her hand in his.

"Friar, you feel hot," Culca said, alarmed. "You must be very ill."

"The warmth will comfort me through this long cold night," the friar replied. "Just as you have comforted me through this long journey."

In the dark a sailor approached them. Culca assumed he was bringing them food and blankets, just as the bearded sailor had the night before. But instead he grabbed her arm and yanked her up.

"Into the slave quarters," he said. "The treasure-master wants to make sure you'll be here in the morning."

"He knows I can't leave." Culca struggled, but the sailor squeezed her arm tightly.

"Those are his orders," he said.

The sailor pushed her through a hatchway and into a dark room filled with shadows and the odors of human confinement. A single candle flickered from a rafter, and the ceiling was so low that Culca had to bend to avoid bumping her head. Behind her the sailor slammed the hatch closed.

All around her slaves lay on wooden berths, jammed tightly together. Culca felt their eyes on her as she crept forward, searching for her brother.

"Culca!" Tulone whispered. In the shadows she saw his face among the others.

Tulone slid over and made a space in his berth for her. Culca felt like a caged animal.

"Have you eaten?" Tulone asked. "I have some crusts of bread. It's stale, but at least it's food."

But the air smelled so foul that Culca had no appetite. "Why is the air so bad?" she asked.

"The treasure-master nailed the portholes shut so that we wouldn't try to crawl through them and escape," Tulone said.

"How do you move about?" Culca asked.



"We don't," another slave replied. "We lie here until we are called. Sometimes when the weather is bad, days pass before we see the sun and use our legs."

"How can the Spanish do this?" Culca asked. "How can they break their promises and treat us like animals?"

No one answered her. Culca felt tears of frustration come to her eyes. She had worked so hard and taken so many risks...for what? To be made a slave.

"Don't cry, little sister," Tulone whispered.

"I've been so stupid," Culca sniffed. "Why did I ever believe the treasure-master? He *never* intended to let us go. Even if we find all the treasure here he'll probably keep us to find treasure somewhere else."

"Shh," Tulone patted her shoulder. "Sleep. You'll need strength for tomorrow."

Culca quieted and tried to sleep, but she felt very sad. For the first time since her long journey began, she had lost hope.

In the middle of the night a hand shook Culca's shoulder. She opened her eyes. In the dark she could see the silhouette of the bearded sailor.

"Shh." He pressed his finger to his lips. "Follow me and be quiet."

Culca got up. Tulone was up also.

"Where are you taking us?" Culca whispered, but the bearded sailor only shook his head.

Very quietly he led them down a dark narrow hall and up some steps. Then he pushed open a hatch and they climbed onto the deck. Culca smelled fresh sea air and looked up at the black star-specked sky. In the distance she could see the dark outline of her island. The bearded sailor pointed over the side. Culca looked down and saw a small boat bobbing next to the ship.

"Be very quiet as you climb down," the sailor whispered. "Your brother and I will lower the friar by rope."

"Why are you helping us?" Culca asked.

"The treasure-master gave you his word," the sailor said. "And the friar is sick. He must have care."

"But the treasure-master will be angry," Tulone said.

"Now that he has the diving bell, he can find others to get his treasure," the sailor said.

"I'll go to the city and tell the governor that the treasure-master broke his word," Culca said.

"That would be a grave mistake," the bearded sailor warned. "I saw the letter from the governor you brought the day you came. It told the treasure-master to use the Indian girl and then do whatever he wished with her. There was nothing about keeping a promise."

Culca was shocked. The governor had never intended to keep his promise either! "They are devils!"

"Some of them," the sailor said. "Now go before they hear you."

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate Mexico, the islands off shore, and Spain on a world map.
- Define the terms: friar, priest, diver, slave, Mayan

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why doesn't Culca seem to fit into her own culture?
2. What does Culca learn about the Spanish attitude toward girls and women? How is it like that of her own culture?
3. The Spanish government had said that the Indian natives were not supposed to be slaves. Why did they break this rule?
4. What was the Spanish attitude toward the value of the lives of the Indian people? What did the Spanish do that revealed their true attitude?
5. How are the friar and the bearded sailor different from the other Spaniards that Culca met?
6. How do you think the people of Culca's village will react to the idea of a girl saving her brother by diving? Do you think that Culca will be permitted to follow her dream of diving?

### **Activities**

1. The ancient Mayan civilization is considered one of the great civilizations of the ancient Americas. When did it exist? Where was it located? What evidence of it still remains?
2. The Spanish conquistadors were harsh conquerors. Read about the Spanish treatment of the native peoples. How does this information compare to the information in **The Diving Bell**?
3. Why was Culca told that she could not be a diver? Give other examples of things that people often believe girls can't do. Can girls do these things in the United States today? Is it fair to say that a girl or boy cannot do something just because of her or his gender? Define the terms sexism and gender equity.
4. The Spanish used the people they conquered as slave labor and mistreated them in many other ways. Why did the Spanish believe they had the right to do treat people that way? Explain why their behavior was wrong and why slavery is called "an evil" thing today.
5. Search the Internet for information about the slavery practices that continue in the world to this day. Make a report to your class about what you learn. What is being done by governments and private organizations to try to stop slavery?

## Call Me Ruth

A Novel by  
Marilyn Sachs

Beech Tree Books, 1995  
Recommended for Grades 5-8

### **Synopsis**

Ruth and her Mama leave Russia to join her father in New York. Soon tragedy strikes their little family when Papa dies and Mama and Ruth go to live with Tanta Sadie's family. Ruth embraces her new life in America with enthusiasm and urges her Mama to give up the Yiddish language and old customs. She constantly tells Mama to learn English. But Mama has a few surprises for Ruth when she goes to work in a shirtwaist factory and ends up joining the union. After Mama is arrested for her work on a picket line during the strike, Ruth is startled to learn that others see her Mama as a hero, not as an "ignorant greenhorn." As Ruth and Mama both struggle to make a better life in America, they also struggle to be "good Americans" by their own views and to strive for the respect as well as the love of each other.

*from Chapter 12 pp. 116-121*

My mother came home from the workhouse a week later. Two ladies came with her. Not two of her co-workers but two real ladies, one of them wrapped in a splendid fur cape and the other wearing a black satin hat with a white plume. Tanta Sadie looked around the kitchen nervously and invited them to sit down and have a glass of tea. They accepted without being asked a second or a third time. My mother yelled, "Rifka! Rifka!" as soon as she ran through the door and she picked me up off my chair and kissed me and rocked me in her arms.

"This is my daughter, my darling little girl, my Rifka," she explained to the ladies in Yiddish. My mother smelled of dirt and sweat. Her hair was unpinned and hung in greasy, unkempt locks all over her face. There was a bruise on one of her cheekbones and one of her eyes was purple. I turned away in disgust.

"Tanta Fanny," Shirley cried and she rushed forward and kissed my mother. My mother kissed and hugged her and said to the ladies, "This is my niece and my sister-in-law. This is my family."

One of the ladies, the one in the fur cape, smiled and nodded. Evidently, she couldn't understand Yiddish. The other one explained to her what my mother had said and then she smiled at me.

"Little girl," she said, "you can be very proud of your mother."

"Have a glass of tea," said my aunt. "I'm sorry but I can't offer you anything else. We...we don't have anything in the house at the moment."

"That's all right," said the lady in the fur cape. "We've brought some refreshments along with us. After all, this is a party, isn't it?" She held out a basket that was covered with a white cloth. Inside were cakes and oranges and bread and cheese and jam and eggs.

"These ladies are from the Women's Trade Union League," my mother explained. "They have supported us ever since the strike began. I don't know

what we would do without them. Today, they were waiting for me when I got out of prison. They wanted to take me home. And you know, Rifka, I rode with them on the elevated train and I didn't even get sick."

My mother ate greedily and noisily. It was disgusting, watching her. She talked and laughed and ate all at the same time, and my aunt, quietly and respectfully, kept filling everybody's glasses with tea.

"I'm so hungry," my mother cried. "I didn't eat hardly anything all the time I was there. Dry bread they gave us and burned oatmeal, and for supper, soup that smelled bad."

"Eat, eat, Fanny," urged my aunt.

"What was it like, Tanta Fanny?" Shirley asked. "Were they mean to you?"

"Not to me," said my mother, stuffing her mouth with some bread and jam. "But there was a young girl, another striker, maybe she was fifteen. They put her in a cell with bad women, real criminals, and she cried and cried. I could hear her all night long. I wasn't exactly in a cell with high society either but I'm older and I wasn't afraid. So I said to the matron, please let her be with me...I said it in English like this, 'Pliss, lady, pliss let dot young girl be mit me.' See, Rifka, I said it in English. So the matron said no. She said, did I think I was on a vacation. But later, she let the girl stay with me and then she didn't cry. They made us dress in dirty, striped dresses and we had to scrub the floors with filthy water. Ugh! I must go to the bathhouse and take a bath right away. But after a few days, the matron said she knew we weren't real criminals and she let us sew gloves and she didn't even mind if we sang songs while we worked. But it was so cold at night, and the food - like poison."

"Eat, eat," said my Tanta Sadie.

When my mother finally stopped talking, the lady in the black hat began to talk to us in Yiddish. She said that public support for the strike was growing every day and that all sorts of people - teachers, social workers, students, and rich ladies - were joining the women on the picket lines. Many of the shops were beginning to give in to the strikers' demands and she thought the strike would soon be settled. She invited us to go to a big demonstration that night at Carnegie Hall.

"Carnegie Hall," I said, "where they give concerts?"

"Yes, and I think you will be very surprised when you come. Fanny, are you ready?"

"But Mrs. Bryce, I just came home."

"I know, Fanny, and I am sorry to rush you but we do have some planning to do for tonight. So get your clothes."

"But I need a bath."

"You can take one at my house."

My mother looked hungrily at me, but she went off, collected some clean clothes, and left with the two ladies.

"Don't forget - Carnegie Hall tonight!"

We ate the best supper we had eaten in weeks. Tanta Sadie said there was enough food in the basket to last a few days at least.

There were more people in Carnegie Hall that night than there had been in Cooper Union in November. Thousands thronged the huge auditorium from the topmost gallery to the first row in the orchestra.

"Look! Look!" cried Shirley. "There's your mother!"

Up on the stage, behind the speaker's platform, sat twenty girls and young women, including my mother. Each of them wore a sash with huge letters on it that proclaimed WORKHOUSE PRISONER. Above their heads hung colorful banners that said THE WORKHOUSE IS NOT THE ANSWER TO A DEMAND FOR JUSTICE.

Farther back on the stage, about three hundred to four hundred other girls sat but their sashes only stated ARRESTED. Evidently, the twenty up in front were being honored because they had not only been arrested but had been sent to jail as well.

My mother looked clean and rosy, her hair piled neatly on top of her head, her clothes tidy. Even from where we sat, you could still see the bruises on her face. Next to her sat a small girl who seemed no bigger than myself. They talked and laughed together until the meeting began.

Speaker after speaker rose to honor the girls who had been arrested. One woman, from the Women's Trade Union League, told of the women's struggle to form a union and how perplexed they were to be told, on one hand, that they had a right to form a union and to picket and then, on the other, to be harassed by the police and punished by the courts with fines and imprisonment for exercising that right. She said they believed this country was the free harbor of all the oppressed and as good Americans, they were fighting to uphold their country's liberty.

Good Americans! My mother a good American!

After the woman finished speaking, she led forward the small girl seated next to my mother and encouraged her to tell of her experience. In a little voice, the young girl, with her hair hanging in one braid down her back and her dress only down to the top of her shoes, said that she had been taken to court as a witness because she had asked a police captain to arrest a thug who had slapped a girl. She said false witnesses had testified that she had assaulted a scab and that she was sent to the workhouse for five days without being given an opportunity to be heard.

Then each of the twenty "criminals" was introduced to the audience, and as each name was called, thousands and thousands of people cheered and applauded. When my mother was led forward, her cheeks redder than I had ever seen them, Tanta Sadie, Uncle Barney, Shirley, Morton, and Joey jumped to their feet and yelled to everybody around them "That's Fanny! She's in our family!"

My mother began smiling, a slow smile that broadened out. She moved her head around, searching the audience while the applause continued.

"She's looking for you, Ruthie," Shirley yelled. "Stand up so she can see you."

I was confused. All around me, people were applauding for my mother, the jailbird. If she had not gone to jail, she would not be sitting on the stage of Carnegie Hall while thousands of people cheered and applauded. But Teacher

had said the strikers were criminals. Teacher said they were not good Americans. How could Teacher be mistaken?

Shirley hopped up and down in her place, shouting, "Here we are, Aunt Fanny. Here we are." She grabbed my arm and began pulling me to my feet.

My mother stuck her neck out as far as it would go. When she saw me, as Shirley pulled me to my feet, she clapped her hands together and her smile stretched all the way across the hall to where I stood.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Define the terms: anti-immigrant, ethnocentric, labor union, greenhorn, Yiddish, shirtwaist, picket lines, workhouse, scab worker, sweatshop, piece work, strike, tenement, Women's Trade Union League, elevated train
- Locate Russia and New York City on a map. What is the distance between the country and the city? The distance is not only in miles. What other forms of "distance" do you think there would be between the two places in those years?

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why does Ruth want her mother to stop calling her "Rifka" and why does she consider it so important for her mother to "speak English"?
2. What were the conditions in the sewing factories during that time? What is a sweatshop? Some of the workers did "home work." What was this? How did this work differ from the sweatshop conditions? How were they similar?
3. Why did Ruth's mother Fanny decide to join a union? Why were the workers on the picket line being arrested? What was the difference between a prison and a "workhouse"?
4. What was the purpose of the large demonstration at Carnegie Hall? Why was Ruth so confused by what occurred there? Ruth greatly admired her Teacher and hoped to grow up to be like her some day. Why do you think she so admired the Teacher?
5. Ruth's mother Fanny obviously adores her daughter. What are some of the indications of this? What indications are there that Ruth's feelings for her mother are confused? How would you describe some of those feelings?
6. What was the Women's Trade Union League? Why was it important to the striking workers? Who were its members?

### **Activities**

1. Research the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. Describe the working conditions in this factory. Were these conditions common? Why was the fire such a terrible disaster and tragedy? How did it contribute to changes in laws affecting the workplace?
2. Explain why workers would decide to join a union. What did they hope to accomplish? Why was joining a union often considered a risky, dangerous thing to do?
3. Ruth is very eager to be a "good American." Analyze what you think Ruth meant by this. What do you think it means to be a "good American"?

4. Ruth is confused by the view others have of her mother as a hero. Why did they view Fanny this way? Why does it confuse Ruth? Which view do you think is the correct view? Why? Did people like Ruth's mother Fanny make a difference with their actions and bring about changes? Explain your answer. How would you define the word "hero?"

## The Star Fisher

by  
Laurence Yep

Scholastic Inc, New York, 1992.  
Recommended for Grades 5-8

### **Synopsis**

Fifteen year old Joan Lee is a native born American citizen as are her younger sister and brother. Mama and Papa, who speak little English, are proud of their Chinese heritage and want their children to share in that pride. Joan, Bobby, and Emily want to be accepted as Americans and to make friends. The Lee family leaves their home in Ohio and move to Clarksburg, West Virginia to start a new business. However, they soon realize that they must be willing to fight the prejudice and discrimination that they meet in their new home as well as learn to accept the aid and friendship of some of their new neighbors.

*from Chapter Ten pp. 97-103*

...Mama ran a hand over my dress, fussing with it and smoothing it. "You've grown so tall. Sometimes I forget how much. Look at you - a regular giant."

Under other circumstances, I might have been insulted; but at the moment, thinking of Bernice's family [Joan's new friend], I was grateful Mama was who she was. "Papa says that it's the diet here."

"No, it's the soil in this land. It makes everything grow big," Mama insisted. She shoved back a strand of hair from my face. "Sometimes it scares me, you know?"

Mama was the tough one, so it was a shock to hear her admit that she could be frightened.

However, when I tried to speak, there was a huge lump in my throat, and it took me a moment to swallow it. "I'm sorry, Mama," I sniffed.

We were not big on hugging in our family, so it surprised me when Mama put an arm around my shoulders. "I know."

Despite everything, I couldn't help smiling. "What would your mama have said?"

Mama smiled. "She wouldn't have said anything. She would have just rapped you across the knuckles for being silly." She sighed and looked up at the moon, which had already begun to climb in the sky. "But then I'm silly, too." Her hand massaged my back in broad circles.

I looked down at Mama. "You were married at my age, weren't you?"

Her fist gripped my fingertips as they lay over my shoulder, and she gave my hand a shake. "That seems like an eternity ago."

I tried to imagine what it would be like to be married, but all I could think of was how frightened I would be. "Were you very scared, Mama?"

"Petrified," Mama said. "It was all arranged, you know. But then I found out that Papa was one of the gentlest of men. And I was grateful."



I pressed myself against her while I thought some more about having a husband liked Papa. "My husband will have to like books."

Mama pressed her lips together. "Then you had better be ready to be the practical one."

I tried to defend Papa. "Papa works hard."

"I never said he was lazy." Mama held on to my hand as she stared at the marks on paper that only she could understand. "Papa was never meant for business. He had studied to pass the government exams, which are really essays on poetry and the classics. And then in 1911 came the revolution, and the republic was set up and the exams ended."

Mama's message was slowly beginning to sink in. I thought of how frustrating it would be to always have to act as the practical one, and I began to understand her a little better. "It must be exasperating sometimes."

"Only when I let it," Mama admitted. "Sometime when I look at the laundry our customers leave, I see a certain dress that would nice on you. There are so many pretty things in the world, but you can't have them."

It must have been some effect of the dim gaslight, but it almost seemed as if there were a soft, golden glow about Mama's shoulders; and I thought that if I half closed my eyes I might see a feather cloak.

And suddenly I realized that there wasn't another Chinese woman for probably a hundred miles or more. All Mama had was me and Emily, and we were half-alien to her. In her own way, Mama must have felt as cut off as the star fisher.

"There's no money," I said. Impulsively I stretched out my arm and put it awkwardly around her shoulders to give her a hug.

She stiffened in surprise, and at first I thought she was going to shove me away. But then she relaxed, her fingers stroking the back of my hand. "Still, you're right. I do take you for granted."

"It's all right, Mama."

"No." She tapped her fingers against my hand. "America is so big and there's so much to learn that we depend on you. Maybe too much. Maybe we get mad at you when we really should get mad at America and how big it is. Or maybe we should get mad at ourselves for being so stupid."

"You're not stupid, Mama. America is a big country, like you said."

Mama straightened and looked at me - really looked at me. And I think for the first time in her life, she realized that she had to tilt her head back to do that. I suppose it sounds silly to say that my mother didn't know I was taller than she was, because she knew it in a superficial way. But I don't think it had ever registered deep down. Now, her eyes flickering up and down as she studied me, she seemed to understand that I was not only taller but also older and that I might have different needs than I did as a child.

"So is China," she said finally. "And the Chinese stuff pushes out the American stuff. But I'll try to be more American."

"You've already done harder things, like cross an ocean when you were my age."

Mama glanced at me. "America's so big we might all get lost."

I reached over and hugged Mama. "I guess it would scare me, too, if we went back to China."

"We are going back," Mama said. It was an article of faith with her and papa that we would go back. "When we have enough money, we'll live in China at a level appropriate to your father's status."

Mama was always saying that without going into details. I always pictured a big garden where Papa could sit writing poetry while Mama bossed servants around.

However, the idea of leaving even West Virginia was awful. And I wondered how her daughter had felt when the star fisher told her they were going back to the sky - back to that strange world that was their birthright and yet was so mysterious and frightening.

When Mama felt me stiffening against her, she hurriedly assured me. "That's a long way off, though."

I thought again of the star fisher's daughter and the questions she must have asked her mother. "Will it be nice there, Mama?"

She patted me clumsily. "You'll like it. You're just scared because you have to cross that big ocean."

I clung to her now. "Will it be really nice, though? Like flying?"

"What in heaven are you talking about?" Mama asked, puzzled.

"Will it have..." I struggled to find the right words for my mother, the practical one who always had to have her feet on the earth. "Will it have something wonderful? Will it have magic?"

Mama began to laugh. "Honestly, the older you get, the less I understand you. Sometimes I think you're worse than your father." Mama hesitated, and then on some wild impulse she hugged me back. Years of washing had given her arms the strength of a lumberjack's. "In the meantime, I promise to try harder to be more American." And then she shoved me away brusquely to hold me at arm's length. "Have you eaten yet?" When I shook my head, she smiled. "Neither have I. Help me get supper."

With both of us working, supper did not turn out as badly as on other nights. But you didn't need a very educated nose to know that something had gone wrong. We were in the middle of salvaging what we could when we heard the knock on the kitchen door.

When Mama opened it, Miss Lucy [the landlady] folded her arms. "*Mrs. Lee, I really must insist on helping you. I simple cannot have more fires.*"

Mama could get the gist of what Miss Lucy said from just her expression and tone. Instantly, Mama began to bristle. "That busybody's got some nerve. You tell her -"

If I had learned one thing from my visit to Bernice, it was not to let a lot of silly prejudices blindfold you. It was important to meet with the person and not the notion. So I did what I should have done earlier and put a hand on Mama's arm and interrupted her. "Mama, her family's all dead except her."

That jolted Mama upright - as if she had smacked up against a brick wall. "No one?"

I knew from Papa that we had a chain of cousins, uncles, and aunts extending all the way from China to Pittsburgh and from there to New York as well as San Francisco. It was hard to think that anyone could be as alone as Miss Lucy. "No one. She's lonely, Mama. She just wants to help."

Mama rubbed her elbow doubtfully as if, despite all the years she had been here in America, she still found it hard to believe. "So she's the last?"

"Yes." I glanced meaningfully toward Miss Lucy's house and then back at Mama. "I saw it in her holy book. They keep a chart of the family."

Mama gazed at Miss Lucy as if Mama had just stepped out the door and found the landlady the victim of some terrible accident. "How...horrible."

Mama was standing there stunned, and her reaction puzzled Miss Lucy enough to make her forget her original indignation. Looking back and forth from one to the other, I hunted for the words that might build the bridge between them; but the words were like so many stars that wriggled away like slippery fish.

In the awkward silence, Miss Lucy cleared her throat. "*Is there something wrong?*"

"No," I said; and then, because I thought I ought to explain the conversation between Mama and myself, I fibbed, "*We were just discussing your offer.*"

Miss Lucy dropped her arms. "*I realize that every country has its own customs. How would someone offer help to another person if we were both in China?*"

I could put Miss Lucy's words into Chinese, but the concepts were a little harder. However, feeling sorry for our unfortunate landlady, Mama now felt obligated to try. It took a bit of discussion with Mama before we hammered out an answer.

"*Every village has a clan,*" I explained. "*Your family would naturally help.*"

Miss Lucy fussed with her sleeve. "*And if you weren't near your family?*"

It took a little more head scratching for Mama and me before I could answer. "*That just couldn't happen.*"

Miss Lucy's chin touched her chest as she pondered her response. Finally she looked up. "*Well, couldn't ...couldn't you think of me as family?*"

Knowing what I did of American families, I tried to ease the disappointment for Miss Lucy. "*I don't think you know what you're getting into,*" I told her.

"*Neither do you,*" Miss Lucy said. "*I know what it's like to be a stranger. When I moved back here from Iowa, I didn't know anyone. And though I had family here, they were all so much older and set in their ways.*"

By this time, Mama was impatient about being left out of the conversation, so she tugged at my sleeve. When I had finished translating, I was surprised that Mama nodded her head in comprehension. "It's true. You can be a stranger in your own family." I think she was thinking back to her own life in China before she had been married. She nudged me. "Especially if you're the youngest and everyone thinks of you as a pest. Make sure you tell her that."

When I had repeated Mama's words in English, it was Miss Lucy's turn to nod her head.

"*Exactly.*"

Mama and Miss Lucy stared at one another as if, despite the barriers of language and custom, there was now some kind of bond - however tenuous and easy to break.

"It would be nice to have a sister," Mama concluded but added hastily, "But only here, in the kitchen." And she confided to me privately, "There's no American really ready to belong to a Chinese family."

When I had translated everything but the last sentence, Miss Lucy hooked her arm through Mama's. "*We'll be cooking cousins.*"

Mama was surprised by the physical contact, but she recovered and patted Miss Lucy's hand in silent accord.

"But, Mama," I said, "Papa said no."

"After two smoky suppers," Mama noted, "he's ready to change his mind."

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Using a world map, locate the following: China; the United States; San Francisco, California; Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Clarksburg, West Virginia; New York City.
- Explain the following concepts: nuclear family, extended family, family clan.
- Define the terms: culture, custom, tradition.
- Explain the practice of arranged marriages that was common in many cultures.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Joan and her Mama love each other but there is obvious friction between them. What are some of the causes of this friction?
2. Mama and Papa Lee talk of returning to China one day when they have made enough money to live well in their homeland. How do you think Joan, Emily, and Bobby feel about this plan?
3. Joan and her brother and sister were born in the United States and consider themselves Americans. Why is their attitude about their citizenship difficult for their parents?
4. Mama and Papa have a limited understanding of English and Mama speaks practically no English. How do Joan, her sister Emily, and her brother Bobby feel about this? How does Joan feel about her role as "go-between" or "middle person" for her parents with their American neighbors?
5. The Lee family moved from Ohio where they had relatives close by to start a new laundry business in West Virginia where they were the only people of Chinese heritage in town. What are some of the difficulties you think this created for them?
6. During her conversation with her mother, Joan begins to think about her mother's feelings and experiences. What understanding does Joan begin to realize about her mother?
7. Why are Miss Lucy and Mama at odds at first? How does Joan use her mother's cultural ideas to appeal to her to accept Miss Lucy's offer of help?

## Activities

1. Read about Chinese immigration to the United States. Identify periods of time when the Chinese came in large numbers. What were the reasons many came to America?
2. The Chinese faced much discrimination in coming to the United States. Describe the laws passed by individual states and by the federal government that discriminated against the Chinese and made life hard for them in this country.
3. Describe the kinds of work many early Chinese immigrants did in the United States and the kinds of businesses many of them established as they made their place in their new homes. What do you think would have been the greatest hardships to face?
4. Imagine that you are an immigrant from Southern China and have just arrived in the town where you live. Write a series of journal entries about your experiences with your American neighbors in your new home.
5. Read the book **The Star Fisher** aloud in class. How does the author show humor about her family experiences?
6. Miss Lucy refuses to be a "bystander" when she sees that bullies are harassing the Lee family. Identify some of the things that Miss Lucy does throughout the story to make the Lee family feel welcome and to stop the discrimination and bullying.
7. Make a chart of the acts of courage that occur in the book. Some are within the family. Some are between friends. Some are community based.
8. What prejudices do Mr. and Mrs. Lee and Joan Lee display early in the story? Explain how they learn to look beyond their prejudices to reach a better understanding of the people they meet. Explain how some townspeople and students try to reach beyond their prejudices to have a better understanding of the Lee family.

## **Amistad Rising**

by  
Veronica Chambers

Harcourt Brace & Company, NY, 1998  
Recommended for Grades 5

### **Synopsis**

In 1839, a group of more than 500 African captives were chained together and placed aboard a Spanish slave ship headed for Cuba. After two months at sea, fifty-three of the prisoners were transferred to *Amistad* to be taken to a plantation in eastern Cuba. Joseph Cinque, a man of the Mende people living near Sierra Leone, was one of these kidnapped men. Freeing himself and then some of the others of their shackles, they attacked the captain and crew. Demanding to be taken home, they were surreptitiously delivered to New London, Connecticut and imprisoned. Abolitionists worked with Cinque and the other prisoners for their defense in court. Cinque won, but the case was taken before the U.S. Supreme Court. Former President John Quincy Adams came out of retirement to argue on behalf of Cinque and the others. The Africans prevailed and were returned home.

### **Quote**

“Have you ever wondered why the ocean is so wide? It’s because it holds so much history. There’s not a drop of seawater that doesn’t have a secret; not a river or lake that doesn’t whisper someone’s name. Ask the ocean about the legend of Joseph Cinque . . .”

### **Pre-Reading Activity**

- Using a map of the world, find the areas on the West Coast of Africa where humans were taken by force, the European countries from which the slavers emanated, and the final destination of the Americas.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. The Spanish slave ship in the story was named *Amistad*, which means “friendship.” How do you feel about that? Why? What is slavery?
2. Why do you think the slaves were forbidden to speak on the ship?
3. Do you feel it was right for Cinque and the other Africans to kill the captain? Why or Why not?
4. After Cinque’s struggle with the crew, the author states, “But they had claimed victory too soon.” What might that mean?
5. Although stealing of slaves from Africa was illegal, people could still own slaves. How could this be?

## Activities

1. Select four episodes from the events of Cinque's life. Prepare a four-page accordion-pleat booklet illustrated with pictures at the top and explain each of these episodes with words on the bottom.
2. Write a letter to John Quincy Adams suggesting arguments to help free Cinque.

## Other Suggested Sources

- **Bound For America, the Forced Migration of Africans to the New World** by James Haskins and Kathleen Benson. NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 2000.
- **From Slave Ship to Freedom Road** by Julius Lester and Rod Brown. NY: Puffin Books, 1998.
- **They Came in Chains, the Story of the Slave Ships** by Milton Meltzer. NY: Benchmark Books, 2000.

## Historical Perspective

Between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries about 20 million African men, women and children were captured in Africa and were bought by European and American slave traders. They were sold as laborers on the plantations and in the mines of the Americas.

“All of us, in some way, are connected to that shameful history. For it is quite likely that just about every one of us is descended from slaves. No matter what our color or where in the world we came from, we have ancestors who at one time or another were slaves. Many were slaves at one time and masters at another.” Milton Meltzer

Slavery had been a part of human life since early time – in Ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt and Africa. Slavery was a traditional part of African life and usually the result of war or a punishment for a crime. African slavery meant different things to different communities. Some slaves were treated as family members. They could marry, own property or have their own slaves.

With the inception of European slave trading, the nature of slavery began to change. African chiefs cooperated with the traders until they began to lose control of the operation. Traders eliminated the “middle man” as the need for slaves rapidly increased. European raids inland procured slaves who were bound together by neck rings and marched to coastal trading posts. Slaves might be forced to carry heavy loads for miles. Many died along the march and were left unburied. Retained in holding pens, the slaves were examined for disease or advanced age and often branded for company identification. Chained in pairs at the ankles, they were stripped naked “for cleanliness,” and boarded into separate male and female compartments.

The ensuing ocean voyage was a tale of human misery and humiliation. Some slaves chose to end their own lives by jumping overboard or refusing to

eat. Many were determined to live and attempted to revolt. Most were unsuccessful, but these endeavors - as well as the subsequent survival of American slaves - attested to the strength of the human spirit.

Many people believed that slavery was part of the natural order. When Prince Henry asked the Pope to approve more raids on the African coast, the Pope's reply was to forgive all those engaged in the raiding wars. In 1455 a papal declaration authorized Portugal to reduce to servitude all non-Christian peoples. Consequently, Christian slavery was to be reduced but this was not the case for unbelievers. They were thought to be undeserving of freedom and, if enslaved by Christians, could be converted. What legitimized slavery in the New World was that the clergy also owned slaves.

"In a way, this was like the rationale some Africans gave themselves when they choose not to enslave people of their own community, but only those so-called "strangers," or "outsiders." But merchants – European and African – who handled thousands of slaves, could not have cared less about religion or the origin of their commodities."

Milton Meltzer



## **On the Long Trail Home**

by  
Elisabeth J. Stewart

Scholastic Inc., NY, 1994  
Recommended for Grades 5

### **Synopsis**

Meli and her older brother Tahli are collected with their family to begin the long march to lands west of the Mississippi. Meli tries to sort out her feelings between what she has learned at the Quaker school and what the soldiers are doing to her people now. She and Tahli escape from the camp where they had been penned up and attempt to find their way back home. During the journey the brother and sister struggle for survival in the wilderness, meeting up with some helpful people along the way.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Briefly relate the history of the Trail of Tears.
- Using a map of the United States, locate the areas of Cherokee lands and the lands of removal.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Early on Meli questions her father, "Why does anyone order men to do bad things?" How would you answer her?
2. Meli insists that, "Persons can choose whether to obey bad orders." Do you agree with her? Why or why not? Some would say that it is a matter of conscience. What do people mean by that?
3. Along the trail, "One or two of the soldiers had tried quietly to bring water and food, especially to the children. But most had made themselves hard." What does it mean "*to make themselves hard*?"
4. Why do you think Meli's grandmother encouraged her to run with her brother?
5. What do you think of the children eating raw food while on the run?
6. Caddo's father says, "We keep truth in our hearts, and say what is necessary to white men." Is that lying? Why or why not?
7. Meli ponders about those who care about other people's feelings. She thought about the Quakers and the Christians she had met and also about the old Jewish peddler. Meli wonders if it is God who makes them good to the Indians and who makes them think about unseen things. But the white leaders and most of the soldiers do not. How would you respond to Meli?
8. Why did Tahli and Meli give their most prized possessions to Caddo's family? Would you have done that? Explain.
9. When Meli and Tahli are reunited, how did they show their feelings for each other? Why do you think they did that?

## Activities

1. Choose a part of the story to illustrate. Write a paragraph explaining the scene.
2. Compose a poem for Meli that would try to explain all her questions about life.
3. Write a brief final chapter that tells what happens to Meli's family.

## Other Suggested Sources

- **Remember My Name** by Sarah H. Banks. NY: Scholastic, 1993.
- **Soft Rain, A Story of the Cherokee Trail of Tears** by Cornelia Cornelissen. NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1998.
- **The Trail of Tears** by R. Conrad Stein. Chicago: Children's Press, 1993.
- **Wilma P. Mankiller, Chief of the Cherokee** by Charnan Simon. Chicago: Children's Press, 1991.

## Historical Perspective

Realizing the whites were here to stay, the Cherokee had chosen cultural accommodation with white society. They tried to combine the best elements of European and Cherokee culture. The Cherokee so emulated the whites of the Old South that they even adopted the practice of keeping slaves.

The Cherokee's desire to educate their young was extremely strong. Sequoyah developed the first Cherokee alphabet. Cherokee government was modeled after the U.S. federal government. They even chose to fight alongside white soldiers against their Creek neighbors during the Creek Wars of 1812-13.

However, when Andrew Jackson became president in 1828, he considered Indians inferior to and less civilized than whites. Then when gold was discovered in Georgia, miners invaded the Cherokee territory. Many of the miners stole Indian cattle and attacked Indian women. Neighboring whites encouraged the miners. Hoping to harass the Indians into giving up their land, the whites organized groups called Pony Clubs who were gangs of rowdies who started fires and plundered homes.

The Cherokee people took their grievances to court and eventually a lawsuit reached the U. S. Supreme Court. The Court ruled in 1832 that the federal government must protect the Cherokee nation from the intruders. But only the president had the authority to send in the troops. President Jackson refused.

Jackson promoted the Indian Removal Act, which then passed Congress. In the winter of 1831, the migration of the Choctaw began. The federal government had agreed to feed and clothe the Indians during the journey, but money for the provisions were never sent. The Creek were driven out in 1836. Some 3500 Creek died of hunger and exposure. In 1837, the Chickasaw began their journey. After a long and bloody war, the Seminole Indians were forced west.

The Cherokee nightmare began in May 1838. Troops brutally rounded up the people and herded them into camps. Neighboring whites swept up the Cherokee's personal possessions and even plundered the graves searching for gold and silver jewelry. The camps held about 17,000 Cherokee – sick, disabled, elderly and children. Some were sent on riverboats. Most made the 800-mile walk through forests, mountains, swamps and wilderness roads – the Trail of

Tears. Diseases spread, summer drought seared, and winter winds blasted the travelers. It took more than a year to reach Oklahoma. It is estimated that one of every four died along the route.

A few years after their resettlement, white pioneers began to invade and the government did little to discourage them. Parcel by parcel, the federal government bought up or seized Indian Territory and opened it officially to white farmers.

Adapted from The Trail of Tears by R. Conrad Stein

**Pink and Say**  
A Story by  
Patricia Polacco

Philomel Books, NY, 1994  
Recommended for Grades 5-6

**Synopsis**

Pinkus [Pink] Aylee and Sheldon [Say] Russell Curtis met during the Civil War. Sheldon, only fifteen years old, was wounded and laying unconscious in a Georgia field when he was discovered by Pinkus, another teenage Union soldier. Pink was born into slavery and had run away to join the Union army. Pink takes Say to the nearby cabin of his mother Moe Moe Bay to hide from Confederate forces while Say heals from his wounds. Both teenagers are in great danger from the Southern marauders and they also know that their presence endangers Moe Moe Bay.

*Pp. 9-20*

...Then fever must have took me good, 'cause I could feel a cool, sweet-smelling quilt next to my face. Soft, gentle warm hands were strokin' my head with a cool wet rag cloth.

"Look at that mornin' that's comin'," a woman's voice said as she spooned oat porridge into me. "Do your momma know that a beautiful baby boy she has?"

"Where am I? Is this heaven?" I asked.

She tossed her head and laughed. "No child, Pinkus brung you home to me - don't you remember?"

The mahogany child, I thought.

"Both you children been on the run for days, and a miracle of God Almighty brung you both here, yes indeed, child, a miracle."

I remember thinkin', Could this war have been so close to this lad's home? I couldn't imagine havin' a war right in his back yard. I looked over and saw him lookin' out the winderlight.

"Guess you don't remember much," he said. "I'm Pinkus Aylee, fought with the Forty-eighth Colored. Found you after I got lost from my company."

"My name is Sheldon. Sheldon Curtis," I said weakly.

"This is my mother, sweet Moe Moe Bay," he said as she smiled at me.

"Lord, Lord, I never thought I'd see my dear boy again," she said as she hugged him. "I been gittin' along, though, Pinkus. Warm things got left in the big house when the family left. Dry goods, too. The rest I been gittin' from the woods. They's a freshwater spring out back. Still have some chickens, even got an ole cow out back that still gives."

"Then you have been all alone here?" Pinkus asked his mother. "Where is everybody?"

"Your daddy runned off to fight a month ago. All the hands and their children runned off out of harm's way. But I stayed. I prayed to the Lord every day. My prayers were surely answered 'cause He brought my baby back here to stay,"

she said as her face beamed. "You ain't never gonna leave your momma again, are you, child?" she said softly.

Pinkus looked troubled and didn't answer.

"I'm goin' down to the stream and pound these clothes of yours," she said as she readied to leave us. "If you hear marauders comin', git for the root-cellar door. Stay down there 'til they gone. That's what I been doin'."

"Marauders here?" Pinkus said with alarm.

"They've seen there's nothin' here for them, child....Nothin'!"

As soon as she left us, Pinkus sank to my bedside.

"Sheldon, boy," he whispered, "as soon as you heal up we gotta get away from here. We are puttin' Moe Moe Bay in great danger by bein' here. If they come and find that she's been holdin' troopers..." Then his voice trailed off. "We gotta get back to our outfits if we can find 'em."

"You mean go back to the war?" I asked.

I must have gone pale as he went on to say, "It's the only way, ain't it?" Then he look at me. "Sheldon, you alright? You look bothered," he said as he eased me back.

"You can call me Say," I said. Everybody in my family calls me Say, not Sheldon. I 'spect you're my family now."

"Near 'nuff, Say. Near 'nuff," he said as he chucked the blanket under my feet. "You can call me Pink," he said softly as he smiled.

For the next week Moe Moe Bay fed us both up good. Raw milk and corn bread never tasted so good in all my born days. It were the first time in months my vittles didn't have any mealy worms in it. She saw to it that I tried to walk a little every day. "So's that mean-lookin' leg don't go stiff on you and cripple up," she'd say.

This place wasn't that much different from our farmhouse in Ohio, more poor maybe, but it smelled the same. Like pine boards and good cookin'. A mess-o'-beans with salt pork, corn bread, greens and onions. When we slept, she sat near us, stoked the fire and watched over us. Never thought I'd feel safe enough to sleep deep again.

"My mother and Kaylo, my father, jumped the broom on this very spot," Pink said as he walked me on my first day outdoors. "And that there was the Master's house. Master Aylee." Pink spoke quietly as he helped me along.

"How come you have his last name?" I asked.

"Boy, when you owned, you ain't got no name of your own. Even Kaylo had to take that name."

As we rested under the willow tree, Pink asked me about my family back home.

"Got one brother still at home to help run the place fer Pa," I answered.

"What was your outfit again?" Pink asked. He'd asked me before.

"Ohio Twenty-fourth. I carried the staff. Wasn't supposed to carry a gun, but then so many died, even us boys had to carry after so many were slaughtered like hogs."

"Least you got to carry. In the Forty-eighth, we couldn't have guns at first. We fought with sticks and hammers and sledges. Can you imagine not trustin' us with our own fight?"

I couldn't imagine such a thing.

"Then when they did finally give us muskets, they were from the Mexican-American War. Those muskets jammed and misfired!"

"Then how, in God's name, can you want to go back?" I asked.

"'Cause it's my fight, Say. Ain't it yours, too? If we don't fight, then who will?"

I had no answer for him, but, God forgive me, I didn't want to ever go back to it!

After a few more days I could walk a little steadier but still needed help. Pink took me out by the big house and walked me through it. Weren't much left of it really, it was mostly burned out.

"Master Aylee had a library full of books right here," he said. He taught me to read, even though it was against the law."

"He must had been a good man," I said.

"More bad than good, Say. Sometimes I think he just liked bein' read to. There was this book of poetry, Say, that was this thick. Every night I'd read out loud to him from that book. I blessed this house because of all those beautiful books...but I cursed it, too, for what it stood for."

We walked a bit further.

"To be born a slave is a heap o' trouble, Say. But after Aylee taught me to read, even though he owned my person, I knew that nobody, ever, could really own me.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Examine a map of the Civil War. Locate Say's home state of Ohio and Pink's home state of Georgia. Identify several battles that took place in Georgia.
- Locate and identify several prisoner-of-war camps of the Union and of the Confederacy. Be sure that Andersonville is one of the camps identified.
- Find out about the ages of soldiers who fought on both sides during the Civil War. What did the soldiers in each army eat during the war? What were some the problems the soldiers faced in preparing and protecting their food?
- Define the terms: mealy-worms; root cellar; marauders; vittles; jumped the broom; greens; Confederate; Union.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss the risks that Pink takes when he carries the wounded Say home to Moe Moe Bay. Why was it especially dangerous for Pink and Moe Moe Bay to aid a wounded Union soldier?
2. Why were the marauders considered an especially dangerous threat to Union soldiers caught behind Confederate lines and to slaves who were runaways or who helped the Union soldiers?
3. Say later reveals that he envies Pink's ability to read. Why do Pink, Moe Moe Bay, and Say all consider the ability to read such a wonderful gift? What did Pink learn through the knowledge of reading?

4. Why do you think Pink is so determined to return to the fighting when you consider how African American soldiers were treated by the Union army? Was the treatment that was given to Pink's unit a common treatment for African American soldiers? Why? Why were these units given white officers to command them? What happened when African American units like Pink's were given the opportunity to fight with proper weapons?

### Activities

1. Show the class **excerpts** from the video "**Glory.**" Select an excerpt that illustrates how African American soldiers were viewed by Caucasian units and officers as well as by the Confederate army. Also select an excerpt that reveals the attitude and determination of the African American soldiers themselves. Discuss the affect of prejudice and discrimination on African American soldiers, on the army's ability and readiness to fight as a whole, and on the civilian population.
2. Say reveals to Pink and Moe Moe Bay that he shook Abraham Lincoln's hand and they are awed by Say's good fortune. Why was this such an impressive experience for Say to have had? Research information about decisions made by President Lincoln that impacted on African Americans who were slaves.
3. Locate and read the whole book of Pink and Say. What does the author reveal about her reason for writing this book? Have the students write or e-mail the author expressing their reaction to the story and what they have learned about the importance of friendship and respect for others and the dangers of prejudice and discrimination.
4. **For the teacher:** On their way to rejoining their units, Pink and Say were captured by the marauders and taken to Andersonville prison camp. Although Say managed to survive, Pink was killed within hours of arriving in Andersonville. Have the students research the conditions in the Andersonville prison camp and what happened to the soldiers imprisoned there. Why was Pink executed almost immediately? What happened to the commandant of Andersonville after the war? Why is that important to note? Identify some of the other prison camps noted for cruelty in both the North and the South.

### Other Sources

Video: **Glory**

## Dragonwings

A Novel by  
Laurence Yep

Scholastic Inc., New York, 1990  
Recommended for Grades 5-8

### **Synopsis**

Moon Shadow is eight years old in 1903 when he leaves his home in China to join the father he has never seen in America. His father is famed in his old village in China for the wonderful kites that he could make but, in San Francisco, he works in the Company of the Peach Orchard Vow, a laundry. Moon Shadow's father is known as Windrider among the members of the Company because of his magnificent kites but he dreams of building a flying machine. Living and working in Chinatown, Moon Shadow learns that it is dangerous to venture outside its limits into the world of the "white demons" who seem to despise the Tang people. Moon Shadow and Windrider leave the Company and go to live among the "demons." When the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906 destroys their home, the two decide to move across the bay to Oakland where they work for the next three years to build a flying machine.

from Chapter 10 *Aroused (April-May, 1906)* pp. 187-200

[San Francisco had been struck by the great earthquake of 1906 and the people are living in tents.]

\* \* \*

Sometimes I think there are scales in Heaven, and for every good thing that happens in your life, Heaven balances it with a bad thing. The Company had no sooner warmed to Miss Whitlaw [the landlady] than other demons proved just how malicious they could be. Three days later Father and I were over visiting with Miss Whitlaw when we heard the tramp and clatter of the demon soldiers.

"*In here,*" we heard a voice say.

The tent flap was raised by a young demon officer. One of Miss Whitlaw's demon neighbors was pointing at us. "*Come along, you two,*" the young officer said. "*We're moving you out.*"

"*All of us?*" Father asked incredulously.

"*Just YOU, Chinamen,*" The young officer said. "*You sabe me?*"

Father's hands clenched and unclenched, but behind the young officer we could see a squad of demon soldiers. They were not the same friendly ones who had given out bread and taken care of the refugees. These soldiers all wore the same stern, tense expressions and handled their bayoneted rifles nervously, as if they were in the camp of the enemy.

"*I sabe,*" Father said. "*You must excuse,*" he said to Miss Whitlaw.

"*Well, I don't 'sabe.'*" Miss Whitlaw rose in magnificent outrage. "*How dare you come poking into my tent and commanding my two friends to leave? How dare you tell the Chinese to leave?*"

The officer was taken aback. He became a little less haughty. "*Ma'am, those are the orders. The Chinamen have to go.*"



"Why? I daresay they make better neighbors than some other folk whom I won't name because I'm a Christian woman." Miss Whitlaw darted a poisonous glance at the demon who had guided the soldiers over here. The demon shifted uncomfortably on his feet.

"I'm...I'm sure, ma'am," the officer said hastily. "But they've got to go. I'm to take them bound up if necessary."

Father got up. There was no point getting Miss Whitlaw into trouble, too.

There was a cast-iron frying pan awfully close to her hand and we now knew just how "forcefully" she could argue. Father picked up our hats. "Come, Moon Shadow."

Miss Whitlaw whirled around. "Surely you're not going. You arrived only a moment ago."

Father patted Miss Whitlaw on the shoulder. "It some misunderstanding. We fix," he lied, to make her feel better. It was a misunderstanding, but we would not be able to fix it. Nobody short of Heaven could fix it. Father handed me my hat. He fixed his own hat on his head. "We come back quick."

"You come back quick as you can, you hear me?" Miss Whitlaw said.

I nodded.

The squad was guarding other Tang people, who stood with their gear on their backs or in wheelbarrows. We were marched through the camp, with demons staring at us, while soldiers rounded up more and more Tang people. When we got back to the main camp of the Tang people, we found most of the tents already struck. The Company was loading our stuff onto our wagon. There were more soldiers there, standing with rifles at the ready, waiting for some outbreak of rebellion. From the way the demon soldiers acted, you would have thought each of us had a knife up his sleeve.

A long procession of Tang people, many on foot, marched along Van Ness Avenue past the gutted mansions of the rich. What the earthquake had not destroyed, the fires had. At the end of Van Ness, after several foot wearying miles, we came to a warehouse. Except for Uncle, myself, and Hand Clap, who rode on the wagon, the rest of the Company had walked. Red Rabbit already had to carry several wagonloads at the same time. Somehow he did it.

But then, the very next day, we were moved to a parade ground at an army fort near the entrance to the bay, the *Golden Gate*. I can't remember everywhere we moved, or when. But I think Thursday morning we were moved to the golf course at the *Presidio*, another army base slightly to the east of the *Golden Gate*. It was as if the demons could not make up their minds. Because it was hard to get fodder for Red Rabbit - the demon soldiers now gave us bread and water reluctantly, let alone fodder for our horse - we sent Hand Clap south with the wagon to some of our kinsmen. Uncle should have gone, for all this moving around was hard on him, but he was needed to help some of the other leaders of the Tang people figure out what to do.

Last year the demon officials of the city had tried to move the Tang people out of our old area to a place called *Hunter's Point* in the southern part of the city, where some Tang fishermen already had a camp. It was now rumored that the demon officials were going to make us rebuild the Tang people's town not in our

original location but down at *Hunter's Point*; and yet every other ethnic group in the city was going to be allowed to return to its old homesite.

Friday we were moved back to the parade ground of the fort near the *Golden Gate*. Uncle bore this uncomplainingly, though he was sore all that evening. In true hardship, he could be a source of immense strength. By that Friday, we had dwindled from some twenty-five thousand of us to only a few hundred. Many Tang people had just got disgusted and left for points east, south, and north, where you weren't herded around like a flock of sheep by a shepherd who could not make up his mind. But the few hundred who stayed were the hard core of the Tang people - the stubbornest, orneriest individuals, who were getting tired of being pushed around. Someone had to stand firm.

We pitched our tents - they were quite brown now and no longer a bright purple - for the fourth time in four days. Nobody spoke too much. Father jammed his hands into his pockets, watching White Deer wash the rice. "We let ourselves be pushed around like a bunch of stupid oxen. Why don't we do something?"

White Deer shrugged. "What can we do? They have all the guns."

Father spat contemptuously on the ground. "That's what we always say when there's trouble."

"And what would you do? Take them all on? The superior man rises above such squabbles," White Deer reminded Father.

Father glanced toward the tent where the old, wise heads of the Tang people had gathered to work out some strategy. You could hear their voices rising.

"They sound like a bunch of old hens," Father said.

"They're trying their best." White Deer slammed the lid down on the pot. "What's eating you?"

"I'm sick. I'm sick of greed and stupidity."

"You're just sick of people." White Deer planted his fists on his hips.

"Maybe I am," Father grumbled.

It was very late in the evening when Uncle came back across the grass, looking very tired but smiling grimly. He had had to store away his heavy chair because of all this moving around, so he just sat down on an old crate instead; but he did it just as majestically as if it were his throne. He poured himself a cup of tea from the teakettle we had kept boiling all that day. He sipped it while we all sat or stood around, waiting for him to speak. When Uncle finished his tea, he arched his head, grimacing as he scratched the underside of his chin. "I think we have them," he said with a self-satisfied air.

"What magic did we come up with?" White Deer asked.

"It was there all the time, only some of those old fools were afraid to try it. I guess they were afraid of making any kind of trouble." Uncle fished into his pocket and pulled out a handful of coins. He dumped them by White Deer's boots. "There's your magical weapons. There's all the charms and spells you need for these demons. We Tang people own one-third of the land in the Tang people's town outright. For instance, we own the land that our Company was on. The demons can't tell us to move off it if we want to live there. Even they have to follow their own laws. And as for the other two-thirds - well, did you ever stop to

think how important we are to the demons? We run a lot of businesses and services that they need. If we were to leave this city completely, their whole economy would be wrecked."

"But we don't want to go," I protested.

"That's not the point, Moon Shadow," Uncle said. "All we have to do is threaten to go. They let us rebuild the Tang people's town in the old place or we go to some city where they'll appreciate us."

"Yes," White Deer agreed, warming to the idea, "some city like *Oakland* or *Los Angeles*. If you name their rival cities, it will make it twice as hard for them to hear."

"That's what we figured."

"It's too bad," Father observed, "that you have to appeal to their sense of greed."

"That's the way it is with demons," Uncle snapped.

"That's the way it is with most men," Father said.

I did not see the meeting that Uncle and some of the elders had with the demons who ran the city. The demons tried to bluster and threaten, but Uncle remained calm throughout it all. He played his hand with a confidence that would have done credit to Lefty when he was gambling. Some of the more stupid demons were inclined to let us go, but some of the others, the men who really run the city and handled the money, knew that if they lost us, their pocketbooks would be hurting. Their hearts and consciences might be as hard as flint, but their pocketbooks were as sensitive as a cat's whiskers. To make a long story short, we won the same rights that the demon citizens had in rebuilding on their old sites.

We sent out a call then - a call that was heard all around the demon land. Lefty's brother-in-law came down from *Sacramento*. He was a stonemason. White Deer's youngest brother came all the way north by train from *Los Angeles*. He was a carpenter. Hand Clap's young cousin twice removed came all the way from *Colorado*. He had no skills. He just had a strong back, but that was at his elder cousin's disposal. Uncle even got money from some kin and friends in the eastern provinces from whom he had not heard in twenty years. And we were not the only Tang people with kinsmen and friends.

Every day, the men came in by the dozens - dusty, tired men who had journeyed by foot and by wagon when they could not afford a train ticket. They would sit for a moment and stretch out their legs, revealing the holes worn into the soles of their boots. They would be covered from their boots to the crowns of their hats with dust. They would accept a cup of tea with a quiet nod of their thanks, and maybe smile and maybe make a joke. And after they had finished their tea, they would pitch right in. They might work sixteen hours a day without pay, expecting only the food they ate and the straw mats they slept on. We were friends and kinsmen in trouble.

The Company's days were filled with a cheerful shouting and singing and swearing and hammering. We were putting up a new building, one made of stone and guaranteed to last a century. It was hard work, but it was exhilarating - the kind of feeling that comes from being alive and taking part in some great

common enterprise. Only Father seemed strangely unmoved by the experience. He worked as hard as everyone else, but he did so without spirit. Whenever Uncle talked about building an extra large room for Father to work in, Father always kept very quiet. Finally, four months after the earthquake, Father came by and found me helping to mark off wood for Hand Clap to saw.

"The Whitlaws are leaving today," he said. "I told them we'd say good-bye."

Poor Miss Whitlaw had lost her house in the fire, and so had lost her chief financial support. The money in her cash box was meant to help Robin through college. Miss Whitlaw's land might be worth something once the city was rebuilt, but that meant holding on to it for quite a while. In the meantime, she would have to support herself some other way. Miss Whitlaw had borne her losses with a courage that I had come to expect of her. She had cheerfully taken a job as a housekeeper to some demons over in Oakland across the bay.

I put down the pencil and ruler and followed him without a word. We both washed up silently and put on some clean clothes. As we walked through the city toward the park, we could hear the incessant banging of hammers and the wheezing of saws. Wherever you went, you saw the same wooden frames going up - like the skeletons of houses waiting for their wooden flesh to be attached. It was a city waiting to be reborn.

\* \* \*

We walked along for a while. "Houses don't mean much. It's the people inside them that are important," I said.

Father grinned sardonically. "Yes, and you no sooner get to like those people than they're dead, or they move away. Like the Whitlaws."

"But we can meet other people," I pointed out.

Father playfully tipped his hat forward so that it shaded his eyes. "Yes, and you go on losing those new friends that you make just like you lose the new house you build. Don't you want something better, purer, freer in this life?"

"I don't think there is," I said doubtfully.

Father pulled his hat off and smoothed his hair.

"I think an *aeronaut* is free. I think an *aeronaut* may be the freest of all humankind."

"But you don't have an aeroplane."

"I'll build one."

"And how will you live?"

"I'll put on shows and people will pay to see just how pure and free a man can live." He bit his lips thoughtfully. "I think this is my final test, Moon Shadow; the final and truest measure of whether I'm worthy to become a dragon again."

I felt as lonely as I had that first day on the pier, looking at the crowd of strange Tang men. I was not only losing the Whitlaws, but Father as well.

"Why do you always have to change your life just when it looks like you're finally settling in?" I asked.

"Dragons are able to change shape, and so must I. Do you understand?"

Father glanced over at me. I dropped my eyes. "Do you, Moon Shadow?" I still did not answer. "Do you?"

"I think Miss Whitlaw may be waiting." I hurried on.

\* \* \*

We loaded the two suitcases Miss Whitlaw had onto the wagon and drove them down to the *Ferry Building*. We would arrange to sell her wagon and horse for her. ...The whole trip was made in a long silence. In the years we had known them, we had grown probably as close as we could to demons.

\* \* \*

Miss Whitlaw took Father's hand between hers. "*You stay true to your dream, Mr. Lee. I just know that one day I'll be going to a show with your name up on the banner*". Then she turned to me. "*And you keep in touch, you hear, or I will personally walk back across the bay and skin you alive.*"

"*I guess that goes for me too,*" said Robin.

"*I hear you,*" I said.

\* \* \*

I did not say much to Father as we rode back to the Tang people's town. What could I say to a man whom I had come to love and respect but who wanted to leave me? That night Father got Uncle alone and I sat down by them. Father turned to me. "Moon Shadow, you once asked me who or what caused the earthquake. I don't know. It could have been the gods, or dragons, or demons, or it could have simply been a natural event. It doesn't matter, supernatural or natural; it means the same: This life is too short to spend it pursuing little things. I have to do what I know I can and must do."

Uncle banged his fist on the arm of his chair. "Not that damn dream again."

"Dream or not, I can fly," Father said matter-of-factly. "I can build a flying machine."

Uncle looked grim. "Even assuming you can build a flying machine and then make money flying it, what will you and your family eat while you're building the machine?"

"It's time I thought of myself," Father asserted.

Uncle was scandalized. "Supposing your father and mother thought that? Or suppose their fathers and mothers had thought that before?"

"That's cheating." Father sagged in his chair and rested his hands on his knees.

"A superior man admits the truth," Uncle snapped. I could see Father was beat. He hung his head for the longest time, staring down at his hands. I could only think of some immortal who had suddenly woken one morning to find himself in a man's body and realized he was being punished. For the second time in my life, I made an important decision to be with him.

"I want to fly, too, Father," I said.

"Stay out of this," Uncle snapped.

"Pardon me, Uncle, but you brought me into this." I looked at Father again. "We should build the flying machine. Maybe you can make a living doing it. And while we're building it, we'll both get jobs. We'll all manage somehow."

Father straightened a little. "Despite what everyone says?"

"A superior man can only do what he's meant to do," I said.

Uncle laughed scornfully. "Don't give me that nonsense."

"He's the only one I hear talking sense," Father said.

"Don't expect to come back here, either of you," Uncle warned us. He was hurt by our leaving him a second time. "I won't have anything to do with fools."

"Please let me go with you, Father. I won't be any trouble at all, and you'll need help."

Father put his hand on my shoulder. "Yes, I know I'll need help. I was hoping you'd come along."

"Why didn't you ask then?"

"It's not something you can ask."

"Then we'll go together," I said.

Uncle looked at both of us, hurt and confused. "Why"? he asked. "Why?"

"It's something we both have to do," I tried to explain, but it was like trying to describe colors to a blind man.

Uncle shoved his chair away from us and got up. "Get away from me," he said.

I was sad about Uncle, but with Father's arm around me, I felt a warm glow inside of me even so. He was Windrider and I was his son.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, and Sacramento on a map of California. Identify the Golden Gate area. Locate China on a world map.
- Define the terms: People of the Tang; white demons; dragons; ethnic; elders; aeronaut.
- Look up some information about the size, power, and destructiveness of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. The Moon Shadow and his Father had become friends with their landlady Miss Whitlaw and her young niece Robin. Why was this unusual in 1906 California?
2. Why do the soldiers keep moving the Chinese people from place to place? Does this happen to any other group of people?
3. How do Uncle and the other elders convince the "demon" city leaders to let them return to their old homesite? How does Moon Shadow's father Windrider view this strategy?
4. Many Chinese come to help rebuild the homes and businesses in Chinatown. How does Moon Rider explain this sudden appearance of so many helpers?
5. Miss Whitlaw and Robin make it clear that they expect to hear from the Lee family. How do the Father and son feel about this?
6. What does Windrider say about losing people? Does Moon Shadow share his view? Why do you think each of them feels the way they do?
7. Windrider seems compelled to follow his dream. What is his dream? How do the following people view his dream: Moon Shadow? Uncle? Miss Whitlaw? Why do you think Uncle and Miss Whitlaw have such different reactions to Windrider's dream?

## Activities

1. Many of the Chinese who came to America stayed for years, working and sending money home to their families. Imagine yourself in a strange land far from home and living among unfriendly strangers who do not speak your language or understand your customs. Write several journal entries describing how you feel as the years pass and you continue to work and wait to be reunited with your family.
2. Investigate the immigration laws that the United States had passed concerning the Chinese coming to this country. Explain some of the main features of these laws. Do you consider the laws fair? Why were such laws adopted?
3. Explain why American laws did not permit the Chinese men to bring their wives to the United States. Were there any exceptions to this rule? Read more of the book **Dragonwings** to discover the method that Windrider hoped to use to bring his wife to join him and his son in the United States.
4. Many immigrants to the United States settled together forming places such as Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Little Italy, Little Dublin, etc. Why do you think immigrants formed such settlements? Did it help them to survive in the new country? What benefits did it offer to the new immigrants?
5. Find directions for making your own kite by researching in the library or on the Internet. Design and build your kite. On a nice breezy day, go and fly your kite. In a letter to a friend or in a speech to your class, explain how you felt when you saw your kite flying high in the sky. Remember, if at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Windrider had to try many times!

## Other suggested sources

- **Dragon's Gate** by Laurence Yep. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1993.
- **The Journal of Wong Ming-Chung** by Laurence Yep. New York: Scholastic Inc., 2000.
- **Goodbye, Vietnam** by Gloria Whelan. New York: Dell Yearling, 1992.

## **The Circlemaker**

by

Maxine Rose Schur

Puffin Books, New York, 1994

Recommended for Grades 7-8

### **Synopsis**

This is the story of Mendel, a twelve-year-old Jewish boy living in Czarist Russia during the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855). In 1827, Nicholas enacted a law stating that Jewish boys from 12 to 18 were to be conscripted for military service. These boys would be held in garrisons or distant provinces where they would receive military and religious training until they were 18 and could start their 25-year military service to the Czar. Mendel, therefore, must leave his family to escape conscription. He travels on foot, train and horseback to try to reach Hungary, where he will have an opportunity to go to America. By coincidence, one of the men who helps Mendel flee pairs him with Dovid, who has just escaped from the army. Dovid is antagonistic and abusive even though the two help each other on the way to freedom. Mendel, because of deeply-rooted faith, meets this antagonism with generosity and compassion, although tinged with fear and dislike. Dovid does finally respond to this "circlemaker." He asks Mendel why he risked his life to save someone who has treated him so derisively and Mendel replies, "All growing things live and die in a circle...my knowledge is part of a circle from my grandfather to me...and now to you...it is when you give that you gain power." After many narrow escapes, the book ends as Mendel is on a boat heading to America.

This book can be used for the discussion of both antisemitism and the "Pale of Settlement."

### **Quote**

"Good people! Honest Ukrainian people! The landowners own you, but the dirty Jews rob you. Who has seized the shops and the taverns? The Jews! Wherever you look, whatever you touch, the Jews. The Jews curses the peasant, cheats him, drinks his blood. Arise! Wreak your vengeance on the landowner, kill the officials, but also kill the Jews!" (p.25) This was written by freedom fighters who were against the Czar.

"He went from boy to boy, and if one had a prayer shawl around his waist, he pulled it off from him...and dumped them all on the ground in a heap. He told us we would not be allowed to speak Yiddish ever again...He called us all godless and wicked. He said the Czar was God's vicar on earth...that meant we had to be Christian. We would all have to convert. (p.105) Description of what happened to the young Jewish boys who were conscripted into the military.

### **Pre-Reading Activity**

- Identify the Pale of Settlement. Students can research how and why it was set up and its effect on the people in the region.



### **Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss the origins of antisemitism in Europe. A reading might be useful in this.
2. Identify some of the elements of culture (beliefs, education, relationships, etc.). Discuss how culture has been handed down from generation to generation.

### **Activities**

1. Distribute the quotes previously mentioned. Journal on what these quotes tell you about people and reflect on how these quotes would impact the Jewish population.
2. Write a short sequel telling what happens when Mendel gets to America, or what happens to Dovid.
3. Write a news article describing the conscription law and how people are resisting it.
4. Explain your own "circle" - the traditions, beliefs, and ideas that your family cherishes and passes down. How are these different from Mendel's?
5. Make a collection of articles that Mendel would identify with. Why are each of these significant to him?

## Esperanza Rising

A Novel by  
Pam Munoz Ryan

Scholastic Press, New York, 2000  
Recommended for Grades 5-8

### **Synopsis**

Esperanza Ortega is the pampered daughter of wealthy landowning parents in Aguascalientes, Mexico. However, all of that changes when her father is murdered and his stepbrothers make it virtually impossible for Esperanza and her mother to stay. At great risk, they escape and flee across the border to the United States with the help of Alfonso, her father's *el jefe*, the boss, and close friend. After a hazardous journey, they reach a Mexican farm labor camp in California where they hope to work and make a home. Alfonso's brother has promised all of them a place to stay and the possibility of work. Esperanza, the pampered child, quickly learns that she is expected to work hard and that North Americans look down upon the Mexican workers. Even her fellow workers are aware of her shortcomings as a worker. When her mother becomes very ill, the situation becomes even more desperate. Esperanza struggles to become a good worker in the face of discrimination, harsh working and living conditions, strife among the workers over the question of striking for better conditions, and the threat of deportation back to Mexico. She also learns the importance of friendship and making good decisions.

from the chapter *Las Cebollas* (onions) pp. 113-119

\* \* \*

"Do you know how to change a diaper?" asked Esperanza when they got back to the cabin.

"Certainly," said Isabel. "I will change them and you can rinse out the diapers. We need to do some laundry, too."

Esperanza watched as the young girl laid the babies down one at a time, unpinned their diapers, wiped their bottoms clean, and pinned on fresh diapers.

Isabel handed Esperanza the smelly bundles and said, "Take them to the toilets and dump them and I'll fill the washtub."

Esperanza held them at arm's length and almost ran to the toilets. Several more onion trucks passed by, their smell accosting her eyes and nose as much as the diapers. By the time she got back, Isabel had already filled two washtubs with water from an outside pipe and was swirling soap around in one of them. A washboard was propped inside.

Esperanza went to the washtub and hesitated, staring into the water. Bits of onion skins floated on the surface of the soapy water. She held a corner of one of the diapers, lightly dipping it in and out of the water, her hand never getting wet. After a few seconds, she gingerly lifted the diaper from the water. "Now what?" she said.

"Esperanza! You must scrub them! Like this." Isabel walked over, took the diapers, and plunged them into the water up to her elbows. The water quickly

became murky. She rubbed the diapers with soap, vigorously scrubbed them back and forth on the washboard, and wrung them out. Then she transferred them to the next tub, rinsing and wringing again. Isabel shook out the clean diapers and hung them on the line stretched between the chinaberry and mulberry trees. Then she started on the clothes. Esperanza was amazed. She had never washed anything in her life and Isabel, who was only eight years old, make it look so easy.

Puzzled, Isabel looked at Esperanza. "Don't you know how to wash clothes?"

"Well, Hortensia took everything out to the laundry quarters. And the servants, they always..." She looked at Isabel and shook her head no.

Isabel's eyes got bigger and she looked worried. "Esperanza, when I go to school next week, you will be here alone with the babies and will have to do the laundry."

Esperanza took a deep breath and said weakly, "I can learn."

"And later today, you must sweep the platform. You...you do know how to sweep?"

"Of course," said Esperanza. She had seen people sweep many times. Many, many times, she assured herself. Besides, she was already too embarrassed about the washing to admit anything else to Isabel.

Isabel sat with the babies while Esperanza went to sweep the platform. The camp was quiet and even though it was late in the day, the sun was unrelenting. She retrieved the broom and stepped onto the wooden floor. Dried and brittle onion skins were everywhere.

In her entire life, Esperanza had never held a broom in her hand. But she had seen Hortensia sweep and she tried to visualize the memory. It couldn't possibly be that hard. She put both hands near the middle of the broomstick and moved it back and forth. It swung wildly. The motion seemed awkward and the fine dirt on the wooden planks lifted into a cloud. Onion jackets flew into the air instead of gathering together in a neat pile like Hortensia's. Esperanza's elbows did not know what to do. Neither did her arms. She felt streams of perspiration sliding down her neck. She stopped for a moment and stared at the broom, as if willing it to behave. Determined, she tried again. She hadn't noticed that several trucks were already unloading workers nearby. Then she heard it. First a small tittering and then louder. She turned around. A group of women were laughing at her. And in the middle of the group was Marta, pointing.

"*¡La Cenicienta!* Cinderella!" she laughed.

Burning with humiliation, Esperanza dropped the broom and ran back to the cabin.

In her room, she sat on the edge of the cot. Her face flushed again at the thought of the ridicule. She was still sitting there, staring at the wall, when Isabel found her.

"I said I could work. I told Mama I could help. But I cannot even wash clothes or sweep a floor. Does the whole camp know?"

Isabel sat down on the bed next to her and patted her back. "Yes."

Esperanza groaned. "I will never be able to show my face." She put her head in her hands until she heard someone else come into the room.

Esperanza looked up to see Miguel, holding a broom and a dustpan. But he wasn't laughing. She looked down and bit her lip so she wouldn't cry in front of him.

He shut the door, then stood in front of her and said, "How would you know how to sweep a floor? The only thing that you ever learned was how to give orders. That is not your fault. Anza, look at me."

She looked up.

"Pay attention," he said, his face serious. "You hold the broom like this. One hand here and the other here."

Esperanza watched.

"Then you push like this. Or pull it toward you like this. Here, you try," he said, holding out the broom.

Slowly, Esperanza got up and took the broom from him. He positioned her hands on the handle. She tried to copy him but her movements were too big.

"Smaller strokes," said Miguel, coaching. "And sweep all in one direction."

She did as he said.

"Now, when you get all the dirt into a pile, you hold the broom down here, near the bottom, and push the dirt into the pan."

Esperanza collected the dirt.

"See, you can do it." Miguel raised his thick eyebrows and smiled. "Someday, you just might make a very good servant."

Isabel giggled.

Esperanza could not yet find humor in the situation. Somberly she said, "Thank you, Miguel."

He grinned and bowed. "At your service, *mi reina*." But this time, his voice was kind.

\* \* \*

from the chapter *Las Almendras* (Almonds) pp. 133-135

\* \* \*

"Why is she [Marta] so angry?" asked Esperanza, as she walked back to the cabin a few hours later with Josefina, Isabel, and the babies, leaving the others to stay later. Isabel carried the soft, mewling orange kitten in her arms.

"She and her mother move around to find work, sometimes all over the state," said Josefina. "They work wherever there is something to be harvested. Those camps, the migrant camps, are the worst."

"Like when we were in El Centro?" said Isabel.

"Worse," said Josefina. "Our camp is a company camp and people who work here don't leave. Some live here for many years. That is why we came to this country. To work. To take care of our families. To become citizens. We are lucky because our camp is better than most. There are many of us who don't want to get involved in the strike because we can't afford to lose our jobs, and we are accustomed to how things are in our little community."

"They want to strike for better houses?" asked Esperanza.

"That and more money for those who pick cotton," said Josefina. "They only get seven cents a pound for picking cotton. They want ten cents a pound. It seems like such a small price to pay, but in the past, the growers said no. And

now, more people are coming to the valley to look for work, especially from places like Oklahoma, where there is little work, little rain, and little hope. If the Mexicans strike, the big farms will simply hire others. Then what would we do?"

Esperanza wondered what would happen if Mama did not have a job. Would they have to go back to Mexico? ...

\* \* \*

from the chapter *Los Aguacates (Avocados)* pp. 185-195

\* \* \*

"You need to get away from the camp, Esperanza," said Hortensia as she handed her the grocery list and asked her to go to the market with Miguel. "It is the first of spring and it's beautiful outside."

"I thought you and Josefina always looked forward to marketing on Saturday," said Esperanza.

"We do, but today we are helping Melina and Irene make *enchiladas*. Could you go for us?"

Esperanza knew they were trying to keep her occupied. Mama had been in the hospital for three months and Esperanza hadn't been allowed to visit for several weeks. Since then, Esperanza hadn't been acting like herself. She went through the motions of living. She was polite enough, answering everyone's questions with the simplest answers, but she was tormented by Mama's absence. Papa, Abuelita, Mama. Who would be next?

She crawled into bed as early as possible each night, curled her body into a tight ball, and didn't move until morning.

She knew Josefina and Hortensia were worried about her. She nodded to Hortensia, took the list, and went to find Miguel.

"Be sure to tell Miguel to go to Mr. Yakota's market!" Hortensia called after her.

\* \* \*

"Miguel, why must we always drive so far to shop at the Japanese market when there are other stores closer to Arvin?"

"Some of the other market owners aren't as kind to Mexicans as Mr. Yakota," said Miguel. "He stocks many of the things we need and he treats us like people."

"What do you mean?"

"Esperanza, people here think that all Mexicans are alike. They think that we are all uneducated, dirty, poor, and unskilled. It does not occur to them that many have been trained in professions in Mexico."

Esperanza looked down at her clothes. She wore a shirtwaist dress that used to be Mama's and before that, someone else's. Over the dress was a man's sweater with several buttons missing, which was also too big. She leaned up and looked in the mirror. Her face was tanned from the weeks in the fields, and she had taken to wearing her hair in a long braid like Hortensia's because Mama had been right - it was more practical that way. "Miguel, how could anyone look at me and think that I was uneducated?"

He smiled at her joke. "The fact remains, Esperanza, that you, for instance, have a better education than most people's children in this country. But no one is

likely to recognize that or take the time to learn it. Americans see us as one big, brown group who are good only for manual labor. At this market, no one stares at us or treats us like outsiders or calls us 'dirty greasers.' My father says that Mr. Yakota is a very smart businessman. He is getting rich on other people's bad manners."

Miguel's explanation was familiar. Esperanza's contact with Americans outside the camp had been limited to the doctor and the nurses at the hospital, but she had heard stories from others about how they were treated. There were special sections at the movie theater for Negroes and Mexicans. In town, parents did not want their children going to the same schools with Mexicans. Living away from town in the company camp had its advantages, she decided. The children all went to school together: white, Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino. It didn't seem to matter to anyone because they were all poor. Sometimes she felt as if she lived in a cocoon, protected from much of the indignation.

\* \* \*

There was a small tissue donkey that Esperanza had not noticed before. It was like one Mama had bought her a few years ago. Esperanza had thought it so cute that she had refused to break it, even though it had been filled with sweets. Instead, she had hung it in her room above her head.

A clerk walked by and impulsively, she pointed to the miniature *pinata*. "*Por favor*," she said. "Please."

She bought the other things she needed, including another money order. That was one more benefit of Mr. Yakota's market. She could buy money orders there.

She was waiting in the truck when Miguel came back.

"Another money order? What do you do with them all?" asked Miguel.

"I save them in my valise. They are for such small amounts but together, they'll be enough to someday bring Abuelita here."

"And the *pinata*? It's not anyone's birthday."

"I bought it for Mama. I'm going to ask the nurses to put it near her bed, so she'll know that I'm thinking of her. We can stop at the hospital on the way back. Will you cut a hole in the top for me so I can put the caramels inside? The nurses can eat them."

He took out his pocket knife and made an opening in the *pinata*. While Miguel drove, Esperanza began feeding in the caramels.

Not far down the main road, they approached an almond grove, the trees flush with gray-green leaves and white blossoms. Esperanza noticed a girl and a woman walking hand in hand, each with a grocery bag in her other arm. She couldn't help but think what a nice scene it made, with the two women framed against so many spring blossoms.

Esperanza recognized one of them. "I think that is Marta."

Miguel stopped the truck, then slowly backed up. "We should give her a ride."

Esperanza reluctantly nodded, remembering the last time they'd given her a lift, but she opened the door.

"Esperanza and Miguel, *que buena suerte*. What good luck," said Marta. "This is my mother Ada. Thanks for the ride."

Marta's mother had the same short, curly black hair but hers was sprinkled with gray.

Miguel got out and put all the groceries in the truck bed so they could sit in the front.

Ada said, "I heard about your mother and I've been praying for her."

Esperanza was surprised and touched. "Thank you, I'm grateful."

"Are you coming to our camp?" asked Miguel.

No," said Marta. "As you probably know, I'm not welcome there. We're going a mile or so up the road to the strikers' farm. We were tossed out of the migrant workers' camp and were told either to go back to work or leave. So we left. We aren't going to work under those disgusting conditions and for those pitiful wages."

Ada was quiet and nodded when Marta talked about the strike. Esperanza felt a twinge of envy when she noticed that Marta never let go of her mother's hand.

"There are hundreds of us together at this farm, but thousands around the country and more people join our cause each day. You are new here, but in time, you'll understand what we're trying to change. Turn left," she said, pointing to a dirt road rutted with tire marks.

Miguel turned down the path bordered in cotton fields. Finally, they reached several acres of land surrounded by chain-link fencing and barbed wire, its single opening guarded by several men wearing armbands.

"*Aqui*. Right here," said Ada.

"What are the guards for?" asked Esperanza.

"They are for protection," said Marta. "The farmer who owns the land is sympathetic to us but a lot of people don't like the strikers causing trouble. We've had threats. The men take turns at the entrance."

Miguel pulled the truck to the side of the road and stopped.

There were only ten wooden toilet stalls for hundreds of people and Esperanza could smell the effects from the truck. Some people lived in tents but others had only burlap bags stretched between poles. Some were living in their cars or old trucks. Mattresses were on the ground, where people and dogs rested. A goat was tied to a tree. There was a long pipe that lay on top of the ground and a line of water spigots sticking up from it. Near each spigot were pots and pans and campfire rings, the makings of outdoor kitchens. In an irrigation ditch, women were washing clothes, and children were bathing at the same time. Clotheslines ran everywhere. It was a great jumble of humanity and confusion.

Esperanza could not stop looking. She felt hypnotized by the squalor but Marta and her mother didn't seem the least bit embarrassed.

"Home, sweet home," said Marta.

They all climbed out of the truck, but before Marta and Ada could retrieve their groceries, a *campesino* family coming from the opposite direction approached

them. The children were dirty and skinny and the mother held an infant, who was crying.

"Do you have food so that I can feed my family?" said the father. "We were thrown out of our camp because I was striking. My family has not eaten in two days. There are too many people coming into the valley each day who will work for pennies. Yesterday I worked all day and made less than fifty cents and I cannot buy food for one day with that. I was hoping that here, with others who have been through the same..."

"You are welcome here," said Ada.

Esperanza reached into the truck bed and opened the large bag of beans. "Hand me your hat, Senor."

The man handed over his large sun hat and she filled it with the dried beans, then gave it back to him.

"*Gracias, gracias,*" he said.

Esperanza looked at the two older children, their eyes watery and vacant. She lifted the *pinata* and held it out to them. They said nothing but hurried toward her, took it, and ran back to their family.

Marta looked at her. "Are you sure you aren't already on our side?"

Esperanza shook her head. "They were hungry, that's all. Even if I believed in what you are doing, I must take care of my mother."

Ada put her hand on Esperanza's arm and smiled. "We all do what we have to do. Your mother would be proud of you."

\* \* \*

from the chapter *Los Esparragos (Asparagus)*, pp.204-208

\* \* \*

Esperanza had grown so accustomed to the strikers' chanting while she packed asparagus that the moment it stopped, she looked up from her work as if something was wrong.

"Hortensia, do you hear that?"

"What?"

"The silence. There is no more yelling."

The other women on the line looked at each other. They couldn't see the street from where they stood so they moved to the other end of the shed, cautiously looking out to where the strikers usually stood.

In the distance, a caravan of gray buses and police cars headed fast toward the shed, dust flying in their wakes.

"Immigration!" said Josefina. "It is a sweep."

The picket signs lay on the ground, discarded, and like a mass of marbles that had already been hit, the strikers scattered into the fields and toward the boxcars on the tracks, anywhere they could hide. The buses and cars screeched to a stop and immigration officials and police carrying clubs jumped out and ran after them.

"What about us?" said Esperanza, her eyes riveted on the guards who caught the strikers and shoved them back toward the buses. They would surely come into the shed next with so many Mexicans working there. Her fingers desperately clenched Hortensia's arm. "I cannot leave Mama."



Hortensia heard the panic in her voice. "No, no, Esperanza. They are not here for us. The growers need the workers. That is why the company guards us."

Several immigration officials accompanied by police began searching the platform, turning over boxes and dumping out field bins. Hortensia was right. They ignored the workers in their stained aprons, their hands still holding the green asparagus. Finding no strikers on the dock, they jumped back down and hurried to where a crowd was being loaded onto the buses.

"*iAmericana! iAmericana!*" yelled one woman and she began to unfold some papers. One of the officials took the papers from her hand and tore them into pieces. "Get on the bus," he ordered.

"What will they do with them?" asked Esperanza.

"They will take them to Los Angeles, and put them on the train to El Paso, Texas, and then to Mexico," said Josefina.

"But some of them are citizens," said Esperanza.

"It doesn't matter. They are causing problems for the government. They are talking about forming a farm workers' union and the government and the growers don't like that."

"What about their families? How will they know?"

"Word gets out. It is sad. They leave the buses parked at the station until late at night with those they captured on board. Families don't want to be separated from their loved ones and usually go with them. That is the idea. They call it a voluntary deportation. But it is not much of a choice."

Two immigration officials positioned themselves in front of the shed. The others left on the buses. Esperanza and the other women watched the despondent faces in the windows disappear.

Slowly, the women reassembled on the line and began to pack again. It had all lasted only a few minutes.

"What happens now?" asked Esperanza.

"*La Migra* will keep their eyes open for any strikers that may be back," said Josefina, nodding toward the two men stationed nearby. "And we go back to work and feel thankful it is not us on that bus."

Esperanza took a deep breath and went back to her spot. She was relieved, but still imagined the anguish of the strikers. Troubled thoughts stayed in her mind. Something seemed very wrong about sending people away from their own "free country" because they had spoken their minds.

\* \* \*

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- On a map, locate Mexico, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Baja California, and California. Trace railroad routes from Mexico into and through these states.
- Define the terms: *vaqueros*, *Abuelita*, *el jefe*, *fiesta*, immigration, *campesino*, strike, tortillas, migrant camps, company camp, packing shed, *pinata*, *second class citizen*.
- Examine a map of the Southwest region of the United States. Locate place names that reflect the Spanish/Mexican influence in that region of the United

States. Make a list of words commonly used in the United States today that reflect the Spanish influence.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. When Esperanza arrives in California, she learns that the workers are often segregated in different ways. There are company camps, migrant camps, camps for Japanese American workers, camps for "Okies" [workers from Oklahoma who had lost their homes because of the Dust Bowl], etc. Why did the owners of the farms want to keep the workers separated? Was this strategy successful for the farm owners?
2. Marta and her mother Ada are among the migrant camp workers who want to draw the workers together to strike. What do they hope the strike will accomplish? How do Esperanza and many of her fellow workers view the plan to strike?
3. When Esperanza's mother becomes ill, Esperanza decides that she must now be the adult and care for her mother and bring her Abuelita to join them. How did this new responsibility change her work routine? How did it affect the view that others had of her? How did she feel about herself?
4. When the immigration authorities and company guards came to round up the strikers, they sent Mexican American citizens as well as the immigrants back to Mexico. How could they ignore the citizenship of the Americans? Why do you think the authorities were able to get away with this?
5. What do you think was the most important lesson that Esperanza learned from her new life?

### **Activities**

1. Imagine that you have met Esperanza in the company camp and that you are working together. In a diary, record your first impressions of her and make a series of following entries recording the changes that you see in her.
2. History does not often mention the fact that American citizens of Mexican heritage were deported along with the Mexican immigrant workers during these years. Try to find out more about this event in United States history and report what you find to your class. Why do you think this event has been largely ignored in most history books? Can you find what happened to those citizens who were deported to Mexico?
3. Efforts continue today to organize farm workers throughout the United States. One of those organizations is the United Farm Workers and two of its early leaders are Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. Find out what changes the union has made in workers' lives and the roles of Chavez and Huerta in the union's work.

## **The Gold Cadillac**

by  
Mildred D. Taylor

Scholastic Inc., New York, 1999.

Recommended for Grade 5

### **Synopsis**

A family buys a new gold Cadillac and plans to drive from Ohio to Mississippi to visit other family members. They encounter racial prejudice on their drive and eventually decide that it will be safer to turn around and return home. The car symbolizes material wealth and creates problems for the African American family in the United States in the later 1940s and the 1950s.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate Toledo, Ohio and Mississippi on a map of the United States.
- Define and discuss the terms: prejudice, discrimination, bigotry, racism, persecution, segregation, courage

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What car did father drive home?
2. How did his children respond?
3. How did his wife Dee react to the new car?
4. Why was she upset about the new car?
5. Describe the neighbors and their neighborhood.
6. Where did father decide to go with the new car? Why did he want to go there?
7. What did his family, friends, and the neighbors advise? Why did mother decide to ride with him after she had refused to go in the car before this time?
8. What did other members of the family decide to do when father insisted upon driving to Mississippi?
9. What signs upset them along the road and in different places? Why were these signs displayed?
10. What happened when they reached Memphis?
11. Why did the policeman assume that the car was stolen? Why did the policeman take father to the police station even after seeing father's license and other papers for the auto?
12. What happened to father in the police station? Where were mother and the children while father was in the police station?
13. What did father say when he returned to the car?
14. Why did mother and father decide not to go to a hotel or drive on to Mississippi?
15. How did Wilma feel about sleeping in the car?
16. Why did father decide to change cars in Memphis?
17. How did father explain his treatment in Memphis and the South,
18. How was this treatment prejudiced?

19. What did father do with the new car when they got home? What did mother tell him to do about the car?
20. What kind of car did he drive after that visit to the South?
21. What did father do with the gold Cadillac? Why did he decide to change his auto?
22. What did father say he had decided about what was important?
23. Explain your opinion of mother and father and your reaction to the decisions they made.

### **Activities**

1. Has your family ever purchased a new car? How did you feel about the new car? How did your family react? How did your friends react to your new car? Why do you think people are so impressed with new cars? Draw a picture of the "dream car" that you would most like to own when you grow up. Under the picture, write a paragraph explaining why you think that car (or truck) is special.
2. Explain the terms discrimination and segregation. Read about the laws that existed in many parts of the United States before 1964 that permitted segregation and discrimination. Describe the affects of these laws on the people of this country.
3. Find out about the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Act. Explain how laws like this have changed our country and made it better for all of the people.
4. Make a chart with the following names on it. Make two columns. In the first column write the person's or group's name. In the second column, write a sentence about what they did to try to change things and help pass better laws. Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, WEB DuBois, Alice Paul, Fanny Lou Hammer, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, NAACP, ACLU, Morris Dees, Southern Poverty Law Center. Try to find some more names that you think should be added to this list.
5. Make a list of people who you think are heroes because they tried to stand up for what is right and have worked (and are working) to make this country and the world better for all people in the way that they are treated.
6. What are "human rights"? What are "civil rights"? Explain why these rights are so important to all of us. Make a list of things that you can do to stand up for what is right and good.

### **Other Suggested Sources**

- **Mississippi Bridge** by Mildred D. Taylor. New York: Bantam Skylark Book, 1992.
- **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry** by Mildred D. Taylor. New York: Puffin Books, 1991.

## Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

by

Mildred D. Taylor

Puffin Books, New York, 1991  
Recommended for Grades 5-8

### **Synopsis**

Cassie Logan's family was very proud of the farm land they owned in Mississippi and were determined to hold onto it despite the harsh economy of the Depression years and the discrimination against African Americans. Cassie's older brother Stacey understood the implications of that discrimination but Cassie had not realized the harshness of it yet. However, public humiliation at the hands of a white neighbor, injuries done to her father, and the fear stirred by the "night riders" made Cassie realize how unfair and cruel that discrimination was. With the help of her family, Cassie also learned the importance of pride and determination.

*Excerpt from the Chapter 5 pp. 112-116*

\* \* \*

It was then that I bumped into Lillian Jean Simms.

"Why don't you look where you're going?" she asked huffily. Jeremy and her two younger brothers were with her. "Hey, Cassie," said Jeremy.

"Hey, Jeremy," I said solemnly, keeping my eyes on Lillian Jean.

"Well, apologize," she ordered.

"What?"

"You bumped into me. Now you apologize."

I did not feel like messing with Lillian Jean. I had other things on my mind.

"Okay," I said, starting past, "I'm sorry."

Lillian Jean sidestepped in front of me. "That ain't good enough. Get down in the road."

I looked up at her. "You crazy?"

"You can't watch where you going, get in the road. Maybe that way you won't be bumping into decent white folks with your little nasty self."

This second insult of the day was almost more than I could bear. Only the thought of Big Ma up in Mr. Jamison's office saved Lillian Jean's lip. "I ain't nasty," I said, properly holding my temper in check, "and if you're so afraid of getting bumped, walk down there yourself."

I started past her again, and again she got in my way. "Ah, let her pass, Lillian Jean," said Jeremy. "She ain't done nothin' to you."

"She done something to me just standing in front of me." With that, she reached for my arm and attempted to push me off the sidewalk. I braced myself and swept my arm backward, out of Lillian Jean's reach. But someone caught it from behind, painfully twisting it, and shoved me off the sidewalk into the road. I landed bottom first on the ground.

Mr. Simms glared down at me. "When my gal Lillian Jean says for you to get yo'self off the sidewalk, you get, you hear?"

Behind him were his sons R.W. and Melvin. People from the store began to ring the Simmses. "Ain't that the same little nigger was cuttin' up back there at Jim Lee's?" someone asked.

"Yeah, she the one," answered Mr. Simms. "You hear me talkin' to you, gal? You 'pologize to Miz Lillian Jean this minute."

I stared up at Mr. Simms, frightened. Jeremy appeared frightened too. "I--I apologized already."

Jeremy seemed relieved that I had spoken. "She d-did, Pa. R-right now, 'fore y'all come, she did--"

Mr. Simms turned an angry gaze upon his son and Jeremy faltered, looked at me, and hung his head.

Then Mr. Simms jumped into the street. I moved away from him, trying to get up. He was a mean-looking man, red in the face and bearded. I was afraid he was going to hit me before I could get to my feet, but he didn't. I scrambled up and ran blindly for the wagon. Someone grabbed me and I fought wildly, attempting to pull loose. "Stop, Cassie!" Big Ma said. "Stop, it's me. We're going home now."

"Not 'fore she 'pologizes to my gal, y'all ain't," said Mr. Simms.

Big Ma gazed down at me, fear in her eyes, then back at the growing crowd. "She jus' a child--"

"Tell her, Aunty--"

Big Ma looked at me again, her voice cracking as she spoke. "Go on, child...apologize."

"But, Big Ma--"

Her voice hardened. "Do like I say."

I swallowed hard.

"Go on!"

"I'm sorry," I mumbled.

"I'm sorry, *Miz Lillian Jean*," demanded Mr. Simms.

"Big Ma!" I balked.

"Say it, child."

A painful tear slid down my cheek and my lips trembled.

"I'm sorry...M-Miz...Lillian Jean."

When the words had been spoken, I turned and fled crying into the back of the wagon. No day in my life had ever been as cruel as this one.

*Excerpt from Chapter 6 pp. 123-130*

\* \* \*

Mama came back from the kitchen with Stacey behind her. "What is it?" she asked, looking from Big Ma to Uncle Hammer.

"Charlie Simms knocked Cassie off the sidewalk in Strawberry and the child just told Hammer," said Big Ma in one breath, still holding on to Uncle Hammer's arm.

"Oh, Lord," Mama groaned. "Stacey, get Mr. Morrison. Quick, now!" As Stacey sped from the room, Mama's eyes darted to the shotgun over the bed,

and she edged between it and Uncle Hammer. Uncle Hammer was watching her and he said quietly, "Don't worry. I ain't gotta use David's gun...I got my own."

Suddenly Mama lunged to the side door, blocking it with her slender body. "Hammer, now you listen to me--"

But Uncle Hammer gently but firmly pushed her to one side and, brushing Big Ma from his arm, opened the door and bounded down the steps into the light rain.

Little Man, Christopher John, and I dashed to the door as Big Ma and Mama ran after him. "Get back inside," Mama called over her shoulder, but she was too busy trying to grab Uncle Hammer to see to it that we obeyed, and we did not move. "Hammer, Cassie's all right," she cried. "Don't go making unnecessary trouble!"

"Unnecessary trouble! You think my brother died and I got my leg half blown off in their German war to have some redneck knock Cassie around anytime it suits him? If I'd've knocked his girl down, you know what'd've happened to me? Yeah, you know all right. Right now I'd be hanging from that oak over yonder. Let go of me, Mary."

Mama and Big Ma could not keep him from reaching the car. But just as the Packard roared to life, a huge figure loomed from the darkness and jumped into the other side, and the car zoomed angrily down the drive into the blackness of the Mississippi night.

"Where'd he go?" I asked as Mama slowly climbed the steps. Her face under the glow of the lamp was tired, drained. "He went up to the Simmses', didn't he? Didn't he, Mama?"

"He's not going anywhere," Mama said, stepping aside and waiting until both Big Ma and Stacey were inside; then she locked the door.

"Mr. Morrison'll bring him back," said Christopher John confidently, although he looked somewhat bewildered by all that had happened.

"If he don't" said Little Man ominously, "I betcha Uncle Hammer'll teach that ole Mr. Simms a thing or two. "Round here hitting on Cassie."

"I hope he knocks his block off," I said.

Mama's gaze blazed down upon us. "I think little mouths that have so much to say must be very tired."

"No, ma'am, Mama, we ain't--"

"Go to bed."

"Mama, it ain't but--" Mama's face hardened, and I knew that it would not be in my best interest to argue further. I turned and did as I was told. Christopher John and Little Man did the same. When I got to the door, I asked, "Ain't Stacey coming?"

Mama glanced down at Stacey sitting by the fire. "I don't recall his mouth working so hard, do you?"

"No'm," I muttered and went into my room. After a few minutes, Mama came in. Without a word of reprimand, she picked up my clothes from where I had tossed them at the foot of the bed, and absently draping them over the back of a chair, she said, "Stacey tells me you blame Big Ma for what happened today. Is that right?"

I thought over her question and answered, "Not for all of it. Just for making me apologize to that ole dumb Lillian Jean Simms. She oughtn't've done that, Mama. Papa wouldn't've--"

"I don't want to hear what Papa wouldn't have done!" Mama snapped. "Or what Mr. Morrison wouldn't have done or Uncle Hammer! You were with Big Ma and she did what she had to do and believe me, young lady, she didn't like it one bit more than you did."

"Well," I muttered, " maybe so, but--"

"There's no maybe to it."

"Yes'm," I said softly, deciding that it was better to study the patchwork pattern on the quilt until the anger left Mama's eyes and I could talk to her again. After a moment she sat beside me on the bed and raised my chin with the tip of her forefinger. "Big Ma didn't want you to be hurt," she said. "That was the only thing on her mind...making sure Mr. Simms didn't hurt you."

"Yes'm," I murmured, then flared, "But, Mama, that Lillian Jean ain't got the brains of a flea! How come I gotta go 'round calling her "Miz" like she grown or something?"

Mama's voice grew hard. "Because that's the way of things, Cassie."

"The way of things?" I asked warily.

"Baby, you had to grow up a little today. I wish...well, no matter what I wish. It happened and you have to accept the fact that in the world outside this house, things are not always as we would have them to be."

"But, Mama, it ain't fair. I didn't do nothin' to that confounded Lillian Jean. How come Mr. Simms went and pushed me like he did?"

Mama's eyes looked deeply into mine, locked into them, and she said in a tight, clear voice, "Because he thinks Lillian Jean is better than you are, Cassie, and when you--"

"That ole scrawny, chicken-legged, snaggle-toothed, cross--"

"Cassie." Mama did not raise her voice, but the quiet force of my name silenced me. "Now," she said, folding my hand in hers, "I didn't say that Lillian Jean *is* better than you. I said Mr. Simms only *thinks* she is. In fact, he thinks she's better than Stacey or Little Man or Christopher John--"

"Just 'cause she's his daughter?" I asked, beginning to think Mr. Simms was a bit touched in the head.

"No, baby, because she's white."

Mama's hold tightened on mine, but I exclaimed, "Ah, shoot! White ain't nothin'!"

Mama's grip did not lessen. "It is something, Cassie. White is something just like black is something. Everybody born on this earth is something and nobody, no matter what color, is better than anybody else."

"Then how come Mr. Simms don't know that?"

"Because he's one of those people who has to believe that white people are better than black people to make himself feel big." I stared questioningly at Mama, not really understanding...

\* \* \*



...So now, even though seventy years have passed since slavery, most white people still think of us as they did then - that we're not as good as they are - and people like Mr. Simms hold on to that belief harder than some other folks because they have little else to hold on to. For him to believe that he is better than we are makes him think that he's important, simply because he's white.

Mama relaxed her grip. I knew that she was waiting for me to speak. There was a sinking feeling in my stomach and I felt as if the world had turned itself upside down with me in it. Then I thought of Lillian Jean and a surging anger gurgled upward and I retaliated, "Well, she ain't!" but I leaned closer to Mama, anxiously hoping that she would agree with me.

"Of course they aren't," Mama said. "White people may demand our respect, but what we give them is not respect but fear. What we give to our own people is far more important because it's given freely. Now you may have to call Lillian Jean 'Miss' because the white people say so, but you'll also call our own young ladies at church 'Miss' because you really do respect them."

"Baby, we have no choice of what color we're born or who our parents are or whether we're rich or poor. What we do have is some choice over what we make of our lives once we're here." Mama cupped my face in her hands. "And I pray to God you'll make the best of yours." She hugged me warmly then and motioned me under the covers.

As she turned the lamp down low, I asked, "Mama, Uncle Hammer. If Mr. Morrison can't stop him, what'll happen?"

"Mr. Morrison will bring him back."

"But just what if he can't and Uncle Hammer gets to Mr. Simms?"

A shadowy fear fled across her face, but disappeared with the dimming light, "I think...I think you've done enough growing up for one day, Cassie," she said without answering my question. "Uncle Hammer'll be all right. Now go to sleep."

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate Mississippi on a map of the United States.
- Define the terms: Civil War, slavery, abolition, segregation, Jim Crow laws, prejudice, discrimination, racism, night riders, the Great Depression, civil rights.
- Read about the Emancipation Proclamation and the "Civil War" Amendments (#13, 14, and 15)

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Cassie is nine-years-old when this story takes place in the state of Mississippi in the 1930s. Using information you gather from this excerpt, describe what it was like to be African American and growing up in that state at that time.
2. Cassie is shocked and outraged at the way she is treated and the fact that Big Ma [her grandmother] does not leap to her defense. Why does Big Ma make Cassie apologize? Do you think it was necessary for her to do so?

3. Lillian Jean's brother Jeremy tries to "smooth things over" but is silenced by his father's look. Why do you think he tried to speak up? Why do you think he fell silent?
4. Big Mama tried to calm Uncle Hammer down by telling him that Cassie had not really been hurt by the incident in the town. Uncle Hammer disagrees and tells Big Mama to look into Cassie's eyes. What do you think Uncle Hammer sees in Cassie's eyes? What kinds of pain are there other than physical pain? Can it do serious harm to a person? Explain your answer.
5. Mama and Big Ma are frightened when Uncle Hammer wants to go after Mr. Simms. Why are they so afraid? Do you think they were correct in their fear?
6. Mama tries to explain the "way of their world" to Cassie. How would you have explained to a nine-year-old who had not yet realized the discrimination that existed in their society?
7. What point do you think Mama is trying to make about respect? Do you agree with her?
8. How has our society changed since the 1930s? Do you think that there are still things that need to be changed? Describe some of the different kinds of prejudice that continues to exist today.

### Activities

1. Work with a group of students and read about the Jim Crow laws and segregation in the United States and report to the class on the harm it caused to the people and the nation.
2. Working in a group, read about the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other civil rights laws and explain how they have changed our society since 1930. Identify some things that you believe remain to be done.
3. Read the whole book **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry**. Make a Venn diagram identifying a list of characteristics of a school and showing what these characteristics were like in the 1930s versus today.
4. As the story develops, Cassie and her brothers learn some hard truths about surviving in a segregated, discriminatory world while keeping your own self-respect. Identify some of the things that they learn to recognize no matter how wrong and explain how they manage to keep their self-respect.
5. Read about some of the people who have worked for equal rights for everyone in our nation. A few suggestions are listed below, but there are many others. Look in your library and your history books for other names.
 

Elizabeth Cady Stanton	Sojourner Truth	Frederick Douglass
Fanny Lou Hammer	WEB DuBois	Alice Paul
Martin Luther King, Jr.	Rosa Parks	Gloria Steinem
Asa Phillip Randolph	Wilma Mankiller	Dolores Huerta
6. Make a large scroll to place on the bulletin board. On the scroll, write a proclamation listing the civil and human rights that you think everyone should have. Compare your list to the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

7. Make a second scroll for the bulletin board. On this scroll make a second list under a title indicating that they are things that you and your fellow citizens must work to change for true equality to exist.

**Other Suggested Sources**

- **The Gold Cadillac** by Mildred D. Taylor
- **Mississippi Bridge** by Mildred D. Taylor
- **Dragonwings** by Laurence Yep
- **Star Fisher** by Laurence Yep

## The Watsons Go To Birmingham

by  
Christopher Paul Curtis

Bantam Doubleday Dell, New York, 1963  
Recommended for Grades 5-8

### **Synopsis**

This novel is told in the first person by Kenny Watson, a fourth grade student who lives with his African American family in Flint, Michigan in 1963. The family is introduced by a series of vignettes that give the backgrounds of the strict, loving parents, an older brother, and the younger sister. It is the "tough" older brother, thirteen-year-old Byron, who gets into so much trouble that the family decides to go back "home" to Birmingham, Alabama. There, the parents reason, his strong grandmother can teach him some good common sense. Although the story focuses on the family and their relationships, the background of the Civil Rights Movement and racism are introduced in a way that adds authenticity and historical interest. In Alabama, the Watsons hit these problems head on when Kenny's little sister Joetta is in the church as a bomb goes off killing four young African American girls. Kenny's sister escapes but we see fear through the eyes of Kenny- who at first thinks his sister might be one of the victims. The book **Does Not** dwell on the horror, but uses the event to show how racist terror can invade even the shelter of home. In doing this, the civil rights movement and the bombing in Birmingham have a human strand. The epilogue of the book is excellent in discussing some background and heroes of this period.

### **Quote**

"Kenny, things ain't ever going to be fair. How's it fair that two grown men could hate Negroes so much that they'd kill some kids just to stop them from going to school. But you gotta understand that that's the way it is and keep on steppin'."

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Define the following: prejudice, racism, bigot, segregation, integration
- Discuss the events of the fifties and sixties that lead up to the desegregation of schools and other public areas.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss the Watson family. What characters are similar to people you know? How are they similar?
2. Mr. and Mrs. Watson know that there is a lot of racism in the South before they move to Birmingham. Why do they still feel they should take their family there?
3. Give examples of prejudice and racism in this book. How did the Watsons react?

4. Why do you think the author does not dwell on the scene at the church but rather on Kenny's reaction to it?
5. Look at the quote. What other evidence is there in the book that life isn't fair?

### **Activities**

1. Do a report on another incident of this era.
2. Role play how Kenny will tell his friends about what happened.
3. Write a journal as you read describing your reaction to the events in the book.

### **Other Suggested Sources**

- **It's Bud, Not Buddy.**
- **Been to Yesterday, Poems of Life.**

## **Children of the Wolf**

by  
Jane Yolen

Viking Press, New York, 1984.  
Recommended for Grades 5-6

### **Synopsis**

This novel is based upon missionary documented accounts of some children in India in the 1920s. As an orphan in India, Mohandas becomes involved in the lives of two young girls who have been raised by wolves. Mohandas tries desperately to protect the girls from the other children and to establish communication.

Historical fiction novel.

### **Quote**

"But most of all I was ashamed that the little wolf-girls, who had done no one any harm and who had been living out their lives as uncomplaining and unthinking as the animals in the jungle, should have been brought here to be civilized against their wills. And I, who had also been abandoned at The Home, had been powerless to stop it. p.47

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Define, discuss, and explain the existence of orphanages.
- Provide historical information regarding feral children.
- Locate India on a map.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss the events that led to the search for the two girls.
2. Discuss the captivity of the two girls and their treatment.
3. Discuss the responses of the girls as well as their behavior during captivity.
4. Analyze the results of the captivity in regard to the students' reaction.

### **Activities**

1. List the variety of methods Mohandas used to try to communicate with the two girls.
2. Write a reaction essay to the events that occurred on page 102.
3. Write a newspaper article describing the story.

**The Cure**  
A Novel By  
Sonia Levitin

Harcourt Brace & Company (Silver Whistle), New York, 1999  
Recommended for Grades 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>

**Synopsis**

Gemm, a child in the year 2407, must undergo "the cure" when he exhibits a desire to sing and dance in his world that allows no deviant behaviors or differences among humans. This expression of individuality will conflict with the desired goals of the community of Conformity, Harmony, and Tranquility. He has one chance to save himself and is transported back in time to 1348 Europe, where the Black Death threatens and the Jews of Strasbourg, Germany are held accountable. He becomes Johannes, a sixteen-year-old Jewish boy who loves his silver flute and his neighbor, Margarite. However, antisemitism and fear threaten the life of his family and his belief in the goodness of humans. The purpose is for Gemm to learn to associate music with pain - intending to affect a cure. When he returns, he is declared cured, but his memories don't fade as predicted. Gemm is forbidden to speak of his ordeal yet he starts to tell his twin about "choosing what we will believe."

"It will begin with us...I will teach you. Then you and I will teach the others. We will teach them about love."

**Pre-Reading Activities**

- Discuss the issue of antisemitism prevalent during the Middle Ages.
- Locate Strasbourg, Germany on a map.

**Historical Perspective**

In the Middle Ages, belief in legends and myths was common. One of those myths was the blood libel - Jews were killing Christian children in order to satisfy their supposed need for "Christian blood" in making Passover bread or other rituals. The Blood Libels were the most influential and cruel legends in the arsenal of anti-Jewish beliefs, perpetuating the myth of the evil and inhuman nature of the Jews inciting the Christian population to take bloody revenge. In 1215, the Church established the doctrine that the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ is contained in the consecrated Host and wine. Soon stories began to surface that Jews stole, mutilated, or burned the Host in order to kill Jesus once more. Other popular beliefs showed Jews growing horns and tails - attributes of the devil. [Allegations of ritual murder in the 20<sup>th</sup> century surfaced in Russia, in the United States in the South in 1928, and in the propaganda spread by the Nazis. Posters and political cartoons with disparaging captions depicted Jews with horns and tails.]

In 1095, Pope Urbanus called for a crusade to liberate Jerusalem from the Muslims and infidels. On their way to Jerusalem, the crusaders left a track of death and destruction behind in the Jewish communities along the Rhine and Danube. With the Crusades, the status of the Jews as second-class citizens

became entrenched in Church dogma and state laws throughout Christian Europe.

After the Crusades, expulsions of entire Jewish communities became frequent events. In 1290, all Jews were expelled from England - about 16,000 people. In 1306, Jews were expelled from France. Expulsions were often preceded by accusations of ritual murder and anti-Jewish riots.

The 14<sup>th</sup> century was overshadowed by a great disaster: Europe was hit by the plague. Between 1348 and 1350, the epidemics killed millions of people - a third of the European population. As the real causes were unknown, foreigners, travelers, and the Jews, the only non-Christian minority in all affected countries, were accused as having spread the disease. Many believed that Jewish communities were taking revenge for decades of anti-Jewish hostility by poisoning the wells and water supplies. As the disease progressed from Spain and Italy to England and Poland, about 300 Jewish communities were attacked, and thousands of Jews were killed and burned at the stake. In the German states, almost all Jewish communities were expelled. Many preventative measures, such as sanitation, killing of rats, and prevention of the transport of rats in ships arriving from ports in which the disease was endemic, were effective in reducing the incidence of plague.

On February 14, 1349, the Jews of Strasbourg were burnt on a wooden scaffold in the Jewish cemetery. They asked the town leaders to permit them to prepare themselves for martyrdom. They asked that musicians be hired to play dancing tunes so that they could enter the presence of God with singing. One person, a Jewish doctor, was documented as a survivor of the Strasbourg community, and was identified as living in Frankfurt some twenty years later.

*Reading One pp. 8-10*

United Social Alliance, Western Sector: *The Year of Tranquility 2407*

High in the sky a bird circled, sending down a piercing sound, long and wavering.

Gemm stared up at the bird, his heart pounding in alarm. He wanted to run, to soar, and to call out something high pitched and wavering, long and lovely, as he had done in his dream. Deep inside his breast, a feeling surged, beating like the wings of that bird, longing for release. He wanted...he wanted...he had no name for it, but it was like the bird and the Scooper and his dream.

"Gemm 16884!" called his twin. "Come on! What are you looking at?"

But Gemm 16884 could not pull himself away from the vision of that bird, its beautiful sounds, and the desires it aroused in him. He found himself swaying, shoulders and arms moving in rhythm to an inner sound not unlike the call of the bird. "Ah, la--la-la-la--ah, eee-doo!"

As the sounds flowed from him, Gemm's entire being loosened, as if he had been chained and was now suddenly released. "Ah...ah...lo...lo...la... dee...dee...oh!"

Swiftly the others surrounded him. They laid him down on the turf, their faces near his. One hand clasped his pulse, the other his throat.

"Get him to the compound."



"Quick, we have to put him on Med Com."

"Should we call for assistance? For transport?"

"Get away!" Gemm 16884 shouted. "Leave me alone. I don't need anyone!"

Still they pressed upon him. "Hush, what's come over you? Those monstrous noises!"

"Leave me alone! I want...I need to..." He lifted his chin and let the sounds roar from his chest, the glad and free and lovely sounds. "La...la...la...dum...da...da!"

They reached out to console him. Gemm pushed them away, hard. They fell back, crying out in shock. Pushing was not allowed. Anger and hostility were unheard of, except in small children before they were trained to tranquility. What had he done? Gemm 16884 moved away from the others, walking backward. They watched him, stunned. Gemma's hands covered her mouth. Kira began to cry.

Kir reached out. "In love, we will get you some help." Kit's fingers grazed the com button on his cuff.

"I need nothing!" Gemm 16884 cried. "Leave me alone!" He bent down and picked up an artificial red rock and threw it. The rock grazed Kir's head, then landed on the ground and disintegrated completely. A smear of blood seeped along the edge of Kir's mask, staining his yellow jumper. Gemma screamed. Now, hysterically, Kir summoned help, touching his com button. "Request immediate assistance!"

Fear gripped Gemm. "Kir! Kira and Gemma, listen," Gemm cried out. "In love, I ask forgiveness. Please don't call them! Don't let them take me."

In moments, four transporters arrived in the hover-shuttle. The four, dressed in the grim black and red, rushed toward Gemm 16884 and took him away.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. *Prediction:* What do you think the "monstrous sounds" emanating from Gemm could be? Why might they be so offensive?
2. What leads you to believe that in 2407 expression of anger is unacceptable?

### *Reading Two pp.12-13*

Gemm saw his bodily signs registering on the screen. He took a deep breath, using the control techniques they had learned as small children. Monitors recorded his pulse and brain activity, hormone level, and a dozen other indicators of health and mood. Of course, he could not alter his blood chemistry, but with biofeedback techniques he could regulate his mood. He let the mantra flood his mind: *Conformity begets Harmony...*

"Ah, he's calming down," said the medic. "Good. Just a few months now before your Great Choice, isn't it? That can be stressful. Then, the parenting--the parties, all the decisions about food, colors, entertainment..." As he spoke the medic carefully noted the readout. Gemm saw that the indicators were leveling off now. Good.

"Yes, I'm sure that's what it was," Gemm said. He recalled having been given some kind of injection when the transporters took him--probably serotonin

concentrate. He was feeling peaceful now - mellow, well-o. The rhythmic murmuring of the Med Com caught his attention, intruding on his reverie. With effort, Gemm turned his mind toward the mantra, the Ladder of Five: *Conformity begets Harmony begets Tranquility begets Peace begets Universal Good. Shout Praises!*

The medic stood over Gemm, panning his reflexes with the sonar scope. Casually he said, "Your twin told us something about a dream."

"I'm willing to take medication," Gemm said. "I beg forgiveness..."

"And in the dream you were making certain sounds - music?" The medic coughed slightly to hide his embarrassment. "Do you understand what you did? Do you know the law?"

"Indeed I do," replied Gemm hastily.

"And that you asked for privacy today. Is that so?"

"I just thought...it was foolish and perverse," Gemm said. "I've been working too hard, getting ready for career choice."

The medic coded the data into Gemm's file. His mask, snow white with a blue nose and pointed blue eyebrows, was usually the style favored by teachers or enforcers. Gemm wondered how the medic might look with his mask removed. Instantly he was seized with alarm. A loud *bleep* came from the computer; the medic started.

"My, my. Something is certainly going on here. Dramatic shift in hormone level. Look, I am not an enforcer, only a medic. But I advise you to control these outbursts. You have been taught better. You know that venting such...such passions denies tranquillity, arousing instead...well, we need not speak of it. Music." He spoke the word with loathing. "Really, I am surprised. Nobody else in your birth batch has such notions."

With a mighty effort, Gemm 16884 brought his thoughts and his bodily signs under control. The screen hummed softly, a purring sound.

The medic rubbed the side of his mask, pulled his chin. "Well, it might only be the stress of choices. However," he added firmly, "I want you to come in at once should you have a recurrence. These things must be short-circuited at once. Do you understand?"

\* \* \* \*

*pp.15-16*

From the screen came a *bleep*, then a flash--FOLK FACT: "In Past Time people died at various ages and were actually forbidden to choose recycling!" Another *bleep*, and the image and audio abruptly vanished.

"Imagine that!" Gemma exclaimed.

"What?"

"In Past Time people couldn't even decide their own death. Can you imagine?"

"Don't say *death*," Gemm chided her gently. "It's harsh."

"All right. Recycle. Wouldn't you hate not being able to choose? Just yesterday Mori and Mora told me they intend to go next week."

A kind of chill gripped Gemm, like iron hands clasping his shoulders, moving around to his heart. "Mori? Mora? You mean, they want to...leave? Why?"

Gemma pulled away from Gemm's grasp. "What's the matter with you? Maybe they're bored. They don't feel like parenting, they haven't found a career they like, and anyway, it's their right to recycle anytime they want."

"But...but...don't you care? I thought you like them."

"Of course I like Mori and Mora, but there are plenty of others - what's the matter with you, Gemm? Why do you care if they choose to recycle? It's their right!"

A sense of emptiness suddenly overwhelmed Gemma 16884, and all he could think of to describe it was the feeling he had had once, years ago, when the Meal Mate was empty and it took hours for it to be repaired. Gemma had run to get the Leader, who immediately summoned help. Now his breathing felt erratic, and his voice was strange even in his own ears. "I'll miss them," he said. "I...I wish-"

"Wishes are wasteful," Gemma recited.

Suddenly Gemm had a vision of all the people he had ever known, filing past him in identical gait, wearing identical jumpers except for color - all wearing faces that were somehow alike even though the designers tried to make them amusing and interesting. There seemed to be a huge gap somewhere, preventing him from seeing and knowing, though what it was he lacked he could not begin to say.

"Gemma," he whispered, and there was a terrible urgency in him, a sense that if he did not seize this moment, something vital would be lost forever. "Gemma, let me look at you."

"I'm here," she said, her voice muffled. "Go to sleep, my twin."

"I mean - I want - I need..." Almost of their own volition, Gemm's fingertips traced the flesh of Gemma's cheek, the line of her jaw, and Gemm's breath caught in his chest and throat as his trembling fingers pulled at the edge of her mask.

"What are you doing?" Gemma cried in alarm. "Gemm 16884, are you utterly *flashed*?"

"Please," Gemm whispered, his mind grasping for the right words to express his longing. "Let me, I beg you, just look upon your face. Remove your mask. Just for a moment, let me see - "

In the next moment, Gemma fled along the hallway and vanished from Gemm's sight.

\* \* \* \*

*pp. 24-25*

"Sometimes, in special cases," said Eti, "one who is found deviant may petition to be considered for The Cure. It is rare to be accepted. Rarer still to complete The Cure."

"But why is it so rare?" Gemm felt breathless. Now he remembered hearing rumors of strange happenings in the distant mountains, people vanishing or being transformed. Transformed into what? He and his friends had always thought this was a myth, something like a Folk Fact, maybe true, maybe only designed for amusement. This, then, was the idea that had nudged at his memory before but which he could not summon. *There was a cure.*

The two leaders shared a lingering, reluctant look. "For one thing," said Eti softly, "it involves pain."

"Pain," echoed his twin.

"For another," continued Eti, "few can withstand the procedure. When given the choice, most people choose swift and beautiful recycling. At least that is a known quantity. And painless."

Gemm 16884 gazed at his twin. Neither of them had ever experienced pain, only momentary intimations of it - a slight cut or cramp, healed almost immediately by a jetting of medication or a beam of the laser. Yet the thought of pain terrified Gemm, and he heard Gemma's swift breathing and saw the flickering in her eyes.

"Gemm," she said, moving toward him, "you need not experience pain. Don't do it for me. I will go with you, swiftly and sweetly. They say that the recycling is the most dazzling experience, quite amazing, quite--"

"In love," Gemm 16884 said loudly, "I will make this decision, not you. I will go into pain. I will petition. I will do anything to live."

\* \* \* \*

*[Gemm 16884 found himself in a room filled with spectators, the powerful Elders who wore deep blue velvet robes and masks of woven gold. One of the Elders displayed a hologram that revealed Gemm's genetic structure and his entire life. Nothing was hidden and Gemm was diagnosed as a deviant because of certain irregularities in his gait, in his dreams, and in his persistence in making music. Music was viewed as a curse from a time when people actually wanted to be different, a source of competition and strife. It came from a time when people selected their own mates based on love for the individual. This was now viewed as an evil absurdity. Poetry, art, music - these were all evils that aroused the emotions and endangered Harmony, Tranquility, and Conformity. They had to be rooted out. Gemm had a choice: to go quietly into "recycling" or undergo the danger of "The Cure." He chose the cure and was sent into Past Time where he assumed the identity of a young Jewish musician in Strasbourg, Germany in 1348. The horror of what he experienced there was expected to make Gemm abhor all music.]*

### **Discussion Questions**

3. What concepts about family and philosophy can you gain from these views?
4. The Elders laughed at Past Time concepts of diversity and ridiculed emotion. The motto is *Conformity begets Harmony begets Tranquillity begets Peace begets Universal Good*. Is there any truth to their claims? Where does their thinking go wrong?

*Reading Two pp. 38-42  
Strasbourg, Germany, 1348*

\* \* \*

Mother comes out and taps my arm. "Have you seen the children, Johannes?" Benjamin and Rochele are "the children." I am counted as an adult [16], already in business with my father and known by the gentiles as Johannes,

son of Menachem, the moneylender. All my life I will be called Johannes, the moneylender--never Johannes the musician, though I know in my heart that I am a musician.

I call back to Mother, "Don't worry. The sun is still at midpoint. They are only playing on the bridge, maybe picking frogs from the water, who knows?" I blow several notes on my flute to show my lack of concern. Mother vanishes into the house, and I can smell wood smoke and food scents in the air.

The sisters are not coming. Margarite is no doubt home, helping to prepare the Seder meal. Her father, Elias, is a sad-eyed man with red hair and a quiet disposition. Elias must endure the hatred of the gentile butchers who, when they see him, always spit.

"Johannes!" Grandmother calls, her tone crusty and irritable. "Go find the children. *Rasch! Rasch!* They should not be out so late on this day."

"I'm going now, Oma." With my hand on Grandmother's back, I can feel the sharp shoulder blades and the small hump on her back, even through her heavy shawl....

I put away my flute in its velvet case, take my hat and cloak. Mother calls after me, "Johannes! Bring me six more eggs from Frau Rivka, and take her this jar of honey."...

I walk along the curved, narrow street. There is the hovel of Moshe the Bent. He used to weave with those fine, long fingers of his, until Jews were forbidden in the trades. Moshe has an old fiddle and plays it for weddings. Zemel, the baker, glances up from the oven inside his shop. He looks exhausted. He has baked *matzos* for all the Jews in Strasbourg, and his hands are swollen and burnt. He is not careless, only overworked. He is allowed only two apprentices and must pay a heavy tax for each. Such things are well regulated by the town council; one Jew baker, one butcher, one rabbi, three teachers, two tailors, and as many moneylenders as possible--let them kill one another with their competition.

From his upstairs loft, Dovie, the shipbuilder, long without work, calls out, "Hullo, Johannes! Watch yourself. Holy week starts tomorrow, but one never knows..."

I shrug and grin. "I know, I know."

The smell of herbs rises from Saul's garden. Even some gentiles buy from him, ignoring the law. Saul's hut is so small that in summer his children sleep on the roof. Last year one fell off to his death, and Saul's wife still weeps.

There is Rabbi Meier with his sons, standing at the upstairs window, nodding and waving. "*Gut yom tov!*" they shout, and I call back the same.

Nearer the cathedral are the grand house of several wealthy Jews, like Vivelin Rote, who boasts that he lent sixty-one thousand florin to King Edward III of England. He and Jeckelin, another wealthy moneylender, dress in fur-trimmed cloaks. The villa on the corner belongs to Meister Jakon, the singer, whose fortune was inherited from his grandparents. The Jews grin when they see him and tell each other, "If I had his loot, believe me, I'd be singing, too!" Meister Jakon and I have played music together. Jakon's voice and my flute, people said, were like an angel choir.

At the canal I look for Benjamin and Rochele, calling their names. Rochele likes to tarry at the well and talk to people. Mama has told her a thousand times not to talk to strangers, but still she does. Benjamin is little better for sending on errands. He stops at every bridge, poking the water for frogs or fishes.

But the children are not at the canal. ...

A small crowd is gathered across from the cathedral, listening to the ravings of a wandering friar. He wears a corded belt around his loose-woven linen tunic, which was once white but is now various shades of gray and tan. His beard is ragged, hanging halfway down his chest; his hair is wild. There, too, are Rochele and Benjamin, pushing against the crowd. I grab Benjamin by the shoulder and Rochele by the arm. They have set down the water bucket - bad children! - and are all ears and eyes. The friar is shouting, "Now you must know what happens to sinners!"

"Come away from here!" I scold, but Benjamin pushes my hand away.

"Come home. Mama is waiting, Oma is frantic. You don't belong here with all these people." But, in truth, I am also drawn in by the friar's ravings.

"Upon my soul, it happened just last autumn that a ship rode into the harbor at Messina, the main port in Sicily, and all its crew lay dead at the oars or dying. They had boils upon their flesh, under the armpits, and in the groin. Horrible black boils, they were, oozing pus and blood; and they spat blood and they stank of their poisonous pestilence - and after five days, all of them were dead."

Rochele gasps. Benjamin asks me, "Where is Sicily?"

"How would I know?"

"It is a pestilence sent by God, punishment for man's lust and greed. Repent now, ye sinners! Repent!"

"Aye," murmur several women, nodding, their hands folded over their breasts. "It is surely a sign from our Lord. Just last week Pastor Richards found a bloodstain on the altar cloth." They murmur and cross themselves.

The crowd draws back. Merchants return to their stalls. Rochele tugs at my arm. "What made those sailors die? Were they wicked, like Jonah? Did God punish them?"

"We know nothing," says Benjamin, "except that it is a strange pestilence."

"What sickness brings black boils?" Rochele asks. "And stinking?" She shudders. "Will it come to us, too?"

"No, no," I say, to soothe her. "The sickness - it is a sickness that comes to men at sea," I say, though in truth I know nothing of such plagues.

"Not only sailors die," Benjamin says darkly.

"Frau Rivka's babies both died," Rochele says. "In our family," she asserts, "children don't die. It is because of Grandmother's blessings over us."

"Hush!" I shout. "You do not say such things, ever."

"Thou must not tempt the devil," quotes Benjamin, "by saying how well thou art."

I pull them along. "Come, we must hurry." We go across the square, past the enormous bishop's palace, to the street of inns and fine stores and the homes of the wealthy burghers.

The guild house, with its sober façade and deep carvings, is decked with a satin banner of purple and gold. Beside it the tavern, or *trinkhaus*, emits the happy sounds of leisure and pleasure. Two men stumble out, arm in arm. The one with red face is Betscholt, the butcher. The other is the Baron Zorn. The butcher teeters to one side, pointing at me. "It's that Jew child," he says. "Will they ever stop whelping these little moneylenders?" He laughs, showing brown-stained teeth.

I murmur to the children. "Run home. Leave the water, just run!" Benjamin and Rochele slip away, moving like shadows....

\* \* \* \*

*pp. 43-46*

Home at last, I give Mother the eggs. I feel perplexed, and I ask her, "Mother, is there truly a pestilence in the land, with people dying, with boils and pus?"

"Hush, hush," my mother soothes. "Where do you get such notions? Come wash your hands. It is nearly time for the festival."

Rochele's hair shines. She wears a new frock with a broad white collar and full, ruffled sleeves. Benjamin has new leather shoes. By tomorrow the shoes will look old, because Benjamin is like a wild horse.

Everyone is slicked and washed. The gentiles call all this washing craziness. They tap their heads when they see the Jews coming from the bathhouse.

Father rushes in, rubbing his hands together, eager to start. He has put his ledgers and money boxes away. He wears his white *kittel*, the linen garment in which he will someday be buried. He wears it on only one other day of the year, Yom Kippur. He and Mother exchange a glance, a smile. I find myself thinking of Margarite.

A knock at the door. Everyone starts. Grandfather grips the back of his chair. Rochele quickly squats down in her little place beside the hearth. The knock comes again, harder.

"I will go," says Father.

I go with my father, standing right behind him.

The heavy door swings open. The man outside is breathing hard, his belly bulging over his belt. He wears beautiful shoes, elaborately embossed, and a cap of maroon velvet.

Father opens the door wider. "Herr Zorn!" Come inside; the wind is strong. Please, step in."

I know this man, the brother of my tormenter from the square.

Zorn shakes his head. "My business is brief," he says. "Also, I know it is the evening of your..." I can tell he does not want to say the word *Passover*. It repels him. He glances toward the table, hoping to see something that will justify his loathing. "I have only come for my pledge," he says firmly.

"Yes, well..." Father steps backward, stammering, for he has put his business aside already, in preparation for the holiday. Business is one thing, the soul quite another, and tonight the spirit must prevail. "I shall get it for you straightaway," Father says.

As Herr Zorn steps inside, his gaze rests upon the table and the family assembled there.

Mother rushes forward. "Won't you sit down, Herr Zorn?"

"Thank you, no."

Grandmother plucks at the end of her shawl. She averts her eyes from this man, as if by acknowledging his presence she would grant him even greater power.

*[Herr Zorn seized the ring that he had given as a pledge for repayment of the loan he had received from Johannes' father. Herr Zorn claimed that the bulk of the loan had been repayed. He gave Father a few coins for the balance and implied that his servant had given an earlier payment to Johannes who had either forgotten to record it in the ledger or kept the payment for himself. All know that it was a lie but the Johannes and his father dared not say so. Herr Zorn was too powerful.]*

The man leaves. The chill remains. Silence holds everyone still as a stone. Silently I pick up the coins and put them away, and I feel dirty.

### **Discussion Questions**

5. What patterns of family life are comfortable for the members?
6. What intrusions threaten the family and other Jews?
7. Unsanitary conditions exist in the general populace. Which do you notice?
8. What derogatory remarks and stereotyping of Jews did you notice?

### *Reading Three Chapter 11 pp. 97-101*

*[Johannes, his father, his grandfather, and David, a favorite uncle, traveled to the great fair in Troyes, France to do business. Johannes was very excited at the prospect of the journey and all that he hoped to see. Once at the fair, Johannes and Uncle David set about doing business and strolling the streets. They planned to sell a suit of armor that grandfather had restored and Johannes donned the suit as part of their sales effort. He stuffed the tall, conical hat that Jews were required to wear inside the armor so that he could place the helmet on his head. David continued to wear the hat and badge that identified him as a Jew. As they bargained with potential customers in Cathedral Square, a large crowd gathered around new arrivals, a group of flagellants. The flagellants were beating themselves in the belief that it would drive out sickness and pestilence and serve as a penance. The leader of the flagellants described the horrors of the plague that was coursing through Europe and warned that it was moving northward. The leader announced that there had been confessions by those responsible for the plague and that the Jews were accused of helping to spread the evil. Quickly, the terrified crowd became a hysterical mob bent on violence against any Jews to be found. David and Johannes, trapped in the crowd, were pulled apart. After the enraged mob finally moved on, Johannes regained consciousness. Fortunately, the suit of armor had protected him from serious injury but David was not so lucky. Johannes and his father found David's battered body and carried him away, hoping to heal him. It was not to be, however. David died and they returned home to the family with the sad news. They also returned home with the knowledge of the spreading fear and hysteria*



*fostered by the plague and that, increasingly, the Jews were being targeted as scapegoats for the unknown terrors.*

### **Discussion Questions**

9. What trigger(s) turned the mob ugly?
10. Does the thinking of the persecutors relate in any way to the thinking of the inhabitants of the United Social Alliance? How?

*Reading Four summary of pp.161-164*

*[Johannes and his father were warned by Gunther, a gentile friend, that the town council had called a meeting to discuss the "Jewish question." The council planned to decide if the Jews were guilty of poisoning wells in another town and of spreading the plague. In many towns, the people were already burning Jewish homes and businesses, and the Jews themselves. Gunther also warned them that the street on which the Jews of their town lived was to be barricaded starting the next day so that none could flee. Johannes was sent to bring his brother Benjamin home from the rabbi's house where he was studying. On the way, Johannes stopped at the old doctor's house where his friend Jacob was living. He urged Jacob to depart at dawn for the city of Frankfurt where he could practice medicine disguised as a Muslim doctor. Although Jacob urged Johannes to come with him, Johannes refused. However, he convinced Jacob that he should go with Johannes' younger brother Benjamin on the horse that Benjamin had nursed back to health. Early the next morning before daylight, Johannes quietly awakened his younger brother, cut off his long curls, and told him to prepare for the trip to Frankfurt disguised as a doctor's assistant. Later, when Johannes' mother came looking for Benjamin, Johannes told her the truth. Although she was angry at first, Johannes convinced her and his father that what he had done to ensure Benjamin's escape was for the best and that he would be safe with Jacob. By that evening, the street of the Jewish quarter was closed.]*

*Chapter Eighteen reading, pp.165-166*

The streets of the Jews are barricaded now. Guards stand at every intersection. Their eyes are dagger sharp; their jaws firm. We may walk past them, but we do not speak or meet their gaze. It is the unwritten rule for the captive.

Amid the prison atmosphere, news still travels. News comes in from the miller, from the midwife, from Greta the Winker milking cows, from all sources, creating fuel for the frenzy of talk. Rabbi Meier holds meetings at his house every night.

Brazenly, the debtors come, beating on our door. "We have come to take back our pledges," they say.

"But...you have not yet repaid the debt!"

"No matter." A smile, leering and conspiratorial. "Times have changed."

Father and I stand helplessly by as the debtors stride boldly through our room, taking back rings, cloaks, swords, and armor. We dare not object. It would mean trouble for everyone. I feel like a coward as I stand beside Father, seeing

the whiteness of his countenance. I know that he is trembling from both fear and rage.

Some of the men led by Dovie, the shipbuilder, hold secret meetings in the night. They are planning resistance. They have gathered a small cache of arms: knives and swords, cudgels, and even slingshots.

Vivelin Rote's mansion is filled with visitors coming and going. He has paid the bishop's taxes in advance; he has paid the nobles their due and offered a large donation to complete the east tower of the new abbey. Bribery is not new to us; we will buy our lives if we must.

Margarite and I meet every day just outside the bathhouse in the nearby garden, which is now winter white. ...

I tell her about Benjamin, that I sent him away. She says, "He will be witness for us."

"What do you mean?" I ask. I miss my brother terribly; without him, there is a hole in the house.

Margarite's lips form a slight, wise smile, as if she already knows the future. "He will tell everything," she says, "to the world. Then they will not forget."

\* \* \*

"I am thinking about Benjamin, hoping he is free. That he can walk wherever he will, that he can talk to anyone he meets and be respected."

"That sounds like paradise," says Margarite. "In this world, somebody is always brought low."

"But listen!" I bend toward her, suddenly alert. "You were the one who talked about changing the world. What if there were no Jew hats, no badges, no hatred? Everyone could follow his own ways and come together to..." My mind races over possibilities and I recall that afternoon with Closener, when the two of us were joined in spirit. "People would come together," I say, "to make music. And after that, talk."

"It would be paradise," Margarite admits. "What would we have to do? We would have to change, too. We would really have to love everyone - gentiles, nobles, priests, and even lepers.

I ponder this. "Even lepers. Yes."

I cannot remain awake all night, however hard I try. Beside me, Margarite is sleeping, too. I dream of a strange clinic, and of people wearing golden masks. Again the masks - am I going mad? I almost laugh to myself. Does it matter now whether anyone is sane anymore or not?

### **Discussion Questions**

11. Margarite is confident Benjamin will be a witness to the events and the world will not forget. Was she right? How must the world change to be a better place according to Johannes and Margarite? How has it changed?

### *Reading Five pp.181-182*

He turns to Gemma, awakens her gently. "Gemma," he whispers. "Listen to me. I have indeed been cured."

Sleepily she murmurs, "I know, my twin, and I am so happy. I was terribly afraid that I would lose you."

He says, "Gemma, you must trust me. I will tell you everything about where I have been and what I have learned. The world is - the world can be..." He does not have words for it yet, nor is his plan fully formed. But he knows how it must begin. He says, "I am going to teach you a song."

"But it is forbidden," Gemma says.

"No," Gemm tells her. "I allow it. We need it, Gemma. Trust me."

Softly Gemm begins to sing.

*"Sing to the groom  
Oh, happy hearts,  
Sing to the bride and groom,  
For as he comes, so too shall he  
For whom we've waited long."*

Gemm sings the wedding song, verse by verse. Joy and love overwhelm him as never before in this place.

Gemma gazes at him, scarcely breathing. She whispers, "It is beautiful, my twin. But I don't understand the words. What is a bride and groom? What is a happy heart?"

Gemm 16884 sighs deeply. "How can you understand," he says softly, "until you know what love is? Until you have known pain?"

Gemma 16884 puts her hands over her ears. Gently Gemm draws her hands away. "I have been in a place," he says, "where people showed strong feelings. It was allowed. Diversity was allowed in everything. People wore no masks."

"No masks!"

"It is true that diversity leads to emotion. And emotions can bring us either to hatred or to love. People must have that choice. Do you understand?"

Gemma plucks at several strands of blue silk hair. "I am trying; but, Gemm, we already have a thousand choices."

"There is only once choice that really matters," says Gemm, "choosing what we will believe."

Gemma lies silent.

"Let me teach you," Gemm says tenderly. "Take off your mask."

"It is forbidden!"

"I allow it."

"I am afraid."

"There is much to fear, Gemma, I know. Be brave. Take it off now, and I will do the same."

Slowly, with trembling fingers, Gemma lifts her mask.

"It will begin with us," says Gemm, pulling the mask from his face and breathing deeply this new, uncluttered air. "I will teach you. Then you and I will teach others. We will teach them about love."

### **Discussion Questions**

**12.** Will Gemm be successful in convincing Gemma to teach others? Why or why not?

**Chameleon**  
by  
Diane Stelling

I must be a chameleon.  
It seems like  
I always try to be like  
The people I'm with.  
Polite with grownups.  
Attentive in school.  
Goofy with friends.  
Respectful in church.  
When am I myself?  
Perhaps when I'm alone.  
No one to impress.  
No one to please.  
No one to show off to.  
How will anyone  
Ever know  
The real me?

Do I want them to?

And will I every really know  
Anyone else?

Poems from **The Giant and the Mouse** by Diane Stelling. P.O. Box 261, Butler, NJ 07405-0261: Hereami Publishing, 1997. Pp. 20 and 34

**The Giant and the Mouse**  
by  
Diane Stelling

They don't understand,  
Never have, never will,  
Even when I'm grown up,  
It'll puzzle me still.

They don't take the time,  
To listen at all,  
My ideas have no value,  
Perhaps I'm too small.

I know of their world,  
Big thoughts, work, and money,  
Always rushing around,  
No time to be funny.

They don't know my world,  
Can't fit in, always wrong,  
So when I'm with them,  
I just tag along.

I don't understand,  
What's wrong, is it me?  
They ignore all my feelings,  
Why can't they see?

*The mouse can fit through the  
giant's door,  
But the giant can't fit through  
the mouse's.*

## Think Before Your Speak

By Diane Stelling

Sometimes I wish that my words had strings,  
So I could pull 'em back into my mouth,  
I don't mean to say all those rotten  
things,  
But somehow they jump right out.

It seems like my mouth works much faster  
Than my brain, which can't keep up the  
pace,  
It stumbles, gets fresh, and some bad words  
come out,  
They surprise me, just look at my face!

I better just control it,  
Keep my mouth closed as much as can be,  
But until I can get it to work right,  
I hope you'll please forgive me.

Poem from The Giant and the Mouse by Diane Stelling, p. 73

### Discussion Questions

1. What is a chameleon? Why do people often try to conform to be like those around them when they want to be "themselves?" How does a person decide when it is more important to conform and when it is more important to "go against the crowd?"
2. How does it make you feel when people pay no attention to you or your thoughts or words? Have you ever tried to see something from someone else's point of view such as a little brother or sister? A parent? How hard is it to put yourself in someone's place? There is an old saying about walking a mile in someone's moccasins before making a judgment or drawing a conclusion. Apply this idea to an issue or situation and explain how it can help to find a way to resolve a problem.
3. Did you ever say something that you later [or even almost immediately] wished that you could "take back?" How did you feel at those times? What affects had your ill-spoken words had on others? How hard is it for you to apologize for things that you truly wish inside yourself that you had never said? What can you do to try to overcome the impact of those words on others?
4. Why are words spoken in haste, disrespect, angry, etc. so painful to us? How do such words make you feel when you are on the receiving end of them? How do you feel when you are the speaker?

## " "Where Do I Belong?"

By Diane Stelling

I want to be part of the group,  
I want so much to fit in,  
I want them to want to be with me,  
I'll just wait here until then.

I want to be so popular,  
I want to be picked first,  
I want to share in the things they do,  
Can the waiting be any worse?

They never seem to seek me out,  
Or include me in all the fun,  
Why can't I ever be one of them?  
It makes me want to run.

It's lonely here, I want to cry,  
But I still have my pride,  
Why does this always happen to me?  
I need to look inside.

Perhaps I'm not really like all of them,  
And maybe that isn't so bad,  
I know I can get through life on my own,  
I have strength, and that makes me glad.

The hurt's still there, it'll always be  
A reminder that I can't ignore,  
But I'll use it to make my life more  
worthwhile,  
Of this I can be sure.

For I know what it's like to be left out,  
To be by myself in the end.  
So when I see a kid all alone,

From **The Giant and the Mouse** by Diane Stelling, pp.116-117.

**Activity:** Write a series of journal entries describing how it feels to always be the last one "picked" for the team or group. Write some ideas in your journal that you can do to be more thoughtful of others in the same predicament.

## One Little Voice

by

Diane Stelling

Sometimes I feel so bad I think,  
Why should I even try?  
What's the use? I'm one little voice,  
I give up, shrug my shoulders, and sigh.

No one will hear me, or care at all,  
Or even pay attention,  
There are so many other voices out there,  
Too numerous to mention.

And then I think, those voices I hear,  
Although they speak quite loud,  
They say things I don't believe in at all,  
But still they attract a crowd.

I realize then I must speak out,  
For if I don't use my voice,  
The crowd will follow the popular trend,  
And I might wind up with no choice.

So I speak up and hope that others will hear,  
And not find my views too strange,  
For if they will join me, believe in my voice,  
Only then can we get things to change.

But even if no one pays much attention,  
I certainly should rejoice,  
Because I have the gift of freedom,  
To use my one little voice.

From **One Little Voice** by Diane Stelling.  
pp. 32-33

### Discussion Questions and Activities

1. Why is the "freedom to speak" so highly prized as one of our civil rights? What would be the result if there was no such freedom? If the freedom to speak is so important to democracy, why are we often so reluctant to speak up for what we believe when it goes against the popular trend?
2. According to the poem, what is the price we pay when we do not speak up? Have you ever found yourself in a situation you did not like because you did not speak up? What can you do about it?
3. "**Lethal Weapons**" contradicts the old saying about words not hurting you. Do you agree that words can have a more lasting affect than physical contact

## Lethal Weapons

By Diane Stelling

They tell me that  
Sticks and stones  
Can break my bones,  
But names can never harm me.

They're wrong.

Sometimes people say things  
That are so mean,  
The words stay in my head  
Long after my body heals.

They hurt me deeply.

And the more I believe  
The words are true,  
The longer they stay  
And give me pain.

Like an invisible wound.

So be careful what you say.  
You may not know when  
You are hurting someone inside  
Beyond repair.

**One Little Voice** by Diane Stelling, p. 41

can sometimes have? Can you remember something that was said to you a long time ago that is still painful when you think of it? Draw a picture that illustrates the pain caused by mean and hurtful words.

4. Prejudice often leads to mean thoughts being released in hurtful words. How can you contribute to reducing prejudice in your family and friends? In yourself? What can you do to help those who are the subject of painful words because of prejudice? Draw up a list of positive things that you can do to help.

### **Handicapped**

by Diane Stelling

My friend can't talk.  
He doesn't know how.  
There's something wrong with him.  
He gets upset when  
I don't understand him.  
But he's okay.  
He always tries hard and  
He understands me.  
We weren't always friends.  
I used to think he was dumb.  
I didn't know he had a problem.  
It must be hard for him  
To go through life.  
Not only can't he talk,  
But people are annoyed with him.  
They don't get the chance  
To know him inside.  
He's not stupid.  
He tries to be like everyone else.  
To be accepted.  
But his handicap gets in the way.  
When I see people being mean to him,  
Sometimes I wonder what's really  
Getting in the way,  
And who has the worse handicap?

**One Little Voice** by Diane Stelling, p. 35.

### **That's Not Me**

by Diane Stelling

Nobody likes a wiseguy,  
Nobody likes a punk,  
Nobody likes a bully,  
Those kids are surely sunk.

So why do we sometimes act,  
Like those who make a fuss?  
Perhaps wiseguys, and bullies,  
and punks,  
Are living in each of us.

**One Little Voice** by Diane Stelling, p. 88.

### **A Courageous Thought**

by Diane Stelling

What is courage?  
*It is what make us  
Stand tall  
When we really want  
To run and hide.*

**One Little Voice** by Diane Stelling, p. 121



### **Discussion Questions**

1. Have you ever misjudged or mistreated a person because they have a "handicap" or are differently-abled? Why did you respond to them in that way? Was it a matter of a prejudice that you are not even aware you have? Can your attitude be a "handicap" for you?
2. How can we work to overcome such prejudices and treat individuals with the respect that each person deserves?
3. Have you ever acted like a bully? How did that make you feel?
4. Have you ever been the target of a bully? How did that make you feel? Did anyone come to your assistance? What did the person do to help you? If not, would you have liked to have someone come to you and give you some support and friendship?
5. Why do you think people act like bullies and wiseguys, hurting others with their behavior? Why do some people just follow along?
6. Make a list of things that you can do to stop bullying behavior in yourself. Make a second list of things that you can do to help the person who is the target of the bully when you see it happening.
7. Read the poet's definition of courage. Do you agree with the definition? How would you define courage?
8. Can showing courage be a lonely experience? Explain your answer.
9. Is it hard to stand up for what you believe is right when your friends and peers are saying things and acting in a way that you believe is wrong? Sometimes it only takes one person to stand up for what is right and others will join them. What can you do to help yourself find the courage to do what you believe is right? What can you do to help yourself find the courage to "Stand Alone" if that is what is needed?

### **Activity**

1. Think of someone you know who has shown courage in a difficult situation. Perhaps you feel badly that you did not have the same courage. Write the person a note or letter telling them how you admire and respect the courage they exhibited.
2. As a class, create a large banner around the classroom or a bulletin board with brief descriptions of courageous actions by individuals and groups. Remember to think of people you know as well as those who are well known. Do not overlook the courage of "everyday heroes" around you.
3. Make a chart of ideas and things that you can do to be a better friend to someone who is differently abled than you.

# The World Changes: Rise of Nazism

September 1, 1941 - Nazis order Jews to wear yellow stars.



(Photo credits: top - Harry Goldsmith, below - USHMM, both courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives)

[Return to WW2 Timeline - 1941](#)

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<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/timeline/star.htm>

Unit II: The World Changes: Nazism on the Rise

Unit Goal: Students will develop an understanding of the nature of a totalitarian regime, the strategies and tactics it uses to control and influence people, and the devastating impact it has on the people and groups the regime targets for repression and destruction.

Performance Objectives Students will be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials/Resources
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the terms <i>prejudice, bigotry, discrimination, racism, stereotyping, scapegoating, ethnocentrism, antisemitism, and genocide.</i></li> <li>2. Analyze how prejudice and discrimination may lead to genocide.</li> <li>3. Analyze and evaluate the influence of our personal choices and beliefs in the choices and decisions we make.</li> <li>4. Describe how Hitler and the Nazi regime used propaganda to try to influence the way people thought and acted.</li> <li>5. Identify and explain the terms boycott, storm troopers, brown shirts, pogrom.</li> <li>6. Explain the basic ideas contained in the Nuremberg Laws and the impact they had on the events that followed and that lead to the Holocaust.</li> <li>7. Explain the event known as <i>Kristallnacht</i> and analyze the devastating impact of that event on the lives of Jews in Germany and Austria as well as its influence on the general community.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Teacher Information: Essay "The World Changes: Nazism on the Rise.</li> <li>B. A World Before Fascism               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read and complete the lesson on <b><u>Memories of My Life in a Polish Village 1930-1949</u></b> by Toby Knobel Fluck. Examine the rich and diverse culture that flourished in Jewish communities for centuries and, conversely, the antisemitism that existed in the wider community.</li> </ol> </li> <li>C. Fascism on the Rise               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the excerpts and complete the lesson on <b><u>Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust</u></b> by Barbara Rogasky. Includes information on the boycott, the Nuremberg Laws, the book burnings, and <i>Kristallnacht</i>.</li> <li>2. Using the short story told in <b><u>Flowers on the Wall</u></b> by Miriam Nerlove, examine the antisemitic attitudes that existed in Poland before and after the Nazi conquest. Discuss the efforts within a family to maintain a sense of culture and identity in the midst of the chaos and crisis.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Memories of My life in a Polish Village 1930-1949</u></b> by Toby Knobel Fluck. Gives a good look at life in a Jewish community before and during the Holocaust.</li> <li>2. View scenes from "<b><u>Fiddler on the Roof</u></b>" to gain a glimpse into the life, customs, and dangers of shtetl life in Eastern Europe before the Nazis.</li> <li>3. Listen to Itzhak Perlman playing popular Jewish melodies from Eastern Europe on the recording "<i>Tradition.</i>"</li> <li>1. <b><u>Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust</u></b> by Barbara Rogasky.</li> <li>2. View an excerpt from the film/video "<b><u>The Holocaust</u></b>" focusing on the Night of Broken Glass.</li> <li>3. Use the Internet to find newspaper stories of those 1938 November nights in Germany and Austria.</li> <li>4. Miriam Nerlove's <b><u>Flowers on the Wall.</u></b></li> </ol>

Performance Objectives Students will be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials/Resources
<p>8. Analyze the reasons individuals and groups act in ways that are hurtful and destructive to others.</p> <p>9. Examine various aspects of Nazi policies and their impact on individuals and groups, i.e. laws, isolation, propaganda, organizations, etc.</p> <p>10. Demonstrate an understanding of the use of propaganda by Hitler and the Nazi regime including the use of brainwashing, pageantry, and ritual.</p>	<p>D. <i>Anschluss</i>, the Nuremberg Laws, and <i>Kristallnacht</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the excerpts from Barry Denenberg's fictional work <b><u>One Eye Laughing, the Other Weeping.</u></b> Examine the impact of the <i>Anschluss</i> and the horror of <i>Kristallnacht</i> through the eyes and perceptions of young Julie's diary entries. Consider the sense of betrayal and loss as her world collapses around her.</li> <li>2. The fictional novel <b><u>Play to the Angel</u></b> looks at the Anschluss and the resulting chaos through the eyes of a young girl who is not Jewish. Examines the pageantry and propaganda used by the fascists, the fear and sense of betrayal of those who opposed the fascists, and the repression of any opposition.</li> </ol> <p>E. Hitler Youth</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read two excerpts about youth and the changes in Nazi Germany for both Jews and non-Jews <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>"The Ball"</b></li> <li>b. <b>"I Was There"</b></li> </ol> Both selections are in Hans Peter Richter's novel <b><u>Friedrich.</u></b> Excellent look at the impact of the Nazi efforts to organize the youth into groups that they could use for brainwashing and propaganda efforts.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Barry Denenberg's fictional diary account of young Julie <b><u>One Eye Laughing, the Other Weeping.</u></b></li> <li>2. Read excerpts from Lewis Carroll's <b><u>Alice in Wonderland</u></b> and compare and contrast the sense of confusion and loss with Denenberg's portrayal of Julie's story.</li> <li>3. <b><u>Play to the Angel</u></b> by Maurine Dahlberg. Good example of ordinary citizens faced with the horror of fascism and forced to make decisions about what they will do.</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Friedrich</u></b> by Hans Peter Richter is a classic that tells the story of a young Jewish boy and the impact of fascism on his life. His non-Jewish friend tells the story.</li> </ol> <p><b>Instructional Materials/Resources</b></p>

Performance Objectives Students will be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	
<p>11. Analyze and demonstrate an understanding of the danger of ideas to a totalitarian society and its need to destroy the record of those ideas.</p> <p>12. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of moral responsibility in making choices.</p>	<p>F. Stay or Go?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the true accounts of the Kindertransport in the book of that name by Olga Levy Drucker. Analyze the difficulties Jews faced trying to leave Germany and Austria after <i>Kristallnacht</i> and the wrenching decision by parents to send their children away without them.</li> <li>2. "<i>Departure 1940</i>" by Julie Heifetz. Read and complete the accompanying lesson. Compare and contrast the information and tone of the poem with the information in the book by Olga L. Drucker, <b><u>Kindertransport</u></b>.</li> </ol> <p>G. Controlling the Minds</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Flying Against the Wind</u></b> by Ina R. Friedman is a true account of a young woman, Carla Bjontes van Beek, who follows her conscience rather than Nazi propaganda and directives. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) "The Day They Murdered the Books"</li> <li>b) "Swimming Against the Tide"</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. <b><u>Behind the Bedroom Wall</u></b> by Laura E. Williams is an excellent novel portraying the struggle between conscience and the desire to "belong" as young Korinna Rehme learns about the concept of obedience and "Aryan" superiority at school and in the Hitler Young Maidens organization while her family-learned morals and what she sees around her tells her something</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read <b><u>Kindertransport</u></b> by Olga Levy Drucker. Use the timeline in the lesson to place the story in time context.</li> <li>3. Read the poem "<i>Departure 1940</i>" by Julie Heifetz that is found in the readings.</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Flying Against the Wind</u></b> by Ina R. Friedman. A true story of a young woman who refused to accept Nazi propaganda and made her own moral choices.</li> <li>2. <b><u>Behind the Bedroom Wall</u></b> by Laura E. Williams.</li> <li>3. Using the Internet, conduct a search for More information about the Hitler Youth. Consult the Internet site list at the end of This curriculum guide for some suggested Sites.</li> </ol>

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students should be able to:	different. <b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b>	<b>Instructional Materials and Resources</b>
<p>13. Recognize the consequences of the choices we make on ourselves and on others in terms of human construction v. human destruction.</p> <p>14. Examine various aspects of Nazi policies and their impact on individuals and groups</p>	<p>H. Fear and repression follow in the footsteps of Nazi conquest</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Upon the Head of a Goat</u></b> by Aranka Siegal is a biographical story of the affects of Nazi power on her family, friends, and community in Hungary. Jewish children discover that their courageous mother is taking additional risks to try to help Jews escaping from Hitler's terror.</li> <li>2. <b><u>Parallel Journeys</u></b> by Eleanor Ayer looks at two lives. Alfons Heck, a young German who becomes an avid member of the Hitler Youth and a devotee of Adolf Hitler, and Helen Wohlforth, a newly married young woman who finds her life in turmoil and danger because of people like Alfons Heck. Follow the lesson plan to emphasize the importance of moral decisions and the responsibility for consequences of those decisions.</li> <li>3. Read excerpts from the book <b><u>How Beautiful We Once Were</u></b> by Marga Silberman Randall and analyze the information by using the discussion questions. Good insight into the changes that the Nazi regime bring to a Jewish family in Germany.</li> <li>4. Read the excerpt from <b><u>The Endless Steppe</u></b> by Esther Hautzig and complete the lesson to gain an</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Upon the Head of a Goat</u></b> by Aranka Siegal. Hungary before the coming of the Nazi armies and the deportation of Hungarian Jews was still a place of danger and risk for Jews.</li> <li>2. <b><u>Parallel Journeys</u></b> by Eleanor Ayer.</li> <li>3. Read excerpts from this true story of a German Jewish family as told by one of a daughter in the family, Marga Silberman Randall. <b><u>How Beautiful We Once Were.</u></b></li> <li>4. Read Esther's Hautzig's <b><u>The Endless Steppe</u></b> for a different perspective on suffering imposed by the Nazi rise to</li> </ol>

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students will be able to:	<b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b>	<b>Instructional Resources/Materials</b>
	<p>understanding of the impact of the Non-Aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Germany on the lives of Jewish families in Poland.</p> <p>I. Propaganda and Children Read the article excerpted from the work of Mary Mills on the lengths that the Nazi regime extended themselves to assert control over the minds of the German people beginning with the youngest of children. Discuss the role of primers and storybooks in their propaganda and brainwashing programs.</p>	<p>power and their pact with the Soviets.</p> <p>1. Propaganda and Children During the Hitler Years by Mary Mills. Excerpt of this article is included in the readings.</p>

## THE WORLD CHANGES: NAZISM ON THE RISE

When studying the history of the Holocaust, many people look at Nazism as an aberration from the standard course of events and the standard course of German history. To fully understand the devastation that took place in Europe during the Nazi period between 1933-45, one must first understand the history of antisemitism and how hatred of the Jews changed from a predominantly religious rejection of the tenets of Judaism to a pseudo-scientific abhorrence of the Jewish people as a race. The basis of modern antisemitism lay in early Christian anti-Judaism, but it adopted the nineteenth century pseudo-scientific racial theory to explain the religious differences of the past.

Throughout many centuries, prejudice, discrimination and hatred resulted in the establishment of ghettos, expulsion, pogroms, forced conversions, and ultimately led to Hitler's "Final Solution".

Why the Jews? The Jews, a monotheistic people believing in one God, are a people that can trace their origin back to the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East two thousand years prior to the Common Era. It is a religion shaped by the belief in God's revelation to Moses and the Jewish people at Mt. Sinai.

When the Judean State (Israel) was destroyed in 70 CE, the Jews found themselves a homeless people whose residence in a particular country was always one of tolerance and permission. They did manage in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century to be granted full citizenship in some countries where they fared better. However, Jews did not always feel more secure because of their newly acquired citizenship as it was shown later to be correct in such instances as the Nazi era and conditions that existed in the Soviet Union.

In the long period between the destruction of Judea and the establishment of the State of Israel, kings, noblemen, bishops and people in power at times invited Jews into their homelands. However, they used the Jews as scapegoats during troubled and difficult times, expelling the Jews from their towns, regions, countries and empires. Forced emigrations and expulsions were made to free society of Jews and later became an integral part of the "Final Solution".

*"The Jews have been objects of hatred in pagan, religious and secular societies. Fascists have accused them of being Communists, and Communists have branded them capitalists. Jews who live in non-Jewish societies have been accused of having dual loyalties, and Jews who live in the Jewish state have been condemned as "racists." Poor Jews are bullied, and rich Jews are resented. Jews have been branded as both rootless cosmopolitans and ethnic chauvinists. Jews who assimilate are often called a fifth column, while those who stay together often spark hatred for remaining different. Literally hundreds of millions of people have believed that the Jews drink blood of non-Jews, that they cause plagues and poison wells, that they conquer the world, and that they murdered God himself.*

*The universality of anti-Semitism is attested to by the innumerable facts, the most dramatic being that Jews have been expelled from nearly every country in which they have resided. Jews were expelled from England in 1290, France in 1306 and 1394, Hungary between 1349 and 1360, Austria in 1421, numerous localities in Germany between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, Lithuania in 1445 and 1495, Spain in 1492, Portugal in 1497, and Bohemia and Moravia in 1744-45. Between the fifteenth century and 1772, Jews were not allowed into Russia,*



*and when finally admitted, they were restricted to one area, the Pale of Settlement. Between 1948 and 1967 nearly all the Jews of Aden, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, though not officially expelled, fled these countries, fearing for their lives." (Why the Jews? by Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin p. 15-16)*

Why did the Holocaust originate in Germany at this time? Germany was devastated in World War I, economically, politically and socially. What ideologies provided the seeds for Nazi antisemitism? Were they rooted in early Christianity, the Enlightenment period, Marxism, Nationalism, Zionism, or Communism?

German nationalist antisemites claimed that the German Jews had not fulfilled their part in emancipation, that while attaining citizenship, the Jews did not cease to be a distinct people. Heinrich von Treitschke, a leading German historian in 1879, a man with a wide political and scholarly following, wrote an essay called "A Word About our Jewry." "We do not want an era of German-Jewish mixed culture to follow after thousands of years of German civilization". (Why the Jews?, p. 158)

Later, the Nazis used this slogan written by Treitschke "Even in the best educated circles...we hear today the cry, as from one mouth the Jew is our misfortune."

Antisemitic petitions numbering a quarter of a million signatures appeared a year later demanding that the Jews be excluded from government posts and teaching positions. In the 1880, other antisemitic political groups were formed. In 1897, Herman Ahlwardt, a virulent antisemite, wrote a book in which he claimed that the Jews were ruling Germany and because of political and economic unrest, the lower middle classes bought these explanations and joined the anti-semitism and nationalism bandwagon.

When Poland was partitioned three times in 1772, 1793, and 1795, Russia inherited about a million Jews as a result of her territorial expansion. Jews were required to live in the *Pale of Settlement* where terrible conditions led to poverty, and disabilities increased rapidly. In 1897, Zionism [return of the Jews to their homeland, Israel] looked for a solution for the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe because of the unbearable conditions that existed in Russia and the vicious pogroms [sudden, unprovoked attacks carried out by military and/or civilians] inflicted upon the Jews. Fearing more pogroms, the Jews left Russia by the hundreds of thousands between 1881-1924. They came to America seeking religious, political and economic freedoms.

The Dreyfuss Affair of 1894 also brought out antisemitic hatred in France when Alfred Dreyfuss, a captain in the French Army, was falsely accused of treason. Theodore Herzl, founder of modern Zionism, a Viennese journalist and an assimilated Jew, covered the public spectacle of a trial in France and began the concept that Jews must have a homeland.

Many of the Western European Jews had assimilated and adopted the culture of their non-Jewish neighbors. Jews were found in all walks of life. They were tradesmen, merchants, businessmen, professionals, farmers. They were wealthy and poor.

At the time of World War I, most East European Jews lived in the Pale of Settlement in the Austro border region of Polish Galicia and Lithuania. In the

East, which had a backward economy, the Jews lived mostly in small towns called *Shtetls*. They lived amongst their own, spoke Yiddish, dressed modestly, and had their own institutions and societies. The Czar blamed the Jews for the economic problems and expelled them from the border areas. The *Pale of Settlement* was abolished and many Jews were forced to move to Russia proper where they suffered starvation and disease. Mobs attacked Jews, looting shops and burning homes. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917-21, the rightist (White) Russians fighting the Bolsheviks let out their rage against the Jewish population, especially targeting the Jews of the Ukraine.

When World War I ended, the Ottoman Empire was divided between the victors and Palestine became a British Mandate that lasted until 1948. The Jewish people were still homeless. In 1917, the British government issued the Balfour Declaration promising a homeland to the Jewish people.

Antisemitism had existed in European countries for hundreds of years. Racist antisemitism was used in many countries to fuel the fires of political propaganda but only in the 1930's did the growth of National Socialism and Hitler's rise to power adopt this policy officially.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Nazi ideologies proliferated in Germany. In defining what is German, the Nazis claimed that anything not Jewish (or Slavic, Gypsy etc.) was German. Jews were described falsely as a fifth column in Germany, infiltrating all aspects of society since they appeared to fit in and be like everyone else. According to the Nazis, Jews were evil and the cause of Germany's woes. However, the Nazis didn't gain power because everyone agreed with their philosophies, but gained power because of the economic forces of the Weimar Republic that thought they could control Hitler. Once Hitler had attained power in 1933, he completely dissolved the Weimar government and began his reign of terror.

Nazi persecutions began in Germany in April of 1933, when Hitler's Storm Troopers began a national boycott of Jewish businesses with signs, "Don't Buy from Jews". Between 1933-1935, Hitler enacted anti-Jewish measures and the infamous Nuremberg Laws, laws prohibiting Jews from being employed in the government, in universities, as school-teachers, serve in the army, vote, marry non-Jews, perform ritual slaughter and more. Books were burned in huge public bonfires and rallies all over Germany.

From 1933-41, 157,000 Jews left Germany and came to the United States to escape the anti-Jewish measures and the impending doom that was in store for Germany's Jews.

In 1936, at the German Olympic Games, almost all Jews were excluded from participation. The Versailles Treaty that ended World War I required the Rhineland to remain demilitarized. With his policy of expansion "Lebensraum" [living space], Hitler marched into the Rhineland in defiance.

In March of 1938, Hitler annexed Austria. In that year, 118,000 skilled and gifted Jews left Germany and fled to other countries in Western Europe; some came to America. At the Evian Conference in France, 32 nations had to decide what to do with the remaining Jews of Germany. A decision was made not to open borders to fleeing refugees.

Benito Mussolini, Italy's fascist dictator, signed a Rome-Berlin Axis pact in 1936. Italy was divided in many zones of occupation in 1940-41 and Jews were caught in these zones.

In March of 1938, Czechoslovakia was annexed to Germany. Bohemia and Moravia became part of the German Reich. Slovakia became a puppet state run by a priest.

The Night of Broken Glass [Kristallnacht] on November 9-10 of 1938 further set into motion the destructive machine to annihilate the Jewish people. Thirty thousand Jews were arrested and 20,000 were transported to concentration camps and approximately 90 Jews were murdered. [This is a conservative estimate. Higher figures are often cited.] Synagogues were destroyed, businesses looted, and apartments robbed.

Great Britain's White Paper of 1939 further restricted immigration and avenues of escape by limiting 75,000 immigrants to Palestine over a period of 5 years. This was then changed to none at all, except what the Arabs would permit to enter. At the time, 500,000 Jews lived in Palestine [Israel] and the Arabs had a greater majority. If the British plan continued, the Arabs would be in control, and the existing Jews could be expelled.

Haj Amin, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Palestine, allied himself with the Nazis and conducted riots and massacres against the Jews in the 1930's.

Before the outbreak of the war in 1939, 300,000 Jews had been deported, 8,000 committed suicide and in Austria 400,000 Jews, including native Austrians and refugees, were not able to leave the country.

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. France and Great Britain declared war on Germany and this unleashed a war unsurpassed in history with brutalities, persecutions, and the death of millions. In the summer of 1941, after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, the Soviets found themselves fighting for their survival. After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States entered the war on all fronts. By the time World War II was over, 55 million people were dead. One third of the world's Jewish population was annihilated including one and a half million Jewish children.

## **Memories of My Life in a Polish Village 1930-1949**

by

Toby Knobel Fluck

Alfred A. Knopf, Publisher, NY 1990

Recommended for Grades 5-6

### **Synopsis**

Toby Knobel Fluck is both an artist and survivor who tells her story through the media of paintings. This is the story of a young girl growing up in Eastern Poland near the Russian border who lived in a small village called Czernica, near the city of Lvov. She wrote and illustrated her life in Czernica, telling about her family, the Jewish traditions, the fellow Jews that lived in her village and her non-Jewish neighbors.

First, her village is invaded by the Russians who set up their own schools and administration. When the Nazis invaded in 1941, conditions worsened, and her family suffered many indignities. In the fall of 1942, Toby and her family ended up in the Brody Ghetto. This ghetto was later liquidated and the inmates shipped to Majdanek, a death camp. Toby and her mother managed to survive although they suffered a great deal. After they were liberated, they joined the illegal transport going to a Displaced Person's camp in West Germany. While waiting to come to America, her mother suffered a stroke from which it took her two years to recover. Toby was married in 1949 and, together with husband and mother, immigrated to the United States that year.

### **Quote**

"Searching for Food: During the winter I hid anyplace that I could get into—barns, cellars, pigsties, pantries. In the summer, it was easier. I sat in fields between tall crops and in the woods. For many days at a time I would sit at the edge of the woods in the bushes because it wasn't one of the obvious places that would be searched by the Germans or the Polish and Ukrainian police. When it rained it was horrible, but I sat through many rainy days, soaked to the bone. At night I went to the peasants, dried my clothes, got some food, and next morning went back to the woods to get soaked again! At times I wanted to give up, but the will to survive was very strong." (p.87)

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Using maps, locate where Toby and her family lived when first the Russians and then the Nazis invaded.
- Study the area of Poland where the story took place.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Describe life in Toby's small village.
2. How did the Jews celebrate the Holidays?
3. How does Toby describe the ten Jewish families who lived in the village?
4. What was life like before the war?
5. What happened to Toby's village during the Russian invasion?

6. How was life different during the Nazi invasion?
7. How did Toby manage to survive?
8. Did local people help her? How?
9. Why did some people help Toby at the risk of their own lives?
10. Describe life in the ghetto, concentration camp and Displaced Person's Camp.
11. What happened to Toby when they were liberated?
12. What did Toby try to tell through her paintings?
13. What happened to Toby's family?

### Activities

1. To create the atmosphere of life in a *Shtetl* (small village) get a paper model of a Shtetl that can be cut and assembled from Dover Publishing, NY.
2. Assign the students the different professions of the village people, Jewish and non-Jewish. Read and report to the class on her/his particular role.
3. Play *Klezmer* taped music that typified the music played by traveling musicians in Eastern Europe.
4. Play a clip from **Fiddler on the Roof** that shows *Shtetl* life in Eastern Europe
5. Have the students cook recipes for the Jewish holidays.
6. Compare holiday practices of the Jewish people and your own.
7. Have students draw their own artwork interpreting what they are reading.
8. Make a timeline showing the different stages of Toby's life and where she lived.

### Suggested Readings

- Cech John . **My Grandmother's Journey.** Story that takes place pre WWII
- Adler, David. **A Picture Book of Anne Frank.** 1993. This book is an illustrated biography of the story of Anne Frank
- Phillips, Mildred. **The Sign in Mendel's Window.** Aladdin Paperback, 1996. When Mendel the butcher rents out half his store, there is a problem. Only his wife can tell who the villain might be. This is a funny folktale that is set in a small town in Eastern Europe.
- Wild, Margaret. **Let the Celebration Begin.** 1991. Miriam lives in a concentration camp and as liberation approaches, the women plan a party for young children and make toys from scraps of clothing.

### For The Teacher

- **Historical Atlas of the Holocaust.** Prepared by the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. Grade 7 and up ( Maps can be used for the students) Macmillan
- Aleichem, Sholom. **More Favorite Tales of Sholom Aleichem.** (1992)
- Shulman, Abraham. **The Old Country.** Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing, 1974. Through photos and author depicts life in Eastern Europe.

### Videos

- **Images Before My Eyes.** Depicts life in Eastern Europe. (show excerpt only) Ergo Media 800-695-3746 (Teaneck, NJ) 90 min. There is a book to match the video.
- **Images Before My Eyes.** Lucjan Dobroszycki and Barabara Kirschenblatt. New York: Schocken Books,1977.

### **Audio Cassettes**

- **European Klezmer Music.** Khevrisa: Audio CD
- **The Hester Street Troupe-Generation to Generation.** Write The Hester Street Troupe 14 Princeton Rd, Cranford, NJ 07016 (Ethnic East European Music)
- **The Traveling Jewish Wedding** by the Golden Gate Gypsy Orchestra by Rykodisc (Jewish Soul Music)
- **Tradition**-Itzhak Perlman plays popular Jewish melodies, classic songs of the small villages and cities of Eastern Europe. Emi Records Limited, 1987.

### Internet

- Do a Search on *Klezmer* music. They have many sites
- The *Shtetl*
- Jews in Eastern Europe
- Sholom Aleichem
- Holocaust Art

## Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust

by

Barbara Rogasky

Holiday House, New York, 1988

Recommended for Grades 5-8

Excerpt from chapter "The Nazis and the Jews of Germany"

*The Boycott* (pp. 25-27)

...The boycott took place on April 1, 1933. Two SS men in their black uniforms and two storm troopers stood before each Jewish shop. The word *Jude* - Jew - was painted across windows, or *Judah verrecke!* - Jews perish - a favorite Nazi slogan.

The boycott lasted just one day. It attracted attention around the world, all of it negative. It had little effect on Germany, except to frighten and worry German Jews even more.

But it did stimulate anti-Semitic feeling around the country to new heights. Individual acts of violence against Jews, their shops, homes and synagogues grew in number.

The Nazis moved quickly. On April 7, the first anti-Jewish law was passed. It was called the "Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service," usually referred to as the Aryan Law. All non-Aryans in the civil service were to be expelled. A "non-Aryan," which meant a Jew, was defined in this first law as anyone who had Jewish parents or two or more Jewish grandparents.

Between that date and the end of the year, anti-Jewish laws affected all Jews in almost all the professions.

Jews were kept out of work in the theater, in the movies and in the arts and literature. They could not practice law in German courts. Jewish doctors and dentists were expelled from German hospitals and institutions. They were fired from newspapers and magazines, removed from the staffs of schools and universities.

Hitler said it, and the Nazis repeated it endlessly, that the Jews dominated Germany. The German people seemed to believe this as a fact, and all these laws and more were carried out ruthlessly everywhere. But the truth is different. Jews made up less than 1 percent of the entire population.

The Nazi fever spread. On May 1, Berlin University students decided on an act "against the un-German spirit." They collected the works of "undesirable writers" and threw them on a huge bonfire. They burned 70,000 tons of books before they were done.

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Works of the "un-German spirit" were removed from libraries all over the country. Before it was finished, one-third of all the library books in Germany were destroyed.

One hundred years earlier, the great German poet Heinrich Heine seemed to see the future when he said: "That was only a prelude. When they burn books, in the end it is human beings that they burn."

*The Nuremberg Laws (pp. 27-29)*

Hitler pulled his power together over the next year, often by simply killing off those who challenged him in any way. Individual acts of violence and vandalism against Jews went on, but for those few months the government added nothing new to their burdens.

On September 15, 1935, any hope that the worst was past vanished forever.

The Nuremberg Laws were passed. They were in two parts. One was called "The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor," the second, "The Reich Citizenship Law."

First, the Protection Law.

"Marriages between Jews and the citizens of German or related blood are forbidden. Marriages performed despite this ban are invalid, even if performed abroad to avoid this law."

"Sexual relations between Jews and citizens of German or related blood are forbidden."

"Jews may not employ in their households female citizens of German or related blood under 45 years old."

"Jews are not permitted to display the German flag or national colors."

Next the Citizenship Law.

"A citizen of the Reich is only that subject of German or related blood who proves by his conduct that he is ready and able to serve the German people and the Reich faithfully."

"Only the full citizen of the Reich enjoys full political rights."

To remove any possibility of misunderstanding, clarifications made their appearance a few weeks later. "A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He has no right to vote in political affairs and he cannot hold public office."

A Jew was defined once and for all as a "person descended from at least three grandparents who are full Jews by race" and any one who thought of himself as a Jew. Eventually one Jewish parent or grandparent was considered enough.

The Jews were now almost defenseless. They were completely outside the protection of the law. Signs saying JEWS NOT WANTED HERE or THE JEWS ARE OUR MISFORTUNE made their appearance outside cities and towns. They were forced out of towns and villages where their families had lived for generations so the town could declare itself *Judenrein* - "cleansed of Jews." Cafes and restaurants posted signs that said JEWS AND DOGS NOT PERMITTED HERE. Park benches were marked with FOR ARYANS ONLY. A Jewish doctor who gave his own blood to save a German's life was sentenced to seventeen months in a concentration camp for polluting the nation's blood or "defiling the race."

Property owned by Jews had to be registered with the government. This was the first step in a series that ended with Jewish businesses being "Aryanized" - sold cheaply or given to non-Jewish Germans.

If a Jew did not have a "recognizably Jewish" name, the women had to add "Sarah" and the men "Israel" as middle names to those they had. The



government published a list of over one hundred "recognizably Jewish" names. It included Menachem, Isadore, Baruch, Ziporah, Chana, Beine.

All passports belonging to Jews were stamped with a *J* or the word *Jude*.

Seventeen thousand Jews formerly from Poland or of Polish nationality were expelled from Germany and dumped in a small town across the Polish border. Polish authorities refused to accept them at first, and the Germans would not take them back. They were forced to live for weeks in filthy, manure-covered stables until Poland changed her mind.

*Crystal Night (pp. 29-31)*

The parents of seventeen-year-old Herschel Grynszpan, a student in Paris, were among the Jews trapped in that tiny border town. In rage and grief, he shot and killed a minor official at the German embassy in Paris.

The Nazis used this as an excuse to unleash a giant pogrom against Jews and Jewish property. It has come to be called "Crystal Night" or "The Night of Broken Glass" because of the huge amounts of broken glass from smashed Jewish storefronts and homes that littered the streets all over Germany. It took place on the night and morning of November 9 and 10, 1938.

The Nazis wanted the events to appear spontaneous, an "expression of the people's rage at the murderous acts of the Jews." But they planned the pogrom carefully. Before the event, orders went out to Gestapo and police stations all over the country.

"At very short notice actions against Jews, especially their synagogues, will take place throughout Germany. They are not to be hindered."

SS offices received this instruction: "Such measures are to be taken that do not entail danger to German life and property."

An order sent to the city of Mannheim left little to the imagination: "All the Jewish synagogues within the Fiftieth Brigade are to be blown up or set on fire immediately. Neighboring houses occupied by Aryans are not to be damaged." It concluded:

"This action is to be carried out in civilian clothes."

One thousand Jews were killed throughout the country. Over 30,000 Jewish males were sent to concentration camps - almost the entire male Jewish population between eighteen and sixty-five. At least 1,118 synagogues were burned or demolished. The Nazis' own figures add 815 shops, 29 department stores, and 171 houses set on fire or otherwise destroyed. They were certain, however, that "the true figures must be several times greater."

Goering, Goebbels, and other high-ranking Nazis held a meeting about what to do next. The result: Jews were to make all needed repairs themselves and pay for them as well. Any insurance money they collected was to be turned over to the Reich. And they were fined 1 billion reichsmarks - equal to \$400 million. They were to pay this, it was explained, to make up for their "terrible crime" against the German people.

The Nazis were not finished yet. Law after law against the Jews appeared. All their valuables had to be turned over to the Reich. Jews were not allowed to

have radios, use telephones, have pets or go to barbers or beauty salons. They could not buy rationed food, go to school, use swimming pools.

In September 1941, "All Jews from the age of six are forbidden to appear in public without displaying the Jewish star." For the first time since the Middle Ages centuries earlier, a Jewish badge made its appearance in the civilized world as a mark of shame.

In October 1941, Jews were forbidden to leave their homes without permission. They could no longer leave their country. They were trapped.

### *Why Did They Stay? (pp. 31-33)*

There were over 500,000 Jews in Germany when Hitler came to power in 1933. By 1939, over 300,000 had left for other countries. In 1941, 164,000 remained.

Why did even that many stay? Why did they wait so long? The reasons are many and complicated. The Nazis wanted them to leave. They wanted a Jew-free country.

But as difficult as things were for the Jews, they were reluctant to go. They paid a heavy "security tax" if they left, signed all their property over to the government, and were allowed to take very little with them. Thus they would have to give up what they had spent their lives working for. They had to start over again with almost empty pockets.

And "starting over" is never an easy thing to do. To begin life again in a new country where they did not know the language and could not carry on their old professions was very difficult. How would they live until they could speak the new language well? How could they earn their living? Leaving meant losing everything familiar and dear to them. Germany was their country; it was home.

The Nazis tricked the Jews into a false sense of security time after time. They would enact a law, put it into effect and then months would go by before any more government-approved violence would occur. German Jews knew their country to be extremely civilized, and it most certainly was. Some of the world's greatest musicians, philosophers and scientists came from there. They could not believe that things would get worse. Each time, they told themselves that it could not go on, that no more would happen. They could not imagine the worst that was to come. No one in the world could imagine that.

Jews had lived in Germany for more than a thousand years. They had made important contributions to the arts and sciences, to philosophy, business and finance, medicine and law. They had fought - and died - in Germany's wars. Perhaps more than Jews in any other country, they felt inseparable a part of their homeland. "More German than the Germans," it was said, and with pride.

Now they could no longer live their own lives. Soon they would not be allowed to live.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Define the terms: boycott; antisemitism; civil service; Reich; "Aryanized"; pogrom; concentration camps; Gestapo; SS; SA or storm troopers.

- Research the term "Aryan" to discover its use in history and compare to the way that Hitler and the Nazis defined and used it.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Identify the "SA" also called the "brown shirts" and "storm troopers." Explain their role in the rise of Hitler and the Nazis to power.
2. Identify the "Gestapo." Explain its role in Nazi Germany. How was the Gestapo different from the police? Who had more power and authority?
3. Identify some of the contributions Jews had made to the arts and sciences, philosophy, etc. in Germany. Give several famous examples.
4. German Jews frequently were viewed as being "assimilated" into the German society and nation. What does it mean to be "assimilated"? For the most part, how did the German Jews view themselves?
5. What were the purposes of the Nuremberg Laws? How are they an example of powerful forces using the "law" to accomplish evil ends? What can we learn about the importance of the "rule of law" in our own country? What can we learn from the example of the Nazis' Nuremberg Laws about the importance of keeping the ideas of "law and justice" connected?
6. What was "The Night of Broken Glass?" Why was it such a devastating blow to the Jews of Germany? How did the Nazis manipulate this incident and use it for propaganda purposes? What were the results for the Jews of Germany?
7. Why was it so difficult for the Jews to leave Germany before 1938? Why was it even more difficult after 1938?

### **Activities**

1. Take a map of the world. Label the countries where Jews were permitted to move before 1938. Indicate the number that went to each of the countries. Shade in the countries that Nazi Germany seized and/or conquered after 1938. What happened to the Jews that had moved to the countries that are shaded?
2. Research and prepare a chart illustrating the contributions of the Jews to the German nation. Include the areas of art, music, literature, philosophy, science, mathematics, medicine, law, sports, business and finance, military, etc. Your chart should include the years 1750 to 1940.
3. Research the "storm troopers" or "brownshirts." Why were so many young men fascinated by this group and wanted to join the SA? Why is this group considered to be little more than an organized force of thugs and bullies? Why did they come to be so despised? What happened to this group?
4. Find examples of news stories that appeared after the "Night of Broken Glass" describing what had occurred in Germany. How do the newspapers of that time describe it? What was the world response?

### **Other Sources**

- Excerpt from the video "**The Holocaust**" showing the "Night of Broken Glass."

## **Flowers on the Wall**

by

Miriam Nerlove

Simon and Shuster, New York, 1996

Recommended for Grade 5

### **Synopsis**

Poland, 1938:

Rachel and her family lived in Warsaw, Poland and life became increasingly difficult as antisemitism increased. While her parents and brother went out daily to find whatever work was available, Rachel, weak and ill, stayed at home in their one-room basement apartment in the Jewish quarter. To relieve her loneliness and boredom, her father obtained a few paints and brushes to while away the lonely hours. Since there was no paper, Rachel began to paint flowers on the walls of the apartment. With the coming of spring, Rachel's health improved and she was able to play outside with her friend Naomi and went to school. Then, in September 1939, Nazi Germany invaded and conquered Poland. The Nazis began to take Jews away so Rachel's family had to remain hidden in their basement apartment. While the world outside grew increasingly bleak, Rachel and her family found some comfort and beauty in the slowly fading flowers painted on the wall. Rachel dreamed of becoming an artist and going to Paris with her family. The dream was never to be realized. Rachel and her family were moved into the Warsaw Ghetto. In July 1942, the family was deported to Treblinka concentration camp. Like the flowers that Rachel had painted on the wall of their apartment, she and her family and thousands of Warsaw Jews were gone.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What is life like in Poland for Jews before the coming of the Nazi conquest?
2. Explain the term "boycott." How does the boycott affect Rachel's family?
3. Why are Rachel and her mother so worried when Papa and young Nat find work as Jewish porters? What is the attitude of the Polish government toward the *tragarz*?
4. Rachel's family learn to "make do" with very little in the way of money and food yet they struggle to find happiness within their family. Explain some of the things the family does to survive and to keep up their spirits.
5. How do the paints and brushes change life for the family in their apartment?
6. Why is school so important to Nat and Rachel? What do they study at school?
7. How does life change for the Jews of Warsaw after the Nazi conquest?
8. At first, Rachel continues to dream of the future and her mother encourages her to dream. What are her dreams?
9. What happens to Rachel and her family?

## Activities

1. Write a short poem or paragraph about Rachel and her flowers. Draw and/or paint flowers on a piece of drawing paper. After the painting has dried, use a dark pen or marker to write the poem/paragraph on the page.
2. Find out what kinds of flowers Rachel might have seen growing in her neighborhood or in the marketplace in Warsaw. What kind of weather or climate is needed for these flowers to grow? Try to obtain seeds for some of the flowers or similar flowers and plant them in some window boxes in the classroom. Students should care for the plants. When they have grown and are ready to bloom, re-read the story of Rachel and her family to the class. Discuss the way the flowers affect the environment and appearance of the classroom. Students should share their views about the way the painted flowers may have affected the environment and appearance of the family's apartment. Discuss the importance of flowers, trees, and other plants in our lives. (If there is no place to plant the flowers, make drawings of them and post them around the classroom.)
3. Find out about the subjects that are taught in Jewish schools in the United States today. Compare and contrast these subjects to those taught in other religious schools. Discuss the importance of these lessons to the people who follow the religion and its importance to the children in the religious schools.
4. Draw a map of Poland. Include the neighboring countries. Locate and mark Germany, Austria, and Russia on the map. Find, mark, and label the city of Warsaw. Indicate the location of the Treblinka concentration camp on the map. Discover the names of other cities in Poland where Jewish ghettos were established and mark them on the map also. Mark the location of other concentration camps located in Poland.
5. Research information on the weather and climate in Poland. Using this information, write a short description of what it would have been like to be living in a small, unheated basement apartment as Rachel and her family did.
6. Write a short story explaining how you would have tried to keep up your spirits and hope if you had been Rachel or her brother Nat. What games or stories or other resources would you have needed to find some happiness despite the bleak world around you?
7. Read **The Christmas Menorahs: How a Town Fought Hate**. Explain how the reactions and responses of the people of the town were so important for everyone. What are the dangers of hate and prejudice for everyone? Have the class make a mural of flowers. At the base of each flower, write one thing that can be done by each person to fight against hate, prejudice, and discrimination.

## Other sources:

**The Christmas Menorahs: How a Town Fought Hate** by Janice Cohn. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, 1995.

## **One Eye Laughing, The Other Weeping**

A Novel by  
Barry Denenberg

Scholastic Inc., New York, 2000  
Recommended for Grades 6-8

### **Synopsis**

Young Julie Weiss, the daughter of a respected doctor and his cultured wife, finds her world in 1938 Vienna, Austria changing in strange and frightening ways and records her thoughts, emotions, and observations in her diary. Then, in March of that year, the Anschluss takes place and Austria is joined with Nazi Germany. New laws against Jews are passed every day and acts of hate and violence against them are encouraged. Her mother, father, and older brother are dragged from their apartment and publicly humiliated. Julie is forced to leave school as the situation becomes increasingly desperate. The Nazis are taking everything from the Jews, including their citizenship and freedom. Violence surrounds them. Her mother commits suicide, her brother Max leaves in the night, and her father decides to send Julie, alone, to an aunt in America where she will be safe. In America, Julie feels lost without her father but is warmly welcomed by her aunt and uncle. As she begins to make a place for herself in their lives, Julie continues to miss and to worry about her father. It will not be until after the war is over that Julie learns that her father had been killed and her brother had made it to Palestine, now Israel.

### **Saturday, March 12, 1938** (pp. 76-101)

Hitler is coming to Vienna!

Everywhere they are preparing to welcome him. Swastika flags are flying from the buildings and there is even a gigantic banner with his face hanging on the Kartnerstrasse.

\* \* \*

### **Tuesday, March 15, 1938**

Hitler is here!

In Vienna!

He spoke from the balcony of the Hofburg.

Schools, shops, and factories were all closed so that everyone could come out to greet our new leader. Hundreds of thousands of jubilant Viennese filled the streets and formed a torchlight procession through the inner city as church bells chimed incessantly in celebration of our union with Germany.

We are no longer Viennese. We are no longer Austrians.

We are all Germans now, just like that.

We have no country.

### **Wednesday, March 16, 1938**

I am frightened even to write. My hand trembles as I do.

Late last night Mr. Heller called to warn us that they were attacking anyone in the street who even looked Jewish. People were being pulled from taxicabs and streetcars and beaten.

While Daddy was talking to Mr. Heller there were shouts coming from the street. I started toward the window but Max pulled me away.

He turned off the light and slithered along the wall and pulled back the curtain. There were trucks filled with men and there were swastika flags flying from the trucks as they drove. He still couldn't make out what they were shouting.

Then the trucks were passing right below us. So close I could feel the building shaking and now I *could* hear what they were saying. They were screaming: *KILL THE JEWS, KILL THE JEWS, KILL THE JEWS.*

All of a sudden there was someone banging so hard on our door that the walls were shaking worse than the building. No one moved and no one spoke. Milli [a member of the family's staff] came out of her room to see what all the banging was about and right before she got to the door it burst off its hinges, came crashing to the floor, and all these horrible men streamed into our apartment.

Some of the men went right over to our piano and began pushing it toward the balcony window. Then they pushed it up and over the railing and it landed on the streets below with a horrible crash.

Everything was happening at once.

They dragged Daddy and Max out into the hall and down the stairs. Then they started toward Milli who screamed, "I'm just the maid, I'm just the maid. I'm not Jewish like them. I'm just like you, Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler," and she pointed to Mother who was sitting next to me on the couch, trembling. "She's the one you want. She's the rich Jewish bitch." Milli's face contorted, her mouth twisted into a senseless grin, and her eyes gleamed as if she were possessed.

Obedying Milli's command, the men turned around and looked at Mother.

One of them pulled her off the couch so violently I thought her arm would come off, but the other said, "Wait."

I recognized him when he first came in but he averted his eyes when he realized who I was and where he was. He was the policeman Daddy had taken care of! The one who broke his arm and cut his eye. His cast was off and his eye had healed but it was him. I remember because Daddy wouldn't even let him pay and the man said he didn't know how he would ever thank him, and now here he was, dragging my mother into the streets.

For a moment I thought he was going to let us go, but the other one told Mother to put on her "fine Jewish jewelry" and her "fine Jewish furs." He kept calling her "rich Jewish bitch" over and over and grinning just like Milli.

I jumped up, hoping to go with Mother. I didn't want to be left alone, but the other man pushed me back onto the couch and said if I was smart I would stay put.

Mother came out wearing her blue velvet gown, diamond necklace, emerald earrings, and ermine cape. They dragged her, too, out into the hall and down the stairs.

I was all alone, except for Milli, but I didn't even know if she was still in the apartment.

There was shouting from the hall and the sound of heavy boots going up and down the stairs.

I didn't know what to do. I just sat there, too scared to move or call out. I must have fallen asleep although I tried my hardest not to, because the next thing I knew I heard voices. Familiar voices.

It was Daddy, Mother, and Max.

They looked filthy and frightened and Mother's blue velvet gown was badly torn and her jewelry and furs were gone. But there was no blood. No one was hurt. They were all alive.

I gave each of them a big hug. I had never hugged Mother before. I never realized how small she is. She isn't any taller than me and she looked different. Something was different. It was like I was seeing her for the first time. Like a mask had fallen from her face revealing someone I didn't know very well.

Daddy spoke, although he looked as if each word was costing him dearly. He said everyone should go to bed.

I hoped Max would come to my room and explain everything the way he did when I was younger. Fortunately, after only a few minutes, there was a soft knock and he entered holding an ashtray in one hand and a lit cigarette in the other.

Outside they were given buckets of water and toothbrushes and told to clean off the pro-Austrian slogans from the sidewalks. They did as they were told, but after a while they realized that it wasn't really water, it was some kind of paint stripper, and their hands began to blister.

The acid burned their fingers and hands, but every time they stopped one of the men kicked them and told them to continue while people stood around watching, laughing, and shouting, "WORK FOR THE JEWS, WORK FOR THE JEWS, AT LAST THE FUHRER HAS MADE WORK FOR THE JEWS!"

Then they were told to form two straight lines and spit in each other's faces. One man refused and they immediately poured gasoline all over him and lit a match. The man tried to give in, he screamed that he would do it, but it was too late.

I thought they were all together because they were all together when I saw them, but Max says that he and Daddy were taken down the street as soon as they got outside and never even saw Mother. She was sitting in the downstairs foyer when they got back and didn't say a word then about what happened and hasn't since....

### **Friday March, 18, 1938**

Richard [the chauffeur] came back from Mrs. Svoboda's with Mother's blue velvet gown untouched. Mrs. Svoboda said it would be better if Mother took her dresses elsewhere because she no longer serves Jews.

### **Monday, March 21, 1938**

Someone wrote GET OUT JEWS in big, big letters all over the blackboard in Sophy's [Julie's friend] class, and Mr. Erickson didn't even erase it when he came in--he just taught the class and left it up there for all to see.



\* \* \*

### **Friday, March 25, 1938**

Each day we hear stories, one more horrible than the next.

Mr. Heller's store was broken into, the cash register smashed with a hammer. There are Jewish stars painted all over the windows, and Mrs. Heller has to stand outside every morning with a sign hanging from her neck saying DO NOT BUY FROM US. WE ARE JEWS. She says only Jewish customers come in now, and she doesn't know how long they can go on like this.

Mr. Friedman told Max that people come in with their children and allow them to take any candy they want now, and they tell them that they don't have to pay because the store is owned by Jews.

They came to Mr. Blumenthal's apartment the same night they came to ours and as soon as they knocked he just opened the window, shouted a warning to anyone standing below to get out of the way, and jumped eight floors to his death, leaving Mrs. Blumenthal to care for herself and their three children.

The worst is the little Eckstein boy, Jakob. When they came to take his father away, Jakob ran to him and held onto his leg. Mr. Eckstein tried to shake him off but little Jakob just held on tighter, screaming, "Daddy don't go, Daddy, don't go." Then one of the Nazis grabbed him by the hair and threw him backward so that he hit his head on the corner of the bed so hard that he died that very instant. It's all right to do anything you want to someone if they're Jewish.

*Everything* has changed.

\* \* \*

I never thought about being Jewish before all this started. I mean, I knew I was Jewish but that was all. What makes us Jewish? Am I Jewish just because Hitler says I am? When I walk down the street, people don't look at me because I have blond hair and green eyes. They don't think I'm Jewish, they think I'm Aryan.

We don't go to synagogue, not even on the really important holidays - and even Sophy's parents go then....

Max is the only one who acts like he's Jewish and that's because he's a Zionist.

\* \* \*

### **Thursday, March 31, 1938**

Mrs. Thompson gave the entire class a stern lecture today. She wanted to remind everyone that what is apparently acceptable in the streets of Vienna - "strutting about and carrying on" - is most certainly not going to be tolerated in the classroom.

School, she said, is a sacred place. We can't study other civilizations properly if we are acting in an uncivilized manner ourselves.

I held my breath the whole time she spoke. Finally, someone had enough nerve to say something. I was so proud of her.

### **Friday, April 1, 1938**

Mrs. Thompson is gone! Mr. Erickson was sitting in her place when I arrived this morning, and he announced that she would no longer be teaching at the school. He gave no explanation for this extraordinary event.

He said that we are going to be combined with his class, and just as he was saying that Sophy's class filed in, but before they could find seats, Mr. Erickson announced that all Jews should step to the back of the room and wait.

Then some older boys marched in carrying pails of soapy water and proceeded to wash some of the chairs including the one I had been sitting on.

Mr. Erickson said he didn't want any Aryan children sitting in seats made dirty by Jewish children.

\* \* \*

### **Tuesday, April 5, 1938**

Daddy tries to act like everything will be all right, but I can tell that he's just pretending and underneath he's concerned.

He and Mother are still distraught because of what happened last week. Mrs. Hirsch gave birth to a healthy baby boy and then, the next morning, she awoke at dawn, wrapped him carefully in a blanket so he wouldn't get cold, held him tight in her arms, and jumped out of the hospital window, killing them both. She left a note behind that said she could not let her son live in a world gone mad.

She's right - our country has been taken over by madmen.

I wish, like Alice [in Wonderland], we could all change size, go through the keyhole, come out the other side, and be on Main Street.

### **Thursday, April 7, 1938**

I slept late this morning. There's nothing much to get up for now that there's no school for Jewish kids. The longer I sleep, the less time I have to be afraid.

\* \* \*

Mother seems to be getting worse with each passing day. She stays in her room with the curtains drawn all the time - especially since Mrs. Hirsch.

She looks like a ghost - pale and thin - and she walks around in a daze. I have never seen her like this. Her eyes are open but she doesn't see. She speaks but only when spoken to. It's like her body is here but there's nothing really inside.

No one really knows for sure what happened that night to Mother.

\* \* \*

### **Friday, April 15, 1938**

Mother is dead.

She killed herself.

I long to go to sleep but I am afraid to shut my eyes for fear I will see her coffin.

I held Daddy's hand the whole time but I didn't cry. I was the only one. Daddy cried. Max cried. Mr. and Mrs. Heller cried. But not me. I didn't want to cry.

The sun was shining and the sky was a brilliant blue - just the kind of day Mother liked best.

...She hated rain. "What a gray day," she would repeat throughout the day, as if somehow, if she said it often enough, it wouldn't be true.

Max found her.

He called Daddy at his office and told him to come home quickly.

I went into her room. It was cold and dark.

She was lying quietly on the bed.

Her pillboxes and little glass vials were all empty.

I whispered, "Mother," but she didn't move. She looked like she was sleeping very, very soundly.

I heard Daddy calling people and telling them that she died of pneumonia. No one was surprised. No one asked any questions. No one said, "I didn't know she was sick. Was it sudden? Wasn't there anything you could do?"

When he got off the telephone, he must have known what I was thinking.

"It's better this way, Precious Jewel. The truth will serve no purpose." That's what he said.

(The truth will serve no purpose. Maybe I *have* become Alice.)

My hand is shaking badly - I can hardly write. It doesn't feel like pen on paper but knife on stone.

### Pre-Reading Activities

- Locate the following on a map: Germany, Austria, Vienna
- Define the terms: Anschluss, Nazi, fuhrer, Aryan, Zionist
- Discover how many students in your class have ever kept a journal or diary. Discuss the reasons people decide to keep such records of what is happening in their lives. Were such diaries and journals more common in the 1930s than they are today?

### Discussion Questions

1. Julie is alarmed at the idea of Hitler coming to Vienna. What makes her so fearful of his coming?
2. In this story, Julie writes her thoughts, feelings, and observations in her diary. Many real people also kept diaries and journals. Why do you think they wrote things in these private books? Do these private records and journals serve any purpose for us today?
3. Julie compares herself to **Alice in Wonderland**, a story that she has read. Why do you think she compares herself to Alice? Do you think that Julie is correct in some ways? How does Julie wish to be like Alice?
4. Explain some of the events that show that law, order, and justice had collapsed in Austria.
5. Why do you think that Mr. Erickson replaced Mrs. Thompson as Julie's teacher? How does Mr. Erickson publicly humiliate the Jewish students in the class?
6. Some of Julie's Jewish acquaintances, including her mother, committed suicide. What do you think drove them to take such desperate actions? How did it affect their families and friends?

7. How do you think Julie feels when people she thought of as friends and neighbors refused to look at or speak to her and even acted against Julie and her family? How would you react if the people you thought were friends turned their backs on you in a time of great trouble?

### **Activities**

1. Julie experienced much loss in a short period of time. What were her losses? Make a chart of her losses and divide her losses into sections: Emotional & Psychological, Intellectual, Physical Property. What types of losses do you think are most important?
2. Compare and contrast the characters of Mrs. Thompson and Mr. Erickson. List some of the character traits of each teacher. Which teacher would you want to have as your own teacher or as a friend? What do you think happened to Mrs. Thompson?
3. Julie's brother Max left in the night and years later she discovered that he had made it safely to Palestine (Israel). Julie's father managed to get a visa and other papers to send Julie to her aunt and uncle in the United States but he told her that he could not go because his patients needed him. Write several diary or journal entries as if you are Julie describing your feelings in setting off on this hazardous journey to unknown relatives in the United States.
4. After the end of World War II and the liberation of the concentration and death camps, Julie learned that Nazi soldiers murdered her father while he was treating a patient in the hospital. This occurred only a few weeks after Julie's departure. Do you think Dr. Weiss made a good decision when he stayed in Austria for his patients? What does his decision tell you about his character as a person and as a doctor?
5. Look through a copy of the story of Alice in Wonderland. Find some passages that you think Julie would use to describe her own feelings and situation. Read these to the class and explain why you selected them.
6. What have we learned about the Holocaust from the diaries, journals, and letters written by real people during this time? Probably the most famous of all such diaries was written by young Anne Frank who perished in a concentration camp. Explain how Anne Frank's diary has affected the world although she herself did not survive.

**Play to the Angel**  
A novel by  
Maurine F. Dahlberg

Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2000  
Recommended for Grades 5-8

**Synopsis**

It is 1938 and there are rumblings in Austria of the rising power of the Nazis in the neighboring country of Germany but twelve year old Greta Radky dreams of becoming a famous concert pianist. However, the piano reminds Mutti [mother] of the death of her talented son Kurt and she wants to sell it. Greta meets the secretive Herr Hummel who agrees to give her piano lessons and arranges for her to compete in a recital at the Vienna Academy of Music and Performing Arts. While the world around her seems to swirl with threatening changes, Greta must come to terms with her own doubts about herself and with her Mutti who seems to care more for her deceased son than for her living daughter. Even as she prepares for the recital, Greta witnesses the Nazi takeover of Austria and becomes increasingly puzzled and concerned for her beloved piano teacher. Greta finds herself confronted with choices that involve dangers to her friends and her loved ones in Nazi controlled Austria

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....It was almost my turn.

It's all right, I thought. The music will be there, in my hands and in my heart, right where I left it yesterday. But my hands were damp, and my heart was pounding.

I pictured Herr Hummel's little angel, floating in front of the lace curtains. Just picturing her serene little face made me feel stonger, calmer. She seemed to represent all the people who believed in me: Herr Hummel, Frau Vogel, the girls at school - and the growing part of *me* that believed in me.

Then the Rachmaninoff was over, and it was my turn. Herr Doctor Haas introduced me.

My heart pounded as I walked to the piano. Just forget the audience, I told myself, and play to the little angel across town.

The Scarlatti was first. When I touched the keys, a sort of miracle happened: something inside of me seemed to take over and play - and it played far better than I could have played myself. The music filled the air with a joy and a clarity it had never had before. I was in perfect control, making some notes as wispy as a bird's breath, others as crisp as winter stars.

Kurt [Greta's deceased brother] had said that happened sometimes when you performed. A deep inner part of you took over and played while the everyday you listened and marveled at it. Now I understood what he meant.

When I finished the sonata, everyone chapped loudly. Some people went "Ahhh!" and I heard someone say "Charming!"

This is fun, I thought. Why had I ever been afraid of the audience? They liked my playing!

So when I played the Mendelssohn, I played not just to the angel but to them, too.

\* \* \*

When I reached the end, the final chord hung in the air for moments, then settled like golden dust over the recital hall. The audience burst into applause. I stood up and curtsied to a blur of smiling faces and clapping hands.

I sat down, weak with happiness and relief. I remembered when Kurt and I had gone to the Hofburg Palace to see the Imperial Crown. It had been enclosed in a glass case where everyone could see it, but no one could touch it. No matter what happened in the rest of my life, today would be safe in its glass case. Nobody could ever mar it or take it away from me.

\* \* \*

...When people began whispering, I thought it was just because they were as bored as I was. But the whispering didn't stop when the long-haired boy did. If anything, it got even louder while the last three children played. I heard the words "plebescite" and "Nazis." Politics again! I wanted to tell everyone to be quiet. The last pianist, a boy named Hans, was playing Mozart's Rondo *alla Turca*, one of my favorite pieces, and he was playing so well I wanted to hear him.

Herr Doctor Haas thanked everyone for coming, but he spoke hastily and his eyes were on the door. To my surprise, he ended by saying, "May God bless us and our country in the days to come."

People hurried out of the room, pushing and shoving. They weren't talking about us or our playing but about Hitler and Schuschnigg [Austria's leader] and radio announcements. Herr Hummel was hurrying toward me, holding out my coat. "You played beautifully! Now hurry, we must get home!"

"But - but what's happening? Where's Mutti?"

"She isn't here Greta. She couldn't come."

She hadn't come.

So that was that.

"It wasn't her fault." Herr Hummel's voice was kind. "Frau Vogel called and had Lothar's secretary bring me a message. Rumors say that Schuschnigg has canceled the plebiscite. The Nazis are rioting all over central Vienna. Your mother couldn't get here. She's all right, though. She got away from the shop and is at Frau Vogel's. We should be happy about that."

Schuschnigg? Rioting? I didn't understand. Surely Mutti could have gotten here if she'd wanted to. It wasn't far from Rosenwald's [where Mutti worked]. All you had to do was cross the Ring and turn -

Herr Doctor Haas came running up. "I'll take you both home in my car. I've heard it isn't safe to be out on the streets."

A car! I'd never ridden in a car before. The idea was exciting. But as Herr Hummel and I waited in the front hall, I thought about how he and Mutti and I were supposed to be celebrating in the garnet and ivory splendor of the Hotel Sacher's dining room. Why did the Nazis have to go and ruin everything?

"I hear that the worst rioting is around Karlsplatz," Herr Doctor Haas said as we got into the front seat. "We'll go in the other direction, toward the park, and make a wide circle south."

Then, as he pulled out onto Lothingerstrasse, I saw the Nazis, thousands of them, filling the streets. I could hear their cries of "*Sieg Heil!*" and "*Heil, Hitler!*"

No wonder Mutti hadn't been able to come to the Academy!

I was thankful to be in Herr Doctor Haas's car with Herr Hummel's arm around me. But why were the Nazi's rioting? I looked at the two men, but they were so tense I didn't want to ask them.

It was a long trip back to Stumper Gasse, threading our way through the back streets. When we finally pulled up in front of Herr Hummel's building, I thanked Herr Doctor Haas and ran ahead of my professor.

To my surprise, Frau Voegel was coming out of Herr Hummel's flat. When she saw me, she gasped with relief. "Greta, lovey! Thank God you're safe! Your mother's here, in Herr Hummel's apartment. I saw her coming from my window. She couldn't climb the stairs, so the superintendent let us in here."

I couldn't even ask what she meant. I just ran into Herr Hummel's living room. Mutti was sitting on the sofa, her ankle bandaged and propped up on the coffee table. Her braids had come unpinned, and she had a square white bandage on her forehead. What scared me most was the way her face looked - all trembly and shocked. Her eyes seemed to be still seeing things she'd seen somewhere else.

"Greta!" She reached for me. "You're safe!! I tried to come -"

"I know. I saw the Nazis." I put my arms around her. Herr Hummel rushed into the room and sat down on the other side of her.

"Frau Radky, what happened?"

In a dazed voice, she said, "I thought I'd be all right. The Rosenwalds [her employers who were Jewish] had left to go stay with friends in the country. Everyone else had gone home early. After they left, I saw the Nazis coming, beating up the police, smashing windows. I thought that if they saw me there by myself, if they knew the Rosenwalds were gone, they'd leave the shop alone. I ran up to the workroom and opened a window. I leaned out and cried, 'I'm the only one here! Me, Frau Radky!' "

She was shaking violently.

"Frau Waldmann was there, in the crowd. She yelled - " Mutti's voice broke. "She yelled, 'It's Frau Radky! She's worse than a Jew because she *works* for Jews!' Frau Waldmann, whose dress I was making! Then I heard someone yell, 'Burn the shop!' More Nazis were coming, screaming that there was a Jewlover in Rosenwald's shop. They had torches. I ran out the back door. I twisted my ankle, but I didn't dare stop. I ran all the way home. I couldn't go to the Academy, Greta! I tried and I couldn't."

"I know, Mutti. It's all right."

Herr Hummel got a blanket to put around Mutti's shoulders. Still she couldn't stop trembling or talking.

"The things I saw! Herr von Prettin was beating an old Jewish man. I think it was Herr Bergen, the jeweler's father. He was on the ground, helpless, and Herr

von Prettin kept kicking him. Ilse and Elisabeth [von Prettin] were there. They looked ill. Ilse says Elisabeth is terrified of [her father] Josef."

I pictured Herr von Prettin's cruel face and suddenly felt sorry for Elisabeth. Ha, I thought, the world *must* be topsy-turvy if I was feeling sorry for Elisabeth von Prettin!

"Try to rest," Herr Hummel told Mutti. "I'll fix us something to eat." He winked at me. "It won't be the Hotel Sacher, but it will have to do."

"The Hotel Sacher?" Mutti asked weakly.

"Yes, we were going there after the recital, remember? To celebrate. And we must still do it some evening, because Greta played beautifully. You would have been proud of her."

"Proud? I am proud. Of course." Mutti looked puzzled, as if she was feeling around in her mind for something. "Greta, I thought about those things you said this morning. You said there wasn't room for you in my heart, but there is!"

"I know, Mutti. We'll talk about it later. Just rest now."

\* \* \*

Frau Vogel's plump hands shook as she took her cup off the tray. I began shaking myself. I'd never seen Frau Vogel frightened before.

Herr Hummel was scared, too. He tried not to show it, but I could see it in his eyes.

"We should have known Hitler would never allow Schuschnigg to hold the plebiscite," he said. "He must have known the Nazis didn't have a chance of winning, so he threatened to declare war on Austria if it wasn't canceled."

Suddenly the music stopped. Then we heard Chancellor Schuschnigg's voice, tired and strained. "Austrian men and women! This day has placed us in a tragic and decisive situation."

Herr Hummel had guessed right. The government of Nazi Germany had given our government an ultimatum: either Schuschnigg had to step down and let Hitler appoint a Nazi chancellor to rule us, or Nazi troops would storm in and kill everyone who got in the way. So Schuschnigg was stepping down. Hitler was taking over Austria.

"We are yielding to brute force," Schuschnigg said, "because we do not want bloodshed. So I bid farewell to the Austrian people with a wish from the bottom of my heart: God protect Austria!"

The radio played our national anthem. The record was old and scratchy, but the courage and sweetness of the tune came through.

\* \* \*

Herr Hummel's words came back to me: "Living under the Nazis is your worst nightmare."

Mutti was crying softly. I patted her arm. Behind her head, the angel's wings glinted gold in the lamplight.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Identify the following people: Chancellor Schuschnigg; Adolf Hitler; Josef Goebbels
- Define the terms: Anschluss; SS; hemophilia; etude; sonata



- Locate Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Switzerland on a map of Europe in the 1930's. Label the city of Vienna.
- Identify some of the following: Mendelssohn, Rachmaninoff, Scarlatti, Mozart, Hadyn, Schumann

### **Discussion Questions**

1. At first Greta pays little attention to what is happening around her in Austrian politics, but eventually she is forced to listen and to see some of the things that are happening. How could the political takeover of Austria by the Nazis influence Greta's personal life?
2. Greta is concerned about her piano teacher, Herr Hummel because he avoids any discussion of his life in Germany and the reasons he moved to Austria. What are some possible reasons why Greta should be concerned?
3. Why was Mutti attacked by the Nazi mob just because she was working in a Jewish business? Why was she so bewildered by the reaction of the mob to her presence?
4. Herr Hummel warns that living under the Nazis is like your worst nightmare. What are some reasons why this was so?

### **Activities**

1. One day while Greta is practicing in Herr Hummel's apartment when he is not home, two Viennese policemen and two SS officers come to the apartment demanding to see him. When they find he is not there, they search the apartment. Greta thinks she knows where Herr Hummel is at that time. What should she do? Tell the policemen and SS? Keep quiet? Lie to the policemen and the SS? She knows that if Herr Hummel comes home that he will be arrested. What can she do? What should she do? What are the dangers to Greta no matter what she decides?
2. Greta's Mutti decides to open her own small sewing business and to work out of their apartment. Why is it necessary for her to do such a thing? Eventually, Mutti, like some others, decides that she and Greta must leave Austria and go to live in Switzerland and Frau Vogel decides to do the same. Why would Mutti decide that they should leave their beloved homeland in Austria and start a new life elsewhere? Why was this such an important decision?
3. Herr Hummel managed to reach the United States and sends Greta a post card from Philadelphia. Why did he have to word the post card very carefully? Was there a risk for Greta to receive a post card from America? Why?
4. Herr Hummel left his angel with Greta as a "thank you" and as a "memory" for her to keep. Imagine that you have seen the angel. Make a copy of the angel to hang in the classroom window.

### **Other Sources**

- Read the book **The Devil in Vienna.** Compare and contrast some of the incidents and attitudes found in the book/video with the book **Play to the Angel.**

## Friedrich

by

Hans Peter Richter  
Puffin Books, New York, 1987  
Recommended for Grades 6-8

### Synopsis

A young German boy recounts the fate of his best friend, a Jew, during the early 1930's. As the boys grow in age, the ages-long antisemitism in Europe grew proportionately. Breaking out from an age of innocence, the critical observations trace the mounting evil. The stunning conclusion is a stark prelude to the study of the Holocaust.

### Quote

"I have been delegated to talk to you today about Jews. You all know Jews. But you all know too little about them...you will know what a danger Jews represent for us and our nation."

### **"The Ball"** **(1933)** from **Friedrich**

*pp.38-42*

We ran along the street, Friedrich kept close to the houses; I stayed on the curb. I threw the little rubber ball I'd been given in the shoe store. It hit the center of the sidewalk and bounced high. Friedrich caught it and threw it back to me.

"My father will be home any moment!" he called to me. "I must get back soon. We're going shopping today. Maybe someone'll give me a ball, too!"

I nodded and jumped over a manhole. I waited until a pedestrian had gone by, then hurled the ball back to Friedrich. Friedrich hadn't been watching. There was a crash. The ball rolled harmlessly back to me. Friedrich stared openmouthed at the smashed shop window. I bent to pick up the ball, not yet believing what had happened.

Suddenly the woman stood before us. She grabbed Friedrich's arm and began to screech. Doors and windows opened. A crowd gathered. Her husband stood by the shop door, hands in his pockets smoking a pipe.

"This good for nothing Jewboy here broke my shop window." She told everyone who cared to listen. "He wants to rob me." She turned to Friedrich. "But you didn't quite make it this time, did you. Because I'm always watching. I know you, you won't get away from me. You pack of Jews, they should get rid of you. First you ruin our business with your department stores, then you rob us on top of it. Just you wait, Hitler will show you yet!" And she shook Friedrich violently.

"But he didn't do it!" I yelled. "I threw the ball, I broke your window. We didn't want to steal!"

The woman looked at me, eyes large and stupid. Her mouth dropped open.

Her husband swept away the broken glass into the gutter. He collected the rolls of thread, the stars of black and white yarn, the balls of colorful embroidery yarn from the display case and carried them into the shop.

The woman's eyes grew very small. "How dare you interfere? What are you doing here anyway? Away with you! You don't think you have to protect this rotten Jewboy because you're living in the same house, do you? Go on, beat it!"

"But I threw the ball!" I said again.

The woman lunged at me, without letting go of Friedrich. Friedrich cried. He wiped his tears on his sleeve, smearing his whole face.

Someone had called the police.

Out of breath and sweating, a policeman arrived on bicycle. He asked the woman to tell him what had happened.

Again she told the story of the attempted burglary. I tugged at his sleeve. "Officer," I said, "he didn't do it, I broke the pane with my ball."

The woman looked at me threateningly. "Don't you believe him, Officer!" she said. "He only wants to protect the Jewboy here. Don't you believe him. He thinks the Jew's his friend just because they live in the same house."

The policeman bent down to me. "You don't understand this yet, you're too young still," he explained. "You may think you're doing him a favor by standing up for him. But you know he's a Jew. Believe me, we grownups have had plenty of experience with Jews. You can't trust them: they're sneaky and they cheat. This woman was the only one who saw what happened, so..."

"But she didn't see it!" I interrupted him. "Only I was there, and I did it!"

The policeman frowned. "You wouldn't try to call this woman a liar." I wanted to explain, but he didn't let me.

He took Friedrich's wrist from the woman and led him toward our house, followed by the woman and a long line of curious onlookers. I joined the line. Halfway there we ran into Herr Schneider. Sobbing, Friedrich shouted, "Father!"

Astonished, Herr Schneider surveyed the procession. He came closer, said hello, and looked from one person to another, obviously puzzled.

"Your son—" said the policeman.

But the woman didn't give him a chance to go on. In one burst she repeated her tales. The only part she left out this time was her insinuation about Jews.

Herr Schneider listened patiently. When she had finished, he took Friedrich's chin in his hand and lifted his head so he could look into his eyes.

"Friedrich," he asked seriously, "did you break the shop window intentionally?"

Friedrich shook his head, still sobbing. "I did it, Herr Schneider. I threw the ball, but didn't do it on purpose!" And I showed him my small rubber ball. Friedrich nodded.

Herr Schneider took a deep breath. "If you can swear on oath that what you just told me is the truth," he told the woman, "go ahead and register a formal complaint. You know me, and you know where I live!"

The woman did not reply.

Herr Schneider pulled out his purse. "Kindly release my son, Officer!" he said sharply. "I will pay for the damage at once."

"I Was There"  
from  
Friedrich  
by  
Hans Peter Richter

pp. 112-116

**In the Hitler Youth - 1939**

I was polishing my Hitler Youth dagger. The words "Blood and Honor" etched into it showed up clearly. I had even polished the Hitler Youth mark stamped onto the black handle til it shone.

The others were talking in low voices.

Gunther sat in the seat next to Heinz. He was tugging at his red-white-red armband. You could still make out a lighter spot, where the Jungvolk's rune of victory used to be.

"You should fasten it with three stitches," Heinz recommended. "Otherwise it'll keep slipping down, or the swastika will turn to the inside."

Gunther nodded. "My mother can do that. She still has to sew the buttons on my shoulder straps as well."

Curious, Heinz pulled at Gunther's shoulder straps. "How did you fasten them?" he asked.

"With safety pins."

The door opened. We looked up and stopped talking. A gorgeous fragrance wafted into the room. We sniffed it with astonishment.

A blond platoon leader in Hitler Youth uniform minced in behind it. Cologne filled the room to the last corner.

There wasn't a hair out of place, or a speck of dust on his uniform. His shoes were polished to a hard shine. He walked up and held out his hand to Heinz, a hand as fine as a girl's, and in a curiously soft voice said: "You and your Jungvolk platoon have joined the Hitler Youth as a whole. We need good leaders in the Hitler Youth."

Heinz said nothing.

A smile on his face, the sweet smelling platoon leader looked us over. "Nice boys you brought," he remarked as he walked along the front row. He stroked everyone's hair and repeated, "Really - nice boys." When it came to Otto, he chucked him under the chin and raised his head, forced him to meet his gaze.

"We will be friends," he said in a velvety voice. Then he pirouetted around on the tips of his toes. We sat silently. We looked at each other.

The door opened again.

This time it was our new *Gefolgschaftsfuhrer* who finally arrived.

"Attention!"

We leaped from our seats.

The fragrant platoon leader reported.

His superior honored Heinz with neither a greeting nor a glance. He thanked the reporting Hitler Youth platoon leader and ordered us to sit down.

Our eyes wandered from one leader to the other. We waited. The *Gefolgschaftsfuhrer* cleared his throat. "Quite a lot will change for you in the Hitler Youth," he began without greeting. "First, you are no longer *Pimpfs*, but Hitler Youths: you bear the name of our Fuhrer. Second, this obliges you even more than before to demonstrate always and everywhere why the Fuhrer has chosen you. All childish behavior stops forthwith. Third, I regard it as the mission of the Hitler Youth to prepare you for your upcoming military service. With the recovery of the Ostmark, the Sudetenland, and the Memel district, and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the creation of a Greater German Reich and a reordering of Europe are no longer out of our reach. Fourth, in order that we may fulfill the mission given us, we need experienced leaders. Only trial in service will prove whether former leaders among you can be utilized further. Fifth, the Hitler Youth, consisting as it does of young working men, apprentices, and school boys, requires different hours. Duty in the Hitler Youth, therefore, falls primarily on evenings and Sundays. Sixth, Sundays belong to the Hitler Youth, not going to church. You are old enough now to discard bourgeois prejudices. Seventh, I expect absolute loyalty to the Fuhrer. The enemies of the Fuhrer are your enemies, too, be they the Jews, Bolsheviks, parsons, or whatever. Eighth, I demand from you unwavering dedication to the ideals of National Socialism. The readiness to sacrifice blood and life for Fuhrer, Folk, and Fatherland. To be a Hitler Youth is to be a hero. Tenth, hundredth, and thousandth: I demand obedience, obedience, unconditional obedience."

I was expecting more. But the recital had ended.

"Up!" shouted the *Gefolgschaftsfuhrer*. "And now our song 'Forward'."

Forward! Forward! With resound fanfares,

Forward! Forward! Youth knows no peril.

Germany, you will stand resplendent  
although we may die.

Forward! Forward! Youth knows no peril.

Be the goal ever so high,  
youth will gain it.

Our banner precedes us, fluttering in the breeze,  
as we march into the future, man after man,

We'll march for Hitler through night and through danger  
with the flag of youth, for freedom for bread.

Our banner precedes us, fluttering in the breeze.

Our banner signals the new time.

Our banner leads us to eternity.

Yes, our banner is worth more than death."

Our first Hitler Youth meeting was over. On the way home I said, "I don't like it in the Hitler Youth." "I don't like it," Gunther promptly agreed. "I don't either."

Heinz walked between us, looking thoughtful. He was staring ahead as fixedly as he had in the kitchen with Gunther's father. After a long while he said softly, without looking at us. "We will have to get used to it."

## Pre-Reading Activities

- Do a time line study of the 1930's and how Hitler came to power.
- Look at the Anti-Jewish Laws of early 1930's  
i.e., Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service  
Law Regarding Admission to the Bar  
Law Against Crowding of German Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning
- Nuremberg Laws of 1935  
i.e., Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor  
Reich Citizenship Law  
First Decree to the Reich Citizenship Law  
Second Decree for the Implementation of the Law Regarding Changes in Family names.
- Look at the role the Hitler Youth played in Nazi Germany
- For what purpose was the first concentration camp Dachau established?

## Discussion Questions

1. In the selection chosen, show who is the perpetrator, the collaborator, the bystander and the victim.
2. How did the woman and officer express their hatred?
3. Why didn't the woman and the policeman believe Friedrich?
4. Why didn't they believe Hans P. Richter who is Friedrich's friend?
5. The war has not started yet. Why are there such feelings of hatred?
6. What role did the husband play in the story?
7. What role did Herr Schneider play in the reading?

## Activities

1. Review the reading and make a list of "hate" language used. Create a cause/effect chart using personal values, beliefs, behaviors, and consequences.
2. Watch the Video: Seeds of the Holocaust, 15 min (1933-35). A documentary with archival footage of events and causes of the Holocaust, asking questions such as: Why did Hitler single out the Jews? With teacher materials. Social Studies School Service 800-421-4246

## Suggested Readings

- Parallel Journey by Eleanor Ayer. NY: Atheneum Books. 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up.
- I Was There by Hans Peter Richter. Ft. Worth, Tx: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up.
- Escape or Die by Ina Friedman. NY: Addison-Wesley, 1982. 6-8<sup>th</sup> grades
- Flying Against the Wind by Ina Friedman. Ma: Lodgepole. 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- War Without Friends by Evert Hartman. NY: Crown. 7-8<sup>th</sup> grades
- Children of the Swastika by Eileen Heyes. CT: Millbrook Press. 7-8<sup>th</sup> grades

**Additional Resources for the Teacher**

- **Number the Stars and Friedrich Curriculum Unit** by Victoria Palisin. Center for Learning, 1994
- See Teacher References under **The World Changes: Nazism on the Rise** for books and videos
- See **Internet** for sites for this subject.

## Kindertransport

by

Olga Levy Drucker

Scholastic Inc, New York, 1994

Recommended for Grades 7-8

### **Synopsis**

After *Kristallnacht*, November 9-10, 1938, the Jews ensnared in the evil plans of the Nazi government were faced with "choiceless" choices. Olga Levy Drucker's autobiographical story is a powerful example. The Levy's, as did many families in order to save their children, sent their children to live in England through a system called the *Kindertransport*. Of the ten thousand children rescued through this program, nine thousand never saw their parents again, or brothers, sisters, and family members.

### **Quote**

"For a moment I saw myself six years earlier, a skinny kid with pigtails, waving good bye to Mama and Oma from the *Kindertransport* train, the train that took me away from Germany forever."

### **"Departure 1940"**

Julie Heifetz

My mother she won't leave her mother.  
Her sister can't go away and leave the mother with the sister.  
My father can't go away and leave his wife with her mother.  
That day after the Synagogue was burned  
my father took everything together and gave it to us,  
tools, watches, rings, you know, whatever he had,  
he gave it to my brothers and me.  
Without his tools, a watchmaker is nothing.  
"I don't need them - you're young, one day  
you might have a use for it."  
My mother, she smiled. "It's not so bad, don't worry,  
tomorrow we'll all probably go on the train  
without having to pay for a ticket."  
She took a photograph of my Father in his caftan  
and her in her new Shabbas dress,  
and put it in my shoe, that they should always walk with me.  
Then she kissed me goodbye.  
It was the second night of Sukkoth."

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Prepare the students for reading with a map study of Europe.
- Use a timeline:



1. January 30, 1933: German President Paul von Hindenburg appoints Hitler chancellor of Germany. The Nazis refer to this as *Machtergreifung* or seizure of power.
2. February 2, 1933: Political demonstrations are banned within Germany.
3. February 27, 1933: A presidential decree gives Chancellor Hitler emergency powers.
4. March 22, 1933: The first concentration camp, Dachau, is established. By 1945, the Nazis will build more than 1000 camps.
5. March 23, 1933: Enabling Act passed giving Hitler's government dictatorial powers.
6. April 7, 1933: Hitler approves decrees banning Jews and other non-Aryans from the practice of law and from jobs in the civil service. Jewish government workers in Germany are ordered to retire.
7. April 11, 1933: The German government begins employment and economic sanctions against Jews.
8. April 25, 1933: The Law for Preventing Overcrowding in German Schools and Schools of Higher Learning
9. April 26, 1933: Hermann Goring established the Gestapo or Secret Police
10. May 10, 1933: Books deemed of "un-German spirit" burned - most of them Jewish.
11. July 14, 1933: The Nazi Party is Germany's only legal political party; political opposition is punishable by law.
12. July 31, 1933: Approximately 30,000 people are by now interned in Nazi concentration camps.
13. September 22, 1933: The Reich Chamber of Culture is established. German Jews are banned from the fields of journalism, art, literature, music, broadcasting, and theatre.
14. 1933-1939: More than 1400 anti-Jewish laws are passed.
15. November 9-10, 1933: *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) occurs across Germany and Austria. Ninety-one Jews are killed, others are beaten. Thirty thousand male Jews are sent to concentration camps, though most will be released later. 267 synagogues are desecrated and destroyed. Jewish businesses are looted and destroyed.
16. March 3, 1939: Olga Levy leaves Germany on Children's Transport, *Kindertransport*, for England.

### Activities

1. The war is over. How do Olga and her family rebuild their lives?
2. Compare and contrast Olga's and Bonnie's war experiences using a Venn diagram.

## Group Assignment

Group \_\_\_\_\_

Brainstorm and make a list of how the children from the book were affected by the Holocaust and World War II.

Choose a member of your group for each role.

Facilitator:

Recorder:

Reporter:

Class discussion from each reporter's response.

**(Teacher caution): Avoid comparisons of pain.**

## **Flying Against the Wind**

by  
Ina R. Friedman

Lodgepole Press, Brookline, MA, 1995  
Recommended for grades 7-8

### **Synopsis**

The Story of a Young Woman Who Defied the Nazis

Cato Bjontes van Beek followed her own values and beliefs in resisting the laws and dictates of the Nazi government. While attending school one day, Cato is deeply troubled and alarmed when the teacher tells the class that certain pages must be torn from their schoolbooks. Realizing that there were books in their home that were written by the very same authors whose pages had been torn from the schoolbooks, Cato and her family must decide what to do about the books and the ideas they represent.

*Chapter 8: "The Day They Murdered the Books" pp. 43-47*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. The teacher says that the village is too poor to buy new books but that the schoolbooks must be corrected. What must the class do to make corrections in their texts? What are these so-called "corrections"? What are the purposes of the Nazis in commanding that these changes be made in the schoolbooks?
2. Why do Cato, Tim, Maria, and Mietje communicate by signing with their hands?
3. Cato realizes that the removal of pages from the schoolbooks is similar to recent events in Germany. What were these events? Why did the Nazis want the works of these authors destroyed?
4. The censorship and destruction of the books in the libraries and schools also posed a threat to private citizens. Why was Cato so alarmed for her mother and aunt?
5. Olga and Amelie are determined to continue to teach their own values to their children. Describe the plan that Olga and Amelie develop to do this. What are the values they consider so important?
6. Why is Ulrich, a nephew, a potential threat to the family?

### **Activities:**

1. Make a list of some of the authors and composers whose works were destroyed in the book burning. Write the names of some of their works after each author and composer.
2. Identify some of the themes and ideas these authors expressed through their works.

3. One of the strategies used by the Nazis to increase their power and to identify "enemies" was to turn family member against family member, friend against friend. What were some of the tactics the Nazis used to accomplish this?
4. Eighteenth century writer Heinrich Heine wrote: "Those who burn books soon burn people." Heine's own works were condemned and destroyed by the Nazis. Why was this done? Heine's comment seems prophetic and in the twentieth century it seemed as if it would be accomplished. Why did Heine make this remark so long before the Nazis rose to power?

### **Flying Against the Wind**

by  
Ina R. Friedman

Lodgepole Press, Brookline, MA, 1995

Recommended for grades 7-8

#### **Synopsis**

The Story of a Young Woman Who Defied the Nazis

The author has written a touching and powerful biography of Cato Bjontes van Beek, a bright and talented young woman who despised all the Nazis represented and worked to help those who were the victims of the Nazis. Her courage and her compassion for fellow human beings led her to defy the Nazis and to work for human rights and human dignity. The biographical portrait opens in 1920 when Cato was a child and concludes with her death in 1943. In Chapter 7, "*Swimming Against the Tide*," young Cato must decide whether or not to join the Hitler Youth. Pp. 37-41

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why would an organization such as the Hitler Youth appeal to someone as energetic and athletic as Cato?
2. Why did the Nazis believe the development of the Hitler Youth to be so important? What were the children in the Hitler Youth taught?
3. How did Olga [Cato's mother] try to make her daughter understand the danger that the Hitler Youth presented to the family and all that they believed?
4. When Cato told her Mietje, Tim, and Maria of her decision not to join the Hitler Youth, how did they respond to the news?
5. What does the teacher Herr Heinbuckel mean when he angrily warns Cato "You can't swim against the tide!"?
6. Olga draws parallels between the lessons of **Uncle Tom's Cabin** and the policies of the Nazis. What were the similarities between this story of slavery in the United States and Nazi rule in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s?
7. As she considers Olga's comments, Cato also thinks of the changes that the Nazis had made in the lives of her family and community. What were some of those changes?

8. How did Cato and her family try to circumvent some of the laws made by the Nazis?

### **Activities**

1. Find out more about the Hitler Youth and how it functioned. How did the Nazis attempt to control and direct the minds and thoughts of the young people through the Hitler Youth? Explain why the organization was so attractive to the young people. Why was the Hitler Youth so important to Adolf Hitler and the Nazis?
2. Make a chart comparing and contrasting the ideas and beliefs taught by the Hitler Youth to those taught by the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and other similar groups in the United States. How do the ideas and beliefs of the Hitler Youth represent a totalitarian regime such as the Nazis? How do the ideas and beliefs of the Scouts represent democratic ideas?

## Behind the Bedroom Wall

by  
Laura E. Williams

Milkweed Editions, 1996  
Recommended for 5-6<sup>th</sup> grades

### **Synopsis**

Adolph Hitler set out to conquer Europe from 1933-45 and in doing so ensnared his people into the trap of following his regime with blind obedience. He especially set out to capture the young through pageantry and sworn loyalty to him, the Fuhrer, and to Germany, the Fatherland. Korinna Rehme was a 13-year-old girl who belonged to a Nazi Youth Group in the 1930's and faced a terrible dilemma in her life when she found out that her parents were hiding a Jewish family behind the wall of her wardrobe in her room. What should she do? To be a "Jew lover" was the worst accusation against a German citizen. She had her loyalties tested to the utmost - whether to report her parents as traitors or to go along and keep the secret that her parents were hiding refugees.

She lost sleep, skipped school, and even aroused the suspicion of her dear friend Rita, whose brother Hans Damerau was member of the Gestapo. As a member in her youth club she learned that "Hitler is the most wonderful man." This was being reinforced in her school books by her teachers, leaders, and even her friends.

In the end, Korinna learned a valuable lesson about humanity, that freedom was perhaps more important than love-as the author states, "After all, if you are not free to love whom you wish, what good is love?" *p. 169*

### **Quote**

"Her mother's best friend had been arrested for harboring Jews. Would her parents be next? She wondered as she took her mother's cold hands into her trembling ones. Suddenly her mother let out a sob, which sounded like it was wrenched from the bottom of her soul. The sound ripped through the quiet of the room and squeezed Korinna's heart.....Her mother had always been there to dry her tears. That's what mother were for. But now she consoled her mother, murmuring under her breath and rocking her back and forth. She suddenly felt grown up, something she longed to be for quite some time, only now she wasn't sure she liked the feeling, or the heavy sense of responsibility that came with it." *(pp.124-5)*

*Chapter 14- pp.149-57*

As soon as the sky turned dark, the Gestapo came. This time they didn't bother knocking on the door, they just broke the lock and stomped right in. Korinna tried to swallow past the lump of fear that closed her throat, but it was impossible. She saw that of one of the officers was Hans Damerau. Oh, how she despised him for hitting her father. She couldn't believe she had ever looked up to him.

This time there were four men. They started in the front room and destroyed it. They knocked holes in the walls, and ripped open the sofas, and pulled up the floor boards. The only thing they didn't touch was the framed picture of Adolf Hitler, hanging above the ruined couch.

Turning on every light, they worked their way through the kitchen. Again, they destroyed everything. Korinna's father warned her and her mother not to say anything when the Gestapo was here, no matter what they did. And Korinna could see her mother biting her lip until she drew blood. Korinna could taste the metallic tang of fear in her own mouth.

The Rehmes followed the officers upstairs. There was barely enough room for the three of them with the four men tossing things about. They started in Korinna's parents' bedroom. First the bed was ripped open, and the feathers danced merrily around the room, oblivious to the seriousness of the situation. Then the wardrobe was dismantled with an ax, as were the chair and Herr Rehme's desk, which had been in the family for three generations. It was priceless. Now it was worthless.

Korinna watched everything as if she were watching a play. She felt involved, yet somehow removed. She felt angry, yet on the verge of hysterical laughter. This was not happening to her or to her family. How could it be? They were good, loyal Germans. They loved their Fatherland, didn't they? They wanted Germany to prosper and succeed, didn't they? What more was needed? Only that they had to hate Jews, love their Fuhrer, and obey the party at all costs. Not too much.

Maybe she could convince her parents before it was too late, she thought frantically. She could convince Hans it had all been a mistake. Her parents weren't traitors, they were just ignorant. They didn't know better. She knew she could explain everything. Hans would understand. After all, he was her best friend's brother.

"Hans!" she cried.

"Korinna, silence!" her father commanded.

Her mother put a firm arm around her and said quietly, "Hush, Liebling. It'll be over soon. Hush."

Korinna could feel her mother's arm shake, and it flowed through her own body until she could feel her legs quiver with fear. What had she almost done? She had almost ruined everything! She had almost turned in her parents!

Her legs trembled uncontrollably. Two officers were now in the bathroom. She heard a grating noise, and then the sound of flowing water. As her mother led her into her bedroom behind Hans and one of the other officers, she saw a flood of water flowing out of the bathroom. Their house would be ruined. Her bedroom received the same treatment as her parent's room had. Only the picture of the Fuhrer above the desk remained untouched.

They destroyed the wardrobe, but still the back stayed in place over the damning hole in the wall, Hans lifted the ax one last time.

"Stop!" Herr Rehme said.

Hans turned to look at Korinna's father. "I thought you learned your lesson last time," he said viciously. "But I guess I was wrong." He added as he nodded to one of the other officers.

The other officer grabbed Herr Rehme from behind and pinned his arms behind his back, the third officer punched Korinna's father in the stomach, just below the ribs, leaving him gasping for breath.

"Stop it!" Korinna cried, "Leave him alone!"

"Get back there," Hans said, easily pushing Korinna back into the corner of the room. "Don't interfere," he said menacingly. Again he lifted his ax and it came down hard, splintering the back of the wardrobe. The ax came down again and the back of the wardrobe fell away in two parts, exposing the hole in the wall.

"Lights, quickly," Hans demanded, obviously in charge of the search.

Another officer stepped forward with two flashlights, which they swung around the hidden room. Korinna looked over to her father. He sat on the floor, breathing normally now. Her mother squatted next to him. Both of their faces were white and pinched with fear. Korinna knew they expected to be arrested at any moment.

She looked back at Hans, who was partially in the hidden room. All she could see of him were his shiny leather boots and the gleaming pistol attached around his waist. She swallowed nervously. If her plan didn't work, she wondered if they would be shot on the spot.

Hans poked his head back out. "What is this room?" he demanded.

"It's no use," said Korinna father, sighing wearily. He started to say more, but his daughter interrupted him.

"It's my room," Korinna said, sounding more brazen than she felt. All the eyes turned to her. "I use it as a kind of—secret clubhouse."

"Korinna, what are you talking about?" her mother cried shrilly.

She turned toward her mother. "I never told you two about it because I thought you might not like how involved I am in the *Jungmadel*. You always say I have to spend more time on my homework," she said, hoping she sounded disdainful. She turned back to Hans. "I keep all my party material back there. And when my parents think I'm studying, I go back there."

Hans's eyes narrowed. "How did you bolt the wardrobe to the wall?"

Korinna tried to shrug with what she hoped looked like nonchalance. "I just did. I used screws and hinges. I did it one day when no one was [home](#)."

Hans narrowed his eyes. "It's not easy to drill holes in the wall."

"I'm strong," Korinna countered. "Didn't Rita tell you that I'm the strongest girl in our *Jungmadel*. I can run the fastest, too."

"Strong enough to move the wardrobe?"

Korinna waved her hand, hoping Hans wouldn't notice that it trembled slightly. "I first took out all of the drawers and my clothes. It wasn't so heavy after that."

Hans glared at her before looking in the small room again. Korinna knew he saw all the pamphlets she had spread around the space, and the clippings she had saved of the Fuhrer she had pinned to the walls. She had even piled the Krugman's blankets and mattresses on top of each other and covered them with a small woven rug to make the room appealing. She wanted to convince anyone



who found it, that it was a comfortable place to be. Only a very loyal German would create such a shrine to the National Socialist Party.

"This is a trick!"

Korinna's heart jumped in to her mouth. Why didn't Hans believe her?

"Korinna, how could you?" demanded mother, wiping her eyes. "We always thought you were studying. We didn't want to keep you from your interests in the party, we too love the party, but how will you pass your classes if you don't study?"

"I did study," she said, trying to sound sullen. "I just wanted a place to pin my clippings. You said it would ruin the walls if I pinned them out here."

"Korinna." Her father said sternly. "You've disobeyed us and you will have to be punished."

"But I—"

"Enough Hans shouted. He stood up, looking uncertainly at Korinna for a brief moment, then he quickly put on a fierce scowl. "I have information."

Korinna didn't like the triumphant sound she heard in his voice. She watched as he extracted a black book from his jacket pocket. *Her black book*. Only one person could have gotten that book and given it to Hans—her best friend.

She felt dizzy staring at Hans. Now she would surely be shot as a traitor. No more would she smell the sweet flowers of spring. No more would she feel the bite of the cold winter wind. No more would she hug her mother and—

"Answer me!"

Korinna looked up at Hans through a rosy haze. Maybe she was dying already.

"Why did you tear out a page in this book?" Hans demanded.

Then she remembered. She had torn out the page. Those awful five words—*My parents are the enemy*. Rita had read those words, but she had no proof.

"I—I made a drawing I didn't like and I ripped these pages out. I threw it away."

Hans sneered at her, "You lie! You wrote that your parents were traitors, Jew-lovers, scum. Why didn't you turn them in?"

"That's not true!" Korinna cried. "It was a drawing of my cat!"

Hans stared furiously down at Korinna, and then his eyes shifted to her parents. "I don't believe this!" he stormed. "I don't believe any of this!" He stomped his boot on the wooden floor in anger. "I will find the truth, and then you will be sent to prison! I'll make sure you never get out!" He turned to his fellow officers. "Come!" he commanded, his voice taut with anger and suppressed violence.

Just at that moment, *Tag* pranced into the room, and one of the officers nearly tripped over her. Hans glared at the tiny kitten. Before Korinna realized what was about to happen, he aimed his shiny boot at the animal and viciously kicked out at *Tag*. The kitten jumped aside at the last second.

Korinna cried out. Images of Herr Haase came suddenly into her mind. She had stood and watched him kicked and beaten, but this time she would stop the brutality. She tried to move, but it was too late. Hans kicked the kitten a second

time. This time his boot connected, leaving the animal lying on her side, unmoving.

Hans waved the other officers out, and they preceded him through the bedroom door. Hans stopped and turned in the doorway to glare back at the Rehmes. "I smell Jews," he said viciously. "I smell their dirty, rotten stink. And when I find them, they'll lead me right back to you!"

### Pre-Reading Activities

- Define the following words: *Fuhrer, Folk, Ostmark, Sudetenland, Pimpfs, Gefolgschaftsfuhrer, Memel District, Jungmadel, Kristallnacht*
- Hitler came into power, what did the Nuremberg Laws do to the Jews?
- How did *Kristallnacht* ( Night of Broken Glass ) affect the Jews?(see map)
- How did Hitler regard the youth of Germany?
- Germany in the 1930's (see a film showing the anatomy of Nazism)
- Read excerpt from "**I was There**" by Hans Peter Richter of what goes on at a youth meeting. Chapt.7,1939, *In the Hitler Youth*, pp.112-6. Dell Books, 1973 (enclosed)
- Read the story on the Internet, "**Under the Blood Banner**" by Eric Kreye.  
[http://www.amazing joy.com/banner.htm](http://www.amazingjoy.com/banner.htm)
- Use the slogans and excerpts of speeches taken from: **The History Place:**  
<http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/hitleryouth/index.html>

### Discussion Questions

1. Why did Korinna fear Hans Demarau?
2. How did the Gestapo behave?
3. Why had they come to the house, if they were loyal Germans?
4. How did the Gestapo react when they found the hidden room?
5. What did Korinna tell them?
6. What did the Gestapo do to Korinna's kitten *Tag*?
7. What important lesson did Korinna learn from this experience?

### Activities

1. Get the rules and regulations from Girl/Boy Scouts and compare them with some of the Nazi Youth Groups rules.
2. Get a national song of the Girl/Boy Scouts. Compare them with a song of the Nazi Hitler Youth.
3. Although this is a novel, how close is it to the truth? Write a small essay.
4. Pick a project dealing with a good deed for a younger class, nursing home, or the homeless.
5. Create a bulletin board showing the freedoms of democracy versus Nazism

### Suggested Readings

- **I Was There** by Hans Peter Richter. Deals with author belonging to Hitler Youth. NY: Puffin Books, 1987. 5<sup>th</sup> –6<sup>th</sup> grades
- **Friedrich** by Hans Peter Richter. Germany, early 1930's, tells story of young Jewish boy and the author. NY: Dell Books, 1973. 5<sup>th</sup> –6<sup>th</sup> Grades

- **The Devil in Vienna** by Doris Orgel. Friendship between Jewish and non-Jewish girl who saves the life of the Jewish girl and her family. Vienna at the time of the Anschluss. NY: Puffin Books, 1988. 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades
- **The Night Crossing** by Karen Ackerman. Austria, 1938. The Jews are being persecuted and Clara and her family escape to Switzerland. New York: Knopf, 1994. 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

### **Teacher Resources**

- Read a chapter on the rise of Nazism in **The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance** by Bea Stadler. Springfield, NJ: Berhrman House, 1973. A history book for young children. 5<sup>th</sup> and up
- **The World Must Know**: The History of the Holocaust as Told by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Michael Berenbaum. NY: Little Brown, 1993.

### **Video**

- **The Camera of My Family.** 20 min. Film that tells the story of well established Jewish-German family that has to escape from Germany in the 1930's. Social Studies School Service and ADL. 5<sup>th</sup> and up. **no graphic footage**
- **Daniel.** 15 min. film made by the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC with Teacher's Guide that tells the story of mythical boy named Daniel made up from the many photographs of children who perished. **no graphic footage.**
- **Friendship in Vienna.** 94 min. color Produced by Walt Disney. Based on the book **The Devil in Vienna**. Well made movie telling the true story of a touching friendship between two girls and how one girl saved the life of the other. 5<sup>th</sup> and up. Social Studies School Service

## Upon the Head of a Goat

by  
Aranka Siegal

Farrar Straus Giroux, New York, 1981  
Recommended for Grades 6-8

### *Reading One Chapter 10 pp. 63-67*

As I was walking home alone from school one day late in October, a woman with an infant in her arms approached me and asked in a wavering voice, "Do you speak Yiddish?"

I nodded.

"I'm running away from Slovakia, and we are hungry. Can you point me to a Jewish door?"

"Follow me, I'm on my way home. I'm sure my mother will give you something to eat," I said in Yiddish.

The woman followed me, walking close to the houses. When we reached our kitchen, I started to explain to Mother, but she pushed me aside and lifted the infant out of the black peasant shawl around the woman's shoulders.

"The child needs water," she said, cradling the infant in one arm, while with her free hand she scooped up a small cup of water from the bucket and forced a little of it into the child's mouth. Lilli [an older married sister of Piri's] spooned some of the vegetable soup simmering on the stove into a dish and set it on the table.

"God bless you, pretty lady," the Slovakian woman said in Yiddish as she sat down on a stool and began to gulp down the steaming soup. Mother asked Lilli to fill a washbasin with water so she could wash the baby. We watched the infant come back to life, kicking and enjoying the sensation of the warm bath. Then Mother lifted the infant out of the basin, wrapped her in a towel, and left the kitchen, taking the baby with her.

The woman began to talk. "I had not time to take anything. I just ran."

"Where were you being sent?" Lilli asked.

"Only God above knows and I hope he is keeping track of what is taking place."

"Piri," Mother said, as she came back into the kitchen, "I want you to take this woman and the baby over to Mrs. Silverman's. You know where she lives?"

"Yes."

Mother had dressed the baby in one of Joli's old dresses, and she held, along with the baby, an armful of Joli's baby clothes and diapers. [Joli was Piri's youngest sister.] She handed the child back to the woman.

"You must leave here," Mother said to the woman, "but I'm sending you to a place where you will be safe for a while. It is a shelter that some of us set up. My daughter will lead you. Take off your head scarf and try not to look Jewish. We'll give you a hat."

After an emotional farewell and many mentions of God, we walked to the gate. Mother looked out to make sure no one was watching. "Piri, you walk ahead, and if somebody stops her, keep walking; you don't know them. After you've left her at Mrs. Silverman's, I want you to come right back. You understand?"

"Yes, Anyuka."

I walked with a normal stride several paces ahead of the woman. No one noticed us, and soon I was at Mrs. Silverman's gate, the woman with her infant still behind me. I hesitated a moment, then rang the bell. Mrs. Silverman appeared almost instantly, opening her gate just enough to let me through. I started to explain why I was there, but she interrupted, "Come to the point, child. What is it you want?" I closed my mouth and motioned the woman to come up. As soon as she got close enough, Mrs. Silverman pulled her into the yard and leaned out over the gate, checking both sides of the street. Then she pushed me out. "You've never been here," were her parting words to me. I walked home swiftly.

"Everything go all right?" Mother asked, turning from the stove to look at me as I came in.

"She is there. What is Mrs. Silverman going to do with them? Does she hide people in her house?"

"Piri, Hungary is the last place for them to run to, it is the last refuge. Don't you have any homework to do?"

I realized then that Mother was involved in things I knew nothing about, and was reminded of how much she was like Babi [grandmother]; when she changed the subject, that was the end of the discussion. But I could not get that woman and her baby out of my mind, and sometimes when I thought or dreamed about her, the woman's face became Mother's or Lilli's.

In the following weeks I met other runaways on the streets of Beregszasz. I learned to recognize them from a distance. Most of them were women, some older, some younger, but their posture showed that they were refugees. Their bodies drawn in almost to a curl, they moved fast, yet hesitated a few seconds, scanning the space around them. Sometimes they asked me for help and sometimes I went over and whispered swiftly in Yiddish, "Follow me at ten paces behind, and I will take you to shelter." I didn't bring them home, but had them follow me straight to Mrs. Silverman's. She no longer asked me what I wanted when she opened her gate, but beckoned the runaway behind me in as she searched the street, and then pushed me out with a whispered, "Be careful."

One day when Iboya [another older sister] was with me, we recognized a boy of about seventeen as a runaway. I went up to him and whispered in Yiddish the words that I had used with the others, but instead of falling in behind me as I turned away, the young man grabbed me, his hunched shoulders instantly relaxed, and he broke into a stream of Yiddish sentences. Iboya joined me alongside of him, and we started to walk three abreast.

"Mother said not to talk to them, just to walk them over," I protested.

"Nonsense," said Iboya, "if anyone stops us, we'll just pretend he's a friend of ours. And if we act natural, nobody will stop us."

The young man, speaking animatedly in Yiddish, told us what had happened to him and to all the other Jews rounded up in Bratislava. He was surprised that Iboya and I did not know about the new anti-Jewish laws in Slovakia, defining who was a Jew. "They are rounding Jews up all over Slovakia," he said.

"Who are they?" we asked.

"The Hlinka Guards-they are Slovak volunteers in the SS-the Gestapo, Hitler's secret police. Some of them used to be our friends, but the Gestapo gave them boots and uniforms and made them feel important. Some can't even read or write their own names..." He sighed. "Anyway, in our town alone they rounded up close to a thousand of us since the law came out."

"What do these new laws say?" I asked.

"That Jews are stateless unless our forebears were residents before 1868. They keep chasing us from place to place, then ask us to prove that we have lived in one place for over seventy years."

"Where are they taking these stateless Jews they round up?"

"To German-held territories."

"What are they going to do with them?"

"I'm not sure. That's why I ran away. They say all sorts of horrible things like slave labor and massacres. Who knows what the truth is? Germans, they will do anything to the Jews."

As we reached Main Street, Iboya asked the young man, whose name, he told us, was Jonathan, to lower his voice. "Too many people on this street," she said. When we were a few houses away from Mrs. Silverman's gate, I walked on ahead.

"So it's you again," said Mrs. Silverman, drawing back inside her yard after having opened the gate for me. I waved Jonathan in.

"Thank you," he whispered, as he hurried past me. Walking home, Iboya and I hardly spoke.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Examine a map of Eastern Europe during the years between 1930 and 1946. Identify the changes that occur during those years. Locate Hungary, Germany, the Ukraine, Slovakia, and Rumania [Romania]. Note the borders of Hungary and identify her neighbors on each border.
- Investigate the origin of the Yiddish language. Where was it spoken? What languages were included in the development of Yiddish?
- Research the situation in Hungary at that time for the following information:
  - Who was the "leader" of the Hungarian government at this time?
  - What name was given to the Hungarian police and other quasi-military groups who supported the Nazis in Hungary?
  - What was the relationship between Hungary and her Ukrainian neighbors before the arrival of the Nazis? What was the relationship after the arrival of the Nazi German forces?
- Identify some of the special problems and risks the Hungarian Jews faced in trying to rescue other Jews and in trying to resist efforts to round up the Jews.

- What were the Nuremberg Laws? How did these laws affect Jews in the areas conquered by the Nazis?

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why did the woman leave her home in Slovakia so ill-prepared and why would she take such risks with an infant?
2. Why does Mother warn the woman "not to look Jewish"? Why does she check the street so carefully before she sends Piri and the woman on their way to Mrs. Silverman's?
3. Why does Mrs. Silverman warn Piri "You've never been here?"
4. How does Piri learn to recognize the runaways? Why do you think they displayed such telltale body language signs? Why does Piri speak to them in Yiddish?
5. When Piri and Iboya go the rescue of Jonathan, what information does he provide to them?
6. Why are Iboya and Piri so worried about people in the street? What could happen to them if they are caught helping these runaways?

### **Activities**

1. Research information about rescue groups and efforts organized by the Jews of various European countries as Nazi Germany and its allies conquered the nations.
2. Aranka Siegal, the author of this book, and one sister [Iboya in the book] survived the Holocaust. **Upon the Head of a Goat** is the story of her family between the years of 1939 and 1944. Why do you think their Mother decided to take the risk of assisting Jewish runaways when she and her family were already at such great risk? What special problems did Jews face in trying to assist and rescue other Jews? Compose a letter to the author describing your reaction to the decision they and their mother made to try to help and to rescue other Jews.
3. Make a chart listing all of the things that Piri and her family were doing that could be considered resistance. Label each as passive, active, physical, moral, etc.

### **Other Suggested Sources**

- **The Cage** by Ruth Minsky Sender.

## **Parallel Journeys**

by

Eleanor Ayer

Atheneum Books, New York, 1995

Recommended for Grades 7-8

### **Synopsis**

Alfons Heck and Helen Wohlforth's biographies will help students understand better what it really was like to be a young German during the Nazi reign of terror. Alfons, a patriotic young German youth, was indoctrinated into the racist philosophy of his time. His blind obedience and love for power brought him the rank of Unterbannfuhrer, a rank equal to a US brigadier general, by age sixteen. Parallel to this trace, the reader follows a young Jewish girl, Helen, whose life in her homeland is shattered. Forced to flee Germany, she and her young husband settled in Holland where they eventually went into hiding. Snared by the Gestapo, they were transported to the East. The attitudes and values expressed in **Parallel Journeys** are an excellent resource in teaching materials prior to the Holocaust.

### **Quotes**

"For minutes on end, we shouted at the top of our lungs, with tears streaming down our faces: 'Sieg Heil\*, Sieg Heil, Sieg Heil!' From that moment on, I belonged to Adolf Hitler body and soul."

\*Hail to Victory

"At no time were we told where we were going. At one point on our trip, Siegfried said to me, 'I don't know where this journey will take us, but I don't think that I am capable of living through whatever it is. On the other hand, I am sure you will return to the normal life and to our child.'"

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Study maps of the area in Europe.
- Use Chapters 3 & 11 from David Altshuler's **Hitler's War Against the Jews,** "The Rise of Anti-Semitism in Modern Germany" and "The Jews in Germany."

### **Discussion Questions**

1. The war is over. Evaluate how powerful our desire for "belonging" can be using Alfons Heck's story as a model.
2. When in a child's development is he or she most vulnerable to issues related to "in" and "out" group behavior?
3. How are racism and violence linked?
4. How do these parallel lives join?
5. Do you believe education can make a difference in addressing the evils of racism?



### Activities

1. Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the parallel journeys of Alfons and Helen.
2. Interview a classmate (using questions below)
3. Write a movie review for **Teen Magazine** after viewing the video **Heil Hitler: Confessions of a Hitler Youth.** (29 min.) Follows closely to the book with powerful images of Hitler Youth Movement.

### Suggested Readings

- **Fredrich** by Hans Peter Richter (Growing up in Germany in the early thirties.)
- **I Was There** by Hans Peter Richter (Three boys growing up in Germany and diversity of reasons that compelled youngsters to join the Hitler Youth Group.)

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Interview your friend. Write down your friend's responses. Switch roles.

1. What "look" is the "right look?"
2. How important is it to get the "right look?"
3. How important is it to you to fit in?
4. How do you feel when you don't belong?
5. What makes you feel happy?
6. What do you look for in a friend?

**How Beautiful We Once Were:**  
**A Remembrance of the Holocaust and Beyond**

by  
Marga Silbermann Randall

Reed and Witting Co., Pittsburgh, PA  
Recommended for Grades 6-8

**Synopsis**

As a Jewish family in Germany prior to World War II, Marga's family was well respected in society, patriotic citizens who fought for their country. They identified themselves as German Jews: Germans first, Jewish second. The reader will follow the events that shattered their lives through the memories of Marga. Important to the teaching experience of the Shoah is to make it a meaningful acquisition and uniquely this book helps do that. It puts a human face on the darkest days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In simple, direct images, the reader experiences the terror and confusion common to those that lived through it.

**Quote**

"The stories captured...show how normal our life in the village of my birth and how rapidly changes came about...You will get to know my family: Opa, my anchor in a changing world; my beloved Mutti, with all her strength and love; my dear cousins, Hanna and Ruth; and aunts, uncles, friends, and new acquaintances. You will see my village, walk its streets, and glimpse life and landscapes as I knew it--and got to know it again."

**Discussion Questions**

*Mother*

1. How would you describe Marga's mother? Use examples from the text to support your ideas.
2. Why did Marga think that her remark, "I am grateful to be here at this funeral," was more than a slip of the tongue?
3. How did Marga and her family continue to struggle once she was safe in the United States?
4. Have you ever had to be separated from your parents for a period of time? Compare Marga's period of estrangement from her mother to your experiences. How were they the same? How were they different?
5. How were the lives of Marga and her family members changed forever by the pressure of the new Nazi movement? In your answer, describe what happened to her parents, siblings, and other relatives.

*A Dream*

1. Why is Marga's recollection of her father so hazy?
2. Explain how Marga's dream reflects her feelings towards her father.

### *Opa*

1. What was the Kegelclub? What do you think its purpose was?
2. Describe the simple pleasures that Marga enjoyed while living with her grandparents.
3. How did Marga's grandparents live before the Nazi movement?
4. Why do you think Marga's grandparents didn't leave Germany by 1935?
5. How did the Nuremberg Laws affect the Jewish family?

### *Our Family*

1. What restrictions do you think would have been the hardest to live with if you had been a German Jew?
2. Why did German Jewish men feel they were an integral part of Germany?
3. What happened to various members of Marga's family after 1936?

### *Queen of Her Hometown*

1. Describe how Paula's life changed after 1933. Why did she have to be inconspicuous?
2. Explain what happened at the Kilian Schuetzenfest in 1929. Why was it a great honor for Paula to be chosen as the queen?
3. Why do you think the townspeople changed their attitudes towards their Jewish neighbors in such a short time?

### *Kristallnacht*

1. What prompted this night of terror?
2. What message did this act upon the Jewish people give them?
3. Did sympathetic Germans come and offer their help to German Jews? Explain.
4. Describe what Marga endured on the night of November 9, 1938.
5. How did the rest of Marga's family survive that night?
6. Some people refer to the events that occurred on Kristallnacht as a pogrom. Look up the work in a dictionary, and describe why the word "pogrom" is often used.
7. Why does Marga ask, "Is the idea that it's easier to hurt someone you don't know?"

### *Sewing Basket*

1. Why did Marga pack her sewing basket with her belongings?
2. What feelings led Marga to give it to her friend as she left?
3. Why did Marga's family want to leave their town at dusk?
4. What did Marga's friend Irmgard endure during the war?
5. How did Irmgard treat Marga's sewing basket?

### *My Place in the Park*

1. What did Koener Park give Marga? How did that change in 1940?
2. How did the Nazis cut the Jews off from their educational, cultural, and social lives?

3. Why are the images of the twins "frozen in time" for Marga?
4. Who was Marga's only friend and playmate? Why?
5. Why couldn't the rest of Marga's relatives accompany her to the United States?
6. What could Marga, her sister, and her mother take with them to the United States?

#### *Our Table*

1. Why do you think it was so important for Marga to find her family's personal belongings after all those years?
2. Why was the table never painted?
3. What was the promise that Hanna Silbermann's friend made?
4. What memories were stirred by the discovery of this tangible find?
5. Explain the significance of the table now that it sits in Marga's home. How does it serve as a "coming together" of her family once again?
6. Is there an item in your home that holds as much meaning to your family as the table did to Marga? Describe this object and its importance.

#### *My Return to Schermbeck*

1. Why did Marga feel the need to return to Schermbeck when the rest of her family refused?
2. Why did Marga describe Schermbeck as "only the props surrounded by similar scenery?"
3. Describe why Willie Kepper, Marga's neighbor, has never forgotten the war.
4. Why was it so important that the Germans tell their own stories to Marga?

#### *Wolfgang*

1. What motivated Wolfgang to pursue the study of Jews in Schermbeck?
2. How did he learn more about the town's Jews before 1941?
3. How did the German people feel about sharing their experiences of the Third Reich with each other? Why do you think they felt that way?
4. How did the minister and Marga become close? What common goal were they trying to reach?
5. Why do you think the minister came up against opposition when working to place a plaque where a synagogue had once stood?
6. What would you call Wolfgang Barnebusch's greatest achievement in the area of Christian/Jewish reconciliation?

#### *Forever a Painful Reunion*

1. Describe the scene of Kristallnacht at the Kupper House.
2. What kind of treatment did Willie receive as a "Judenbengel?"
3. Why is it "forever a painful reunion" between Marga and Willia?

#### *Edith*

1. How has Edith helped to revive Marga's memories of her childhood in Schermbeck?

2. How did the war change the way that Edith raised her German family?

#### *A Bystander*

1. Why did Adolph Ridder have no choice but to become a bystander?
2. What did Adolph Ridder believe had seduced the German people into following Hitler?
3. Do you think that if Adolph Ridder had resisted others would have done the same? Explain.
4. Describe Kristallnacht from Ridder's point of view.

#### *Take Me Home Again*

1. How did Hilda help Marga fill in bits of her past?

#### *These Stories Must Be Told*

1. Describe how Frau Kammeier's husband stood up to the Nazis on Kristallnacht. Do you think it made a difference?

#### *If Not I*

1. Explain the injustices that Ruth suffered as a half-Jew in Germany.

#### *Will My Young Friend Make a Difference*

2. 1500 people attended the remembrance walk and memorial in Dislaken. "Where were all these townspeople 50 years ago...when the Jews were marched down the same streets and packed into railway cars?"
3. How has the relationship between Henrike and Marga allowed each of them to grow?
4. Why do you think Marga spends time speaking to children at their schools about the Holocaust? What is she trying to accomplish?
5. Do genocides still occur today? Research an example of another genocide and describe how it is similar and different to the Holocaust during the Second World War.

#### *You Are My First Caller*

1. Was life easy for Jewish refugees in the United States?

#### **Timeline**

1930 Marga Silberman was born to Hanna and Louis in Lemfoerde, Lower Saxony, Germany.

1934 Following a call warning that the Gestapo were coming to arrest him, Marga's father fell dead at her feet. She was only four years old.

Marga was sent to live in Schermbeck with her aunt, Paula, her Opa and Oma.

1935 Nuremberg Laws restricted Marga and her family in many ways. Marga

was no longer allowed to attend school.

- 1938 Around 10 o'clock on November 9<sup>th</sup>. Marga awakened to the "night of breaking glass." It was a time of terror and destruction.

November 10<sup>th</sup> Marga, her grandparents, and Aunt Paula, exhausted and in shock, view the destruction. Not even a chair was left for her frail grandmother to sit on.

December. Marga's brothers, Herbert and Manfred, were arrested by the Gestapo - one sent to Dachau, the other to Buchenwald. Later, they were released. They were able to escape Germany.

- 1939 January. The family left Schermbeck, their home, but before they left, Marga tossed her precious sewing basket to her sweet friend, Irmgard, who had lived next door.

Marga and her family arrived in Berlin. They moved in with her Aunt Hilda, Hilda's husband Sigfried, as well as her twin cousins, Ruth and Hanna. The park the cousins took Marga to play in was closed to Jews.

- 1940 The war was in full fury. That year, Marga contracted both diptheria and scarlet fever. After recovering, most of the time was spent in the basement food locker that doubled as a bomb shelter.

- 1941 With a bag--fifty pounds of clothes, her precious doll, Puppchen and her mother's wedding ring - Marga, her mother and sister Hilda left Germany for the United States. June 21, 1941 they set sail from Lisbon to New York.

In the year's to follow, 1.1 million Jews were executed at Auschwitz, and Another 1.5 million at Sobibor, Belzec, and Treblinka. Marga's mother's parents and sister, her aunts, uncle, her twin cousins Ruth and Hanna all perished.

- 1982 Marga returned to Schermbeck, Germany to visit her past.

## The Endless Steppe: Growing Up in Siberia

by  
Esther Hautzig

A Harper and Row Junior Books, New York, 1968  
Recommended for Grades 6-8

### **Synopsis**

Esther Hautzig, the author, was born Esther Rudomin into a wealthy Polish Jewish family in Vilna, Poland. She lived among a happy, loving, extended family that included not only her parents but her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. That world came crashing to an end in the summer of 1941 when the Russian army occupying Vilna placed the family under arrest as "capitalists" and ordered them onto the cattle cars that carried them to a different life in the Asian steppe of Siberia. Working as slave laborers in a gypsum mine and at other assigned tasks, the family struggled continuously for survival in the harsh land. Extreme weather conditions, the constant shortage of food, the primitive housing (what there was of it!), the lack of adequate clothing, and the insufficient fuel supply were only some of the problems the family had to face and overcome. Yet, somehow, the little family survived all of this and even the separation forced upon them by the Russian government. At war's end the family was permitted to return from Siberia and were able to reunite with Tata [Esther's father]. Tragically, they did so with the terrible knowledge of the murder of their entire family and many friends who had been killed by the Nazis when the whole Vilna ghetto was eliminated.

### *Chapter 2 pp. 22-34*

The car stank of animals and the sun that was shining so benignly over Vilna had made a furnace of this place. Four small square holes high up in the corners of the car and the slivers of space between the filthy slatted walls were all that provided light and air. However, to be fair, cattle on their way to the slaughterhouse did not need a well-appointed car. Even in the twilight, one could see the scars on the floor made by those other beasts as they shuffled uneasily during their journey.

And now we shuffled, some forty of us, as we looked around us. Stood, huddled in the middle of the car, shuffling from foot to foot. No one talked. There wasn't much to see. The car had been divided in half, leaving a passageway between double rows of makeshift bunks. I was soon to discover that these wooden slabs were to be our beds, our tables, our chairs, our quarters.

No one knew what to do. My father took upon himself the job of leading this bewildered, shocked group of people. A gentle man, yet with a great capacity for making his presence felt and his orders obeyed, he now directed the older people to take the lower bunks and the young ones to climb to the uppers.

The crowd sighed. Victims of tyranny, they needed someone in authority, someone to tell them what to do. They began to select their bunks with a

minimum of confusion; no one was in a mood to be fussy. Although Father had told me to climb a rickety ladder to an upper bunk, I stayed below to take a look at our traveling companions, our fellow capitalists. Possibly I imagined that by studying them I would uncover the secret of our own villainy, bring some sanity, however harsh, to this insanity. What I saw only added to my bewilderment; peering out from behind one of my braids, I saw nothing more villainous than peasants - women in shawls, men in cotton jackets and trousers that resembled riding breeches. I saw Polish peasants, not a rich capitalist among them; yanked from their land, they had toted their belongings in sacks, in shawls, in cardboard boxes. I saw reflected in their stricken faces our mutual shock.

Later we learned of reports that more than a million Poles had been deported as "class enemies."

The train jolted violently and began to move. I scrambled up to the upper bunk and crawled into the corner, near one of the holes that was to be our window. It was from this hole in a cattle car that I would see Vilna for the last time.

Vilna had been presented to me by my maternal great-grandmother Reisa as if it were a family heirloom. In a way it was. Vilna, which was the oldest seat of Jewish culture in eastern Europe, the Jerusalem of Europe, was also the place where many of my ancestors had distinguished themselves. Among them were rabbis, teachers, scholars, and leaders of reform. Vilna was studded with the temples where they had preached, the schools they had organized, the libraries that housed their books.

\* \* \*

I was exhausted and numb, but I was glued to that hole. Before long, I would get to hate the tormenting slowness of this train, but now it provided me with a ribbonlike souvenir of my childhood, the scenes around Vilna - a last glimpse of Castle Hill, the woods where we picnicked, the Wilja where the willows really seemed to weep today, past the small towns, the small farms, the summer homes. The summer homes? In a minute, ours would appear. I strained my eyes to the point where I almost couldn't see. There was the bend in the Wilja, there was the oak that was home free in tag, and there was the roof of our simple country house. I watched it disappear and then I buried my face in my hands.

The people in the car began to weep. And on the bunk below, I heard Grandmother begin to weep again and my father try to comfort her. My mother lay next to me like a figure on a sarcophagus, her hands under her head, her eyes tightly shut. Drained of color, her face - strong and beautiful - was more Spanish than ever, more like her grandmother Reisa's. I watched her and knew that she would not weep, not Mother. She did not and I did not. But the strain of not weeping, the sound of other people weeping, and the movement of the train put me to sleep. Sleeping would become a way of life, in the next weeks it would replace life.

I slept from the middle of that June day into the night, and I didn't wake up until early the next morning. When I awakened, I saw my mother sitting in the corner of the bunk staring at nothing. I asked her where we were and whether we had stopped anywhere during the night. She didn't know where we were and



she couldn't remember what went on during the night. What difference did it make? But I needed reassurance and I climbed down to my father. He looked thoroughly exhausted; my grandmother was leaning against him as if she had spent the night in that position...

Father assured me that we would try to find out where we were at the next stop, and he managed to smile at me. Father knew children; he knew they needed to know where they were. How else would they know where they were going? Even in a sealed cattle car, they needed this information. Even? Particularly in a sealed cattle car.

\* \* \*

...I realized that I was frightfully hungry too. I had not eaten in more than twenty-four hours and my stomach was rumbling noisily.

In the bunks opposite us, the peasants were eating. They had brought huge slabs of cheese and boiled ham in their shawls.

"I'm hungry," I whispered.

My mother hushed me again and told me that we would get some food when the train stopped. Hearing this exchange, one of the women offered me a piece of ham and some cheese. My hand reached out, but to my distress my mother shook her head. "No, thank you," I was forced to say. "I'm not really hungry now." The woman seemed offended and I hastened to assure her that I appreciated her kindness - which I did indeed, much more than my mother's sensibility. The woman shrugged her shoulders and continued eating, smacking her lips and wiping them on her sleeve.

\* \* \*

Although it was early morning, the car was hot and the air had become still more fetid, impossible as that seemed. Forty human beings - many of them not recently bathed - were not improving the animal smells. The heat and the stink would become worse and worse.

At last the train stopped. My heart beat violently. Were we there? Were we going to be let out of this inferno?

The bolt was pushed back and the door slid open. Fresh air. Forty pairs of lungs sucked it in. I started to move from the bunk; the objective was the open door. But a soldier hopped on and the door was closed behind him. He carried a pail of water and a ladle. He told us that this water was for drinking and for rinsing our faces. He pointed to a V-shaped opening opposite the door. That was where we were to wash and that opening was our toilet. Our toilet? No wonder poor mother had resisted suffering this most animal-like indignity. The soldier told us that we were to get some food. He opened the door and jumped down onto a muddy platform. We had stopped at a tiny rural station.

Once again the door was closed and bolted.

So we were not to be released. Soon I would give up all expectation of this ever happening.

However, freedom was an abstraction; food was real and I became ravenous. When it arrived, it was nauseating. The soldier had returned with a rusty pail of soup; behind him another soldier carried wooden bowls and spoons. The steamy smell of cabbage soup was overpowering. I didn't dare refuse, but as soon as

the soldier's back was turned, I put my bowl of soup down beside me, pinched my nose together, and turned to the window. Mother coaxed me to eat it; there would be no food for many hours, she warned, but nothing could make me eat that orange liquid where shriveled bits of tomato, carrots, and cabbage floated like refuse.

Now I concentrated on not vomiting. I lay down and turned my back. I heard my father ask the soldier where we were, but I no longer cared. Mother ate her soup and handed my uneaten portion to Father with the suggestion that either he or Grandmother should eat it. "We had better let her be," she said.

A wise decision, I thought, still fighting my nausea. And not an easy one for Mother to make. Mother, along with the rest of our family, took a child's refusal to eat hard.

\* \* \*

And so we were on our journey - its route and its destination unknown. In the sinister twilight of that car, time too became an abstraction, but one the grownups clung to as if it were all that remained of sanity; they even squabble over it...

Once a day, the soldiers brought the pail of soup and the pail of water; one wondered why they had gone to the trouble of adulterating water in order to call it soup, but even I began to accept it as something to eat some of the time. At other times, it was possible to buy fresh farmer cheese and black bread at a rural station. Only barely possible; the prices were outrageously high and some gymnastics were involved. Mother or Father would poke a head through the hole, shout down to the shabbily dressed peasants who were running up and down the platform with their produce, and begin to bargain noisily and with desperate haste. Once the price was set, they threw the money down, and then the job of handing the food up began. Usually, a child standing on a peasant's shoulders delivered the food to my parents' straining arms. Sometimes even a jug of milk made this wobbly trip. The money was never thrown down without the food's being sent up....

\* \* \*

We had been traveling six weeks by my father's count when the train stopped. We were used to long waits and no one thought anything of it. The train would move again; it always had. I heard some commotion, and for some reason I thought that perhaps we had developed engine trouble, which would only prolong the journey.

\* \* \*

Then I saw the doors of the cars being opened, one by one, and people leaping out of them. I still couldn't believe that we, in this car, would be released. I couldn't believe it. But at last our door was opened too.

No soup and water this time. Instead, a soldier read from a document that sounded very much like the one I had heard - was it centuries ago? - in Vilna. We had reached our destination. We were now in Rubtsovsk in the Altai Territory of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic of the great and mighty Soviet Union.

There were no cheers in that car. Forty people gathered their belongings together, silently, in a near frenzy, as if there were some danger that the door

would close again and leave them behind in that car.

*Chapter 3 pp. 41-42*

\* \* \*

The flatness of this land was awesome. There wasn't a hill in sight; it was an enormous, unrippled sea of parched and lifeless grass.

"Tata [Father], why is the earth so flat here?"

"These must be the steppes, Esther."

"Steppes? But steppes are in Siberia."

"This is Siberia," he said quietly.

If I had been told that I had been transported to the moon, I could not have been more stunned.

"Siberia?" My voice trembled. "But Siberia is full of snow."

"It will be," my father said.

Siberia! Siberia was the end of the world, a point of no return. Siberia was for criminals and political enemies, where the punishment was unbelievably cruel, and where people died like flies. Summer or no summer - and who had ever talked about hot Siberia? - Siberia was the tundra and mountainous drifts of snow. Siberia was wolves.

I had been careless. I had neglected to pray to God to save us from a gypsum mine in Siberia.

*Chapter 4 pp. 43-45*

Gypsum, it turned out, was a grayish-white powder dug out of a desolate land by people in despair. It was mined to make plaster casts for wounded soldiers. The site of this mine was bleak, so bleak that it made the village of Rubtsovsk attractive by comparison. Adjacent to the gouged earth, twelve mud huts stood in a straight line. They were flanked by a large wooden building and a small wooden building; no gingerbread here. And all around it was the unbroken, treeless steppe of Siberia, scorched by a blazing sun, without so much as a cloud to protect it. As far as the eye could see, there was no visible connection to the rest of the world.

Forty truckloads of people - about one hundred and fifty - had been assigned to this mine, and now we were sent to the larger of the two wooden buildings. Once inside, it was obvious that this building was a school that had been stripped of everything but its blackboards and four huge portraits of Lenin, Stalin, Marx, and Engels. Six rooms opened off a main corridor and twenty-six of us who had traveled on the same bus filed into one of them.

Popravka [the official in charge] invited us to make ourselves at home. Our host was the only one who laughed - raucously - at his gallows humor. The room was completely bare of furniture - no chairs, no table, and most certainly no beds.

\* \* \*

We were one of four lucky groups: Father had found us living quarters in a corner of the room. In an utterly bare room, two walls to lean against, a corner to curl up into, were luxury. Mrs. Marshak and Boris [her young son] were across

the room from us, and it was a comfort to see their familiar faces. However, the strangers around us were not quite so strange as the ones in the cattle car; except for one or two peasants, for the most part these were the faces from my past - the shopkeepers and middle-class professionals of Vilna. The only genuine capitalist, from a Soviet point of view, was my father, who, along with his family, had owned a very large business. It seemed to please everyone that Father, who had helped with their baggage, was a well-known citizen of Vilna.

Once again there was no one my own age here.

Settled on the floor, we all used our belongings as back rests, seats, pillows. And we waited. Even I, a child, had begun to feel oppressed. One had not the freedom to fetch so much as a glass of water for oneself. One waited to have water doled out. One waited. The flies buzzing around in the heat were free. I hated them, not for being flies, but for being free...

#### *Chapter 5 pp. 63-64*

The first few weeks of life at the gypsum mine had passed and settled into a monotony that seemed as vast and endless as the steppe itself. Torn from sleep by the morning whistle, in the beginning I didn't know where I was, what we were all doing sleeping on a floor with strangers. But soon that too passed and I would slip from sleep to wakefulness, barely noticing the difference. We did what we were told: we worked, we munched bread and cheese - once in a while, as a special treat, we had a bowl of soup with bits of meat in it - we slept. We barely talked.

The fever, or whatever it was I had had, flared up and I spent a few days alone in the room. Somewhere Father had found a straw mattress (perhaps with Makrinin's help) and I lay on that - for one day. The next day, when I was in a feverish doze, it was unceremoniously yanked out from under me. Popravka had not learned to love us.

\* \* \*

#### *Chapter 6 pp. 72-74*

On the steppes of Siberia, fall does not arrive with a great show of flaming leaves; it comes in with a great howling wind. It came during the night in the early part of September and scared me out of my wits. I thought that all the wolves of Siberia had gathered there at the mine to devour us. When Father told me it was only the wind, I said, "What's only about it?" Nothing. It began that night and it would continue to blow day in and day out. The temperature began to drop rapidly, and so did our spirits. The prospect of a Siberian winter in this desolate gypsum mine was not a cheery one.

One day we were called to a meeting again. As always, we were filled with apprehension as we gathered in front of Makrinin's building. Poor Makrinin, our original judgment of him had been correct, he was a decent, gentle man stuck with an indecent job.

The sun had already set and people were leaning into the wind, pulling jackets and sweaters closer to their chilled and weary bodies. In the deepening twilight, we could not see Makrinin's face, but he seemed unusually impatient - or excited - as he waved to stragglers to move more quickly into place.

Raising his voice over the wind, he told us that as part of a pact made on the 30th of July between the Soviet Union and Poland, his government granted amnesty “to all Polish citizens now detained on Soviet territory either as prisoners of war or on other sufficient grounds...”

The crowd stirred as he continued.

The amnesty was given at the joint request of the Polish government in exile in London and the government of Great Britain, Russia’s ally now in the war against the Germans.

The crowd murmured. I didn’t know what an amnesty was, but I could feel the crowd smiling and I knew that at least something good had happened to us Polish deportees.

Makrinin went on to say that we did not have to stay on at the mine, that those of us who wished to could move to the village, where we would be assigned to jobs with a stipend - only a few rubles, to be sure, but nevertheless something.

The crowd signed. Here and there a man and a woman surreptitiously made the sign of the cross. Someone had remembered us. Way off there in London at a certain hour on a certain day someone had remembered that there were people who were called Polish deportees, someone had remembered that they were people....

*Chapter 12 pp. 142-145*

\* \* \*

This second letter was addressed to Father and was in a long white envelope. I examined it closely, as if it were something from another civilization. I felt an ill wind blow through the hut.

\* \* \*

“A letter for me?” Father too reacted with astonishment.

He opened it and took out a long piece of paper. I watched his face as he read: it had gone white and once again he looked the way he had the morning we were deported - old and defeated.

“What is it Tata, what is it?” I cried out, terrified.

Still reading and rereading his letter, Father sat down on his bed.

He could not bear to tell me what was in the letter and with a futile effort at reassuring me, he murmured absurd phrases...it’s nothing, nothing...everything will be all right...

I finally extracted the terrible truth: Father was ordered to go near the front lines to work in a labor brigade. Front lines! Suddenly, this most gigantic of all wars with its bombings and battles and wounded and dead, this war that, in spite of our exile - or because of it - had until this moment seemed unreal, was now at our doorstep....

\* \* \*

The next day Father went to the authorities to get further instructions. They told him that he would be sent to a work brigade on the front lines. However, first he would join a large group being trained in a big town in Siberia.

Now Father the optimist took over: by the time he got to the front lines the war would be over; he would go directly from the front lines to Poland where he would

send for us.

Mother held her tongue but she looked at him as if he had taken leave of his senses.

\* \* \*

Where husbands and fathers going off to war in other parts of the world might spend some of their last hours at home going over their affairs with their wives, deportees in Siberia had only one affair to discuss - food. In our case, the matter of food was extremely serious. There was scarcely enough in our cellar to last two months, let alone the whole winter.

But the emptiness of our bellies would still be nothing compared to the emptiness of our hut without Father. The day Father left was the worst day of my whole life. I spent it weeping....

#### *Chapter 16 pp 178-179*

That winter cold settled in the bones as if it would be stored there indefinitely like ice in an icehouse.

The hut was perpetually cold. I ripped the red sweater with ice-cold fingers and a cold heart, and when it was too cold to stay out of bed, I knitted in bed, wearing socks (old socks of Father's had replaced my outgrown ones), my sweater, and often a shawl over my head. I tried wearing gloves but that didn't work.

In the early morning when it was still dark, the moment of leaving the cold hut for the walk to school was always a moment of trauma. The walk would take well over an hour and it wasn't a walk at all; it was a constant battle with a ferociously buffeting and icy wind. The battle might have been lost if I had not gone in convoy. The convoy consisted of about six children who picked one another up on the way and used one another as windbreaks. Holding on to our books with one arm, we grabbed one another around the waist with the free arm and hid behind one another's backs. For once, no one wanted to be the leader and we took turns being first in line. On the way we would meet other little bands of children linked together. Everyone who could went to school this way in the Siberian winter; no one was ever excluded; everyone was needed. In this instance, if there was a popular person, it would be the biggest and fattest.

\* \* \*

#### *Chapter 21 pp. 223-227*

That spring, the cattle cars came again, in an endless stream; this time, it was German prisoners of war they brought. All the goose-stepping arrogance was gone, beaten out of them; they were a bedraggled lot, hungry and sick. But to us, they remained monsters and we loathed them, all of us - deportees, European Russian, Siberyaki. All of us with reason; the stories of their atrocities were well known by then....

\* \* \*

On May 8, 1945, the formal surrender took place at Reims. The war with Germany was over.

That spring and summer was a violent time for the spirit: there had been deep sadness and great joy; and then a tearless grief, some part of which would

remain forever.

\* \* \*

And then came the most terrible news of all. It came from survivors of the concentration camps, from their letters, by word of mouth, from the Red Cross. It came: all the members of my father's family - his brothers and his sisters, their children, his aunts, his uncles, his cousins - not one of them had survived the German massacre of the Jews. Of my mother's family, we heard that only two cousins and an aunt survived. My mother's brother, sister, her mother - my darling grandmother - her aunts and uncles, my beloved cousins, all were dead. My mother tortured herself as she thought of the day she had told the Russian soldier she didn't know who the man at the door was. Perhaps if she had said that he was her brother, he would be alive.

Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps...

But we were alive. Out exile had saved our lives. Now we felt ourselves to be supremely lucky to have been deported to Siberia. Hunger, cold, and misery were nothing; life had been granted us. As Mother and Grandmother lit the kerosene lamps for our dead and said their prayers, I joined them in thanking God for having saved us.

\* \* \*

When the war with Japan was over in August, we received a letter from Father. He said he would not return to the village.

Mother said, "Thank God for that. Thank God he won't be coming back to this forsaken place. If he can only get back to Poland, then perhaps he will be able to get us out of here...."

### **Pre-Reading Activity**

- Locate the following on a map of Europe and Asia in the 1930s and 1940s: Vilna, Poland; Byelorussia; Ukraine; Ural Mountains; Altai Territory; Siberia
- Investigate the basic terms of the Non-aggression Pact.
- Define the terms: fascism, dictatorship, communism, soviet, socialism, kulak, capitalism, democracy, massacre, genocide.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why did Nazi Germany permit the Soviet Union's army to take over parts of Poland?
2. Why did the government of the Soviet Union want to send "capitalists" and other middle and upper class people to places like Siberia?
3. When Esther's uncle knocked at their door the morning that the Russian soldiers came to take her family away, Esther's mother said that she did not know the man [her brother] at the door. Why did she pretend that her brother was a stranger?
4. Why did the Russians use cattle cars to send the prisoners to Siberia? Why were they given so little water and food of such terrible quality? If you had been on the cattle cars with Esther's family and the others, what would have been the worst part of the journey for you? Explain your answer.
5. The prisoners faced many problems, some caused by humans and some

caused by nature. Identify several of each type of problem. Which problems do you think were the hardest to solve? Why?

6. Why were the prisoners so excited by the news that the Soviet government was granting all of them amnesty at the request of the British government and the Polish government in exile? What changes did it cause in their lives?
7. After the war ended, Esther, her mother, and her grandmother learn about the massacre of their family at the hands of the Nazis. Why is Esther's mother especially troubled by the murder of her brother? What would you say to Esther's mother about this?
8. In the end, the Soviet decision to exile Esther and her family and others like them to Siberia probably had saved their lives, although that was not the intent. Did this influence the former prisoners' opinion of the Soviet Union? How did the reactions of Esther and her mother differ? Why do you think they were different?

### **Activities**

1. Make a chart listing the problems, human and natural, that the exiles to Siberia faced. Next to each problem, explain the way the problem was solved.
2. Make a weather graph of the average temperatures in Siberia for each month of the year. What is the range of differences in degrees from one season to another? Describe other characteristics of the climate in Siberia. What problems did these extremes of weather create for Esther's family? Why do you think some people choose to live in a place of such extremes? Explain how the Soviets used what was virtually slave labor to build up the economy of Siberia and to establish new cities and industries there.
3. Esther's father was an electrical engineer by training as well as a successful businessman. Her mother was an educated and skillful woman. Why did her Tata think the Russians were being ridiculous with the job assignments? Why do you think the Russians placed skilled people and successful farmers (like the kulaks) in such harsh, distant places doing such work? The children were also expected to work in Siberia. What were some of their tasks?
4. After the war ends, Esther's father writes to tell them that he is not returning to join them in Siberia. He will work to have them rejoin him in Poland. Find out what life was like for the Jewish survivors who tried to return to their former homes in Poland. Eventually Esther's family, as with many survivors, struggled to leave Europe. Locate on a map the various destinations for many of them. Why did the survivors continue to have difficulty gaining entry to many countries?
5. Write a poem or draw a picture depicting life in Siberia during the 1930s and 1940s.



## "Propaganda and Children During the Hitler Years

by

Mary Mills

Recommended for Grade 8 and up

### Synopsis

Mary Mills is a New Jersey educator who has studied and taught about the Holocaust. In this paper, she discusses the impact of children's storybooks used as propaganda upon the children raised under the Third Reich. From the beginning of their plotting, planning, and rise to power, Hitler and other Nazi officials had emphasized the importance of gaining control of the minds of Germany's children. Under the direction of the Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, the German people were subjected to a constant barrage of cleverly designed messages to convince them to accept even the most outrageous claims of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party. The propaganda came in newspapers and magazines, in books, in posters, in speeches, on radio programs, in the theaters and movie houses, in music and art, and in almost every conceivable medium of communication. For the young people, in addition to their schoolrooms, there were the Hitler Youth and the Young Maidens where they were trained in all of the Nazi ideology and to believe and obey without question. For the very young children, there were specially prepared picture books to accompany their lessons. Through these books, the Nazis tried to capture their minds and hearts when they were most open and vulnerable to the twisted hate produced by Hitler and his Nazi supporters.

....The most notorious anti-Semitic picture storybooks, *Trau keinem Fuchs auf gruner Heid und Keinem Jud bei seinem End!* (*Don't Trust a Fox in a Green Meadow or the Word of a Jew*) and *Der Giftpilz* (*The Poisonous Mushroom*), went through several editions and had a circulation of several hundred thousand. They were produced by the hate-mongering publication, **Der Sturmer**, owned and operated by Julius Streicher, its chief editor.

....These children's books provide an inside view of the anti-Semitic prejudices and practices nurtured by the Third Reich and serve to document the ruthless poisoning of the young minds that were exposed to these storybooks, which represent one of the most insidious tactics used by the Nazis to imbue German children with a deep hatred of Jews.

....The picture book stories offer an insight into the means used to indoctrinate young children in the most extreme anti-Semitism imaginable. During the Nuremberg Trials, *Don't Trust a Fox in a Green Meadow or the Oath of a Jew* and *The Poisonous Mushroom* were received as documents in evidence. Because they document the practices of the Nazis, these books have an authenticity that should sound a very persuasive warning against the dangers of the hate groups that live in our midst...

\* \* \* \*

The image of the Jew as something less than human, unnatural and immoral, recurs throughout Nazi propaganda picture storybooks for children. Around the age of six, children were given primers whose content focused upon camp life,

marching, martial drums, boys growing up to be soldiers, etc. Along with these primers, children were given a supplement entitled Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jed bei seinem Eid (Don't Trust a Fox in a Green Meadow or the Oath of a Jew). This supplement was written by an eighteen-year-old art student, Elvira Bauer, and was a basic educational tool that was typical of the material provided for young children. It was published in 1935-36 by Der Stürmer and went through seven editions. A hundred thousand copies of this picture book were in circulation....

\* \* \* \*

...Bauer alludes several times to what must be done to keep Germany a wholesome country and thanks the notorious anti-Semite, Julius Streicher, the editor of Der Stürmer, for his efforts to keep Germany healthy and free from Jews. Finally, she reduces the Jewish presence in Germany to a plague that must be eliminated. The association between Jews and a fatal disease as well as the justification for the destruction of the Jews was being indoctrinated into young children via colorful picture books in 1936, six years before the Wannsee Conference. [This was the meeting where the decision to implement the Final Solution was arranged with Nazi officials who would be responsible for carrying out the plan for the annihilation of the Jews.]

\* \* \* \*

Der Giftpilz (The Poisonous Mushroom) appeared in Germany in 1938 and leaves little question regarding the intended Nazi solution to the "Jewish problem." The book begins innocently enough by describing a favorite German pastime, picking wild mushrooms in the woods. A young boy, Franz, accompanies his mother on a walk in a beautiful, wooded area and helps her gather mushrooms. After carefully describing and showing Franz several varieties of both edible and poisonous mushrooms, his mother compares the good mushrooms to good people and the harmful mushrooms to bad people. The most dangerous people are, of course, the Jews. Franz proudly announces that he has learned in school that the Jews are bad people. His mother continues her comparison of Jews to poisonous mushrooms... It is Germany's obligation to warn the rest of the world about this terrible toadstool and, thereby, save humanity from destruction. Thus begins one of the most insidious storybooks ever composed for children.

\* \* \* \*

Der Giftpilz ends with a brief description of a speech given by Julius Streicher, in which he declares that humanity cannot be saved without a solution to the Jewish problem...

\* \* \* \*

...The purpose of the propaganda picture storybooks was to make the status of the Jew as a deadly enemy as concrete as possible to German children. These storybooks may be viewed as a clear signal pointing to the impending Final Solution as well as a prerequisite for it. Without the hate that these books sought to instill into young children, there could not have been a Final Solution.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Define the terms: propaganda, primer, antisemite, Final Solution, edible, poisonous.
- Identify the following: Julius Streicher, Joseph Goebbels, Der Sturmer.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Do you remember the types of stories in your primers and picture books when you were between the ages of three and seven? Describe some of the story ideas and illustrations that were in your books.
2. Compare and contrast the themes of your childhood primers and picture books to the two picture books for the children in Nazi Germany that are described in the article by Mary Mills.
3. Why did Adolf Hitler and the Nazis place such a high priority on reaching out to shape the minds of the youth beginning with the youngest of children?
4. Explain why propaganda was such an important part of the strategies and tactics that the Nazis developed to take control of Germany, Austria, and many of the lands they conquered.
5. What evidence exists that indicates that the Nazis were very successful in many of their propaganda efforts? What other examples of Nazi propaganda have you seen in books, documentary films, and movie films or learned about through other sources? Give several examples. What do you think of these propaganda pieces?
6. Do you think that Adolf Hitler and the Nazis were correct in their estimate of the value of propaganda in controlling and influencing people? Explain your answer.

### **Activities**

1. Propaganda does not have to be a negative tool. It can be used in a positive, constructive manner. Research for other examples of government propaganda (any government) that produced positive results rather than negative, destructive results.
2. How are propaganda and advertising similar? Are their differences? Explain the purpose of advertising. Can it be used for positive and negative reasons? Give some examples of each.
3. Form a small group of three students. Discuss something that you think your school, community, or neighborhood needs to do that would have positive, constructive results for the people. Design several posters, slogans, etc. that could be used to try to convince people that the idea is a good one that they should follow.