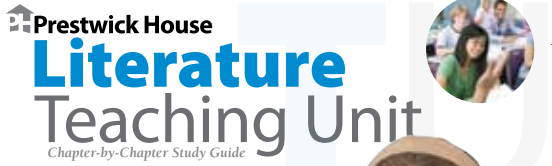




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Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Devil's Arithmetic

by Jane Yolen

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms

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Item No: 300256

The Devil's Arithmetic

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. define and cite examples from the text of the following literary terms:
 - allegory
 - euphemism
 - irony
 - metaphor
 - onomatopoeia
 - protagonist
 - simile
 - tone
 - verisimilitude
 - personification
2. discuss the significance of Hannah Stern becoming Aunt Eva's friend Chaya Abramowicz, as opposed to Hannah becoming anyone else in the story.
3. identify the roles humor, song, and prayer play in *The Devil's Arithmetic*.
4. compare and contrast Hannah before she is transported into the past with Hannah after she returns from her life as Chaya.
5. write detailed character sketches of Hannah, Aunt Eva, and Grandpa Will.
6. describe the significance of the number tattoos applied to prisoners in the concentration camps.
7. define the vocabulary words from each chapter of *The Devil's Arithmetic*.
8. identify and discuss the ways in which the Nazis gradually stripped the Jews of their power and individual identities, and attempted to dehumanize them.
9. discuss how Yolen combines fictional characters with historical fact to create *The Devil's Arithmetic*, and how this proves effective in lending verisimilitude.
10. identify and discuss the ways in which Hannah's character serves as a hero, not merely a protagonist in Yolen's novel.
11. define round/dynamic and flat/static character types, and identify them in the novel.

The Devil's Arithmetic

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Refer to passages from *The Devil's Arithmetic* to explain the significance of the tattoos applied to prisoners in the concentration camps. Why did the Nazis tattoo prisoners? How did the characters in the story react to it, and what meanings did they assign to the tattoos?
2. During the time Hannah Stern lives as Chaya Abramowicz, she learns lessons and undergoes many changes. Discuss the effects on Hannah of her having temporarily become someone else.
3. Why do you think author Jane Yolen describes characters and settings with such painstaking detail after Hannah becomes Chaya, as compared to her very limited descriptions in the first three chapters of *The Devil's Arithmetic*?
4. Dramatic irony applies when a character perceives a situation in a very limited way while the reader, perhaps through another character, sees the bigger picture. Discuss why the following passage from *The Devil's Arithmetic* is a prime example of dramatic irony.

“Please, Rabbi,” she pleaded, “we must *do* something. And quickly. I know where they are taking us. I am from the future. *Please.*” Rabbi Boruch cleared his throat before speaking. “All children are from the future. I am from the past. And the past tells us what we must do in the future....So you must listen to me when I tell you that what we must do now is pray.”

5. A euphemism is the substitution of unpleasant words or phrases with more acceptable ones. From the text, identify and list the euphemisms the Nazis used to refer to the Jews and the extermination of the Jews. Why did the Nazis use euphemisms? Why did the Jews use them?
6. Describe the relationship between Hannah and her Aunt Eva and Grandpa Will. How do they relate to each other before Hannah goes back in time? How do they interact after her return? Do you think Aunt Eva understands what happened to Hannah?
7. A protagonist is merely the main character, the center of attention in a novel. The protagonist may be flat or round. A hero, on the other hand, is a round and dynamic character, learning from experience, developing new strengths, and recognizing new truths. Cite examples from the text that demonstrate the ways in which Hannah is a hero.
8. What does Yolen's use of Yiddish and German add to the novel? How would the novel have been different without it?
9. Identify the main conflict in *The Devil's Arithmetic*. Who participates in the conflict? Who is the protagonist, and who or what is the antagonist? How is the conflict resolved?

The Devil's Arithmetic

Chapter One

Vocabulary

Haggadah – text read at Seder service

Nazis – members of German Fascist party 1933-1944

Passover – Jewish holiday commemorating liberation from Egypt

Seder – feast and service on the first two nights of Passover

Yiddish – Jewish German

unleavened – flat, without yeast

1. The novel opens with what event, and why is it important to Hannah's family?

2. Explain why Hannah does not want to attend Grandpa Will's Seder.

3. Why does Hannah's mother insist she go to the Seder?

5. What is the woman's name and what does her conversation reveal about Chaya?

6. Why does Hannah hug Shmuel, even though she knows he is not her uncle?

7. Describe the relationship between Shmuel, Gitl, and Chaya.

8. How does Hannah know she is not Chaya?

9. Why does Hannah hesitate when Shmuel holds out his hand to her?

10. In this chapter, Yolen writes that Shmuel's smile reminds Hannah of Aaron's smile. This may remind readers of a passage in Chapter Three, in which Aaron smiles up at Hannah. What is the literary term for this technique of hinting at things to come?

Chapter Eleven

Vocabulary

achtung – German for “attention!”
amphitheater – rows of seats around an open space
barracks – military housing
discernible – obvious
embankment – slope
mikvah – Jewish ritual bath
prominent – noticeable
rucked – gathered
runnels – small streams
schnell – fast, quick
uninflected – monotone
vehemence – force, intensity
vulnerable – weak
zugangi – newcomers

1. What graphic simile does the author use to describe conditions in the boxcar?

2. When are the dead bodies discovered, and how do the Nazis treat them?

3. What happens to the villagers on the fourth day in the boxcars?

4. What is written in German on the sign above the gate to the barracks? What does it mean?
