THROUGH EVA'S EYES

By Phoebe Eloise Unterman

Research ideas

The following are questions and considerations when reading the book, *Through Eva's Eyes*, with your students. This book relates the true story of the author's grandmother, Eva K. Unterman. The book is important for several reasons; it contains a true survivor testimony, it provides crucial details that can be researched further to provide a multi-layer study of the book and the subject of the Holocaust, and it was written and illustrated by a young author, who obviously has a personal connection to the story. The survivor, Eva Unterman, recently made her very last speech regarding her experiences, surrounded by her family. The book can be ordered using this website : <http://throughevaseyes.com/>

The book can be read by readers on multiple levels. It can be read by students in the elementary grades and used as is, tuning into reading to learn or non-fiction reading strategies and the imagery in the writing and illustrations. This book can also be used for historical references as certain content points can easily be researched further by students to add context and evidence to support Eva's story. The following prompts may help you to add layers to reading *Through Eva's Eyes.*

1. Page 1: World War II begins, and Lodz

The city of Lodz had a significant Jewish community, and was occupied early by the Nazis once World War II began. You can research more about the beginning of World War II, and Lodz, at the following links below:

Invasion of Poland article:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005070>

Information on Lodz:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005071>

2. Page 5: Reference to the Nazis

Information on the rise of the Nazi party is plentiful on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website. One link to the Holocaust Encylcopedia's description on Nazi ideology is below. There are many other areas of the website that include the rise of Nazism in Germany, and its spread during World War II.

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007457>

3. Page 6: Star of David reference

Students can look up pictures of the artifacts from the USHMM museum and find Stars of David. A link to the timeline, where the Star of David was mandated by the Nazi's in 1941 (with a great picture of a Star of David), is below:

<http://www.ushmm.org/learn/timeline-of-events/1939-1941/jewish-badge-decreed>

This could also be a gateway to studying the history of antisemitism leading up to World War II. In addition, depending upon the age of your students, the current issues with antisemitism could also be analyzed. The following links can help with both:

Anti-Semitism, the Longest Hatred:

<http://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism/antisemitism-the-longest-hatred>

General page on antisemitism, past and present:

<http://www.ushmm.org/confront-antisemitism>

4. Page 12: Reference to Lodz Ghetto

Much can be found regarding Lodz on the USHMM website...the link below is a place to start specifically about the ghetto:

<http://www.ushmm.org/research/research-in-collections/search-the-collections/bibliography/lodz-ghetto>

5. Page 16: Deportation to Auschwitz

Starting on page 15, Eva and her family’s journey to Auschwitz begins. This is where some of the most intense emotions can emerge as the suffering of the train tranport occurs, families are separated, and once in Auschwitz, life is barely livable. Information regarding Auschwitz can be found here:

<http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007718>

* Since the 70th Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz has been recently in the news, other resources should be easily available as well. CNN hosted a special focusing on individual survivor testimonies including their lives after liberation.

6. Page 18, the final page: Reference to Theresienstadt

Theresienstadt, or Terezin, was both a ghetto and a camp. While it is only a brief mention in this book, it is worth futher study. It was a propaganda piece for the Nazi’s, as they deemed it a spa town for elderly Jews who were getting relocated to the east. In addition, succumbing to pressure, the Nazi’s permitted the International Red Cross to visit. The Nazi’s beautified the camp to deceive the visitors. More can be found at this link, for starters:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005424>

Another article from the museum that stresses the unique story of Theresienstadt is linked below:

<http://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-features/special-focus/theresienstadt>

7. The Epilogue: life after liberation

While Eva’s life after the Holocaust is summarized in the epilogue, it is important to mention and research life after liberation for Jews who survived. There was usually no easy road-they still faced extreme antisemitism and discrimination in areas that the Nazis held prior to and during the war, which was typically their home towns and cities. They often had no idea where their family members were. They had to cope with starting life over, their often poor health, and the trauma they had suffered through. In addition, they usually faced a world that would not let them talk about it-until later. The site below addresses liberation:

<http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007724>

The Nuremberg Trials attempted to establish justice, calling the events of the Holocaust “crimes against humanity.“ You can research this topic starting with the link below:

<http://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-features/special-focus/nuremberg-trials-legacy>

8. Providing balance...resisters and rescuers

Within camps, ghettoes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and homes, various acts occurred to defy the Nazis. To add another layer to Eva’s story, stories of Jewish resistance, and those who rescued victims can be studied.

Jewish Resistance

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005213>

Stories of Rescue:

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005185>