

# *Yellow Star*

## Guide for Teachers and Book Groups: Language Arts

### **Character**

#### **Character List**

- Sylvia Perlmutter
- Dora, *sister*
- Isaac, *Papa*
- Haya, *Mother*
- Hava, *friend*
- Itka, *friend*
- Rumkowski, *elder of the Jews*
- Polish woman with the dog
- Baby Isaac, *cousin*
- Uncle Haskel, *father's brother*
- “The Chef”, “Nervous Hands”, *cellar children*
- The Director
- aunts and uncles: Sara, Rose, Malka, *mother's sisters*  
Label, Herschel, *mother's brothers*  
Edit, Esther, Sura, *father's siblings*
- Mina, *cousin*
- Nazi soldiers
- Russian liberators

#### **Activities**

- Create a character web
- “interview” a person from the story (imagine)
- diorama of an event in the character's life
- short story written from the point of view of someone beside Sylvia
- compare the traits of a character with someone you know
- cast a movie “Yellow Star” with actors from TV/movies you like
- draw a life-sized poster of one of the characters
- dress in costume as a character and do an oral presentation
- create a family tree for Sylvia

#### **Heroes**

Papa and Sylvia both show acts of courage in the story, even though their personalities are very different.

- Give examples of Papa rescuing others and saving lives (6, 67-84, 106-9, 114-6, 122-33, 190-2, 196-9, 202-7)

- Give examples of Sylvia's bravery (202-4, 221, 166-70, 216)

### **Biography**

Choose a person from *Yellow Star* and answer:

- Who am I?
- When was I born?
- Am I still alive? How old am I or when did I die?
- Why am I important or interesting?
- What mistakes did I make?
- What good things did I do?
- In what way(s) am I like you? Different?
- What lesson(s) can you learn from my life?

### **Author as Character**

While the author is not a character in the story, she does appear in the Introduction and Author's note. Why do you think the author includes *her* history? How is her view of the Holocaust formed by being the child of a survivor?

**Explore** how generations of Jewish people have dealt with the Holocaust.

- Survivors
- Israeli Jews
- American Jews
- children and grandchildren of survivors

## **Vocabulary**

- word
- definition
- part of speech
- word or picture clue to help you remember
- use in a sentence

### **Activities**

The following list of words may be used for spelling, grammar, or poetry lessons. Also,

- students may choose one of more words that (s)he is unfamiliar with and add to a vocabulary journal
- teacher can divide list amongst students
- student may teach a new word to the class
- students create a "word-a-day" calendar

## Vocabulary List

### *from Introduction*

Holocaust  
survivor  
ghetto  
Jewish  
massacre  
refugee  
anxiety  
resilience

### *from Part One* (page in parentheses)

Aryan  
Kosher (4)  
Warsaw (5)  
Star of David (7)  
infectious (8)  
tormenting (9)  
relocation (11)  
trampled (11)  
courtyard (12)  
exhale (13)  
rations (14)  
valuable (16)  
regard (27)  
smuggler (28)  
torture (29)  
mourning (31)  
solemn (31)  
grief (32)  
looming (36)

### *Part Two*

swaddled (38)  
inspect (43)  
gobble (49)  
tonic (50)  
survive (50)

### *Part Three*

deportation (55)  
death camp/concentration camp (55)  
rumor (57)  
exaggeration (57)  
summons (59)

scrawny (61)  
cemetery (69)  
muffled (72)  
dampness (74)  
unraveled (78)  
sources (80)  
haze (81)  
flee (82)  
swarm (83)  
circumstance (83)  
munitions (89)  
view (91)

*Part Four*

uprising (95)  
grenade (95)  
resistance (96)  
filth (97)

*Part Five*

foreigner (103)  
worrisome (104)  
frail (104)  
briskly (107)  
liquidation (109)  
tremble (111)  
herd (112)  
halt (114)  
shrill (115)  
kilogram (118)  
miracle (118)  
gut (119)  
violently (120)  
milling (123)  
concentrating (124)  
concern (131)  
organized (131)  
risky (133)  
cellar (134)  
tilt (139)  
faint (141)  
broth (142)  
listless (144)  
chaotic (148)  
method (150)  
distraction (150)

plentiful (156)  
dwindling (156)  
harassed (157)  
dingy (157)  
ladle (158)  
galumpkies (158)  
kugel (158)  
nourishment (159)  
courage (159)  
clench (159)  
gaze (160)  
nervous (161)  
burrow (162)  
whoop (162)  
stale (167)  
scent (171)  
inhale (171)  
delight (172)  
scold (173)  
abruptly (174)  
swastika (174)  
whimper (177)  
mutter (177)  
adjust (178)  
outnumbered (179)  
stumble (180)  
tipped off (180)  
betrayed (180)  
encircled (182)  
spared (183)  
rebel (183)  
etch (184)  
provoke (188)  
terrified (189)  
panic (190)  
hoax (190)  
obvious (191)  
grimly (192)  
meshugga (199)  
huddle (201)  
crumple (204)  
Hebrew (209)  
chants (209)  
embracing (210)  
sideburns (213)  
Yiddish (213)

defeated (217)  
demolish (219)  
avoid (219)  
stationed (219)  
alert (221)  
committed (222)  
daze (223)  
rhythm (226)  
gap (227)

## **Free Verse**

Discuss free verse. How is it different from rhyming poetry or a narrative? Discuss the uses of punctuation, grammar, complete sentences vs. fragments, paragraphs, etc.

### **Analyze One Verse**

Choose a verse, and answer the questions:

- What is the title and page number?
- What is the verse about?
- What does the title mean?
- How does the verse make you feel? Why?
- What words did you like? Why?
- What else would you like to tell about the verse?

## **Setting**

A writer uses descriptive words to help you feel like you know what places are like.

Choose one of these places from *Yellow Star*:

- Perlmutter family's apartment in ghetto
- cemetery
- train station
- cellar of children
- courtyard outside workers' buildings
- Perlmutter's apartment before the war / after the war

Close your eyes. Imagine you are there.

- What would you hear? Smell? See?
- What could you touch? How does it feel?
- What colors are around you? Be specific.

## Conflict

How do these kinds of conflict occur in *Yellow Star*?

- Person vs. society (e.g., Jews vs. Hitler's law, Sylvia vs., ghetto rules, Papa vs. Nazi roles)
- Person vs. nature (e.g., Family vs. weather, Sylvia vs. starvation)
- Person vs. self (e.g., Sylvia "mouse" vs. brave-pear incident, weak Sylvia vs. strong-alerting that Nazis are leaving)

## Figurative Speech

Find examples of figurative speech.

**Simile** – comparison between two things using "like" or "as"

- drive like crazies (27)
- no best friend like a doll (48)
- crushing people like cattle (56)
- resistance fighters like ants tunneling through ground (96)
- living is like sleepwalking (96)
- Americans like movie stars
- family in a sea of innocents being swept along with the tide (113)
- feel like a pile of bones (144)
- men like a pack of dogs running from the dogcatcher (152)
- meals like a big picnic (152)
- like a bee to honey (168)
- pear cores like small skeletons (175)
- dragged like a sack of potatoes (175)
- hands feel like ice (187)
- scatter like loose chickens (196)
- stand like statues in the snow (197)

**Metaphor** – compares two things without "like" or "as"

- fingers are icy sticks (6)
- dark apartments are boxes of grief and fear (32)
- summons papers are "wedding invitations" (57)
- I am a bear in a cave (62)
- hole in ground as bed fit for kings (76)
- Sylvia is a mouse in a mouse hole (162)
- blue scrap of fabric is the sky

**Onomatopoeia** – a word that imitates a sound

thump (22)  
vroom, sput sput spop (27)  
bang (41)  
whoo!(55)  
thud (69)  
plop (76)  
zzkrrch (116)  
thwap (126)  
boomboomboom (167)  
zzzmmm (202)  
whee!boom! (208)

**Personification** – describes animal, object, or idea as if it were a person

feet walk as if they have nothing to fear (22)  
wool is ready to help (29-30)  
ghetto holes its secrets tightly and shrugs its shoulders when asked questions (39)  
dialogue between dolls (39)  
winter erases whole families (51)  
sun invites me out (167)  
room is an icebox (201)

### ***More Activities***

**Write a story** from the point of view of Sylvia’s doll, the dog across the street, the wire fence, etc.

**Research and write a report** on the Lodz Ghetto

**Interview** a Holocaust survivor or a family member of a survivor

**Give an oral reading** of one verse

**Act out a scene**

**Write a letter or e-mail** to Sylvia Rozines, the “real” Sylvia

c/o Marshall Cavendish, Margery Cuyler  
99 White Plains Road  
Tarrytown, New York 10591

-- or --

e-mail the author at [JRoy@JenniferRoy.com](mailto:JRoy@JenniferRoy.com), who will forward it to her aunt