

The Big Lie by Isabella Leitner, Scholastic, 1992

- I. In March of 1944 the Nazis took over Hungary. If you were a Jewish child in that place at that time you would not be allowed to:
- ___ Own or listen to a radio
 - ___ Ride a bicycle
 - ___ Go to school
 - ___ Talk to a non-Jew in public
 - ___ Walk outside with your parents after 7:00 pm

Rank order these from the restriction you would find most difficult to least difficult.

- II. Vocabulary: Use as many words as you can in one sentence to describe what life in Hungary would be like for a Jewish child in 1944. (Add other words as needed)

Hungary, ancient, Nazi, invaded, rumors, Jews, unimportant, shopkeepers, threatened, ally, broadcast, overturned, confusion, orders, obeyed, previously, mistake, punishment, bicycle, celebrate, separated, fearful, gendarmes, bayonet, terrified, courtyard, ghetto, disappeared, protection

- III. Sentence Starters: Write for five minutes on the one you choose, Share orally with a small group.
- A. Having four sisters and one brother...
 - B. Rumors can be alarming when...
 - C. Discrimination means...
 - D. Reasons not to celebrate a birthday...

IV. CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND ACTIVITIES

Chapter One: In March 1944 Isabella's family hears rumors of persecution of the Jews by the Nazis but all seems quiet in her small town until Sanyi, a friend, arrives with news that the Germans have invaded Budapest.

Create a dialogue between Sanyi and Isabella. How will she reply?

S: Let me in! Let me in, please!

I: _____

S: The Germans invaded Budapest yesterday. They are seizing all the Jews.

I: _____

S: I was in the library when Nazis with guns rushed in.

I: _____

S: I escaped through an open window. Please hide me until sunset. I'll be gone after dark.

I: _____

S: Your family must leave now while you can.

I: _____

Chapters Two and Three: Many restrictions are placed on all Jews in Hungary. Finally they are sent to the ghetto, marched from the ghetto to a cattle car and travel by train for two days to Auschwitz with no food or water. Describe the ghetto in a five senses report.

The ghetto is:

It sounds like:

It tastes like:

It smells like:

It looks like:

It made Isabella feel like:

Chapter Four: At Auschwitz, the German doctor, Josef Mengele, separates the weak from the strong. Isabella and her older sisters are separated from her mother and baby sister. Their hair is cut off. Philip tells Isabella they must eat to survive.

Isabella shows many feelings in these first four chapters. Choose four different feelings and explain when Isabella had that feeling and why.

BRAVE	CAUTIOUS	FOOLISH
SCARED	IMPATIENT	UPSET
HELPLESS	WICKED	HAPPY
CARING	UNHAPPY	CONFUSED
OPTIMISTIC	TERRIFIED	

Chapter Five: Thousands are put to death in the camp. Others look like walking skeletons. Prisoners are shot for little or no reason. A message on a carved piece of wood comes from Philip: "You must live. You simply must. I love you."

Create a message Isabella might send in reply. Send the message in a code you devise.

Chapter Six: Late in 1944 the girls are forced on a three week death march. They escape in a blizzard and take shelter in an empty house. They then see Russian tanks and trucks on the road.

Describe Isabella in a bio-poem:

Name, Four traits, Related to, Who has, Who needs, Who fears, Who gives, Who would like to, Resident of.

Chapter Seven: The girls make their way to a railroad station and a train that takes them out of Germany. With help they finally arrive in America and a bitter-sweet reunion with their father.

Hitler's "Big Lie" was that the Jews caused Germany's unemployment problems. He put to death nearly six million Jewish people. This was called the Holocaust. Create a time line of events that led to the Holocaust.