

Comprehension Questions for The Devil's Arithmetic

Chapters 1 - 4

1. What is Hannah's complaint to her mother at the beginning of the novel?
 2. Where do Hannah and her family travel to get to her grandparent's house?
 3. Why is Hannah's younger brother scared about dinner?
 4. For whom is Hannah named?
 5. What has Grandpa Will so upset?
 6. When Hannah was younger, what did she do that she thought would please Grandpa Will?
 7. Why does Aunt Eva light candles in Grandma Belle's house every holiday?
 8. Grandpa Will decides that Hannah is old enough to partake of what holiday tradition?
 9. What part of the ceremony does Hannah's younger brother Aaron enjoy the most?
 10. Why does the family open the door to admit the prophet Elijah?
 11. What happens after Hannah goes to open the door for the prophet and says, "Ready or not, here I come?"
 12. On what does Hannah blame the daydream-like scene?
 13. Where is Hannah and with whom in her daydream?
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Chapters 5-7

1. What does Shmuel admit to Hannah the next morning, the day of his wedding?
 2. How do Gitl and Shmuel react to Hannah's ravings about her coming from New Rochelle, New York?
 3. Who comes to visit them the morning of the wedding and what does he bring?
 4. What does Gitl tell Hannah to wear to the wedding and how does Hannah feel about it?
 5. Who does Hannah meet that she thinks will make her 'dream' experience more interesting?
 6. Where does Hannah tell the girls she goes during the week that they find unbelievable?
 7. Why were the shetl girls especially fascinated with Hannah?
 8. Why are the local girls shocked to hear Rachel's account of Shmuel and Fayge's courtship?
 9. What quick observation does the badchan make of Hannah?
 10. Why did Hannah laugh out loud after meeting the badchan?
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Chapters 8-10

1. Why doesn't Fayge enjoy the "Sherle" wedding music and dance?
2. How does Fayge treat Hannah (Chaya) her soon-to-be-niece?
3. Tell what the wedding party sees upon gaining an open view of the village?
4. How does Hannah singularly figure out what is happening?
5. What does Hannah tell the rabbi to try to get him to turn back? What does he say?
6. In what manner did the intruders stop the procession from entering the synagogue?
7. What information do the Nazi officers give the group of villagers?
8. How does the rabbi try to calm the group?
9. How do the truckloads of Jews attempt to calm their fears on the way to resettlement?
10. What is the first thing the Jews notice upon their arrival at the train station?
11. After getting out of the trucks, what does the Nazi officer demand the villagers to do first?
12. Upon rising from lying on the ground, what are they made to do next?

Chapters 11-13

1. Describe the conditions of the boxcars and the length of time spent in them.
 2. What message adorned the iron gates of the camp?
 3. Why is Hannah made to surrender her blue hair ribbons?
 4. What does the woman guard in the blue dress tell them to do first?
 5. Why doesn't Hannah say anymore about what she remembers about the showers?
 6. After her hair is shorn from her head, what does Hannah realize?
 7. What command does Hannah impose upon herself to numb the shock?
 8. After their heads are shaved and they survive the cold showers, where are they next sent?
 9. What distressing information does the man who tattoos Hannah give her?
 10. When Gitl leaves the barracks to find something to eat for the children, what is she told?
 11. Why doesn't Gitl want Hannah to touch Tzipporah upon waking the next morning?
 12. What instructions are the zugangi given pertaining to the bowls they are issued?
 13. What message does the officer give to the newcomers after they have eaten?
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Chapters 14-16

1. What does Rivka share with the girls about the rest of her family?
 2. Rivka shares the rules she follows to stay alive at the camp one day at a time. What are they?
 3. What does Hannah dream of the night Rivka tells them the rules of the camp?
 4. What is the signal for the young children that the commandant is coming?
 5. What job does Hannah have in the camp?
 6. Where does Gitl work in the camp and what does she learn there?
 7. Explain Rivka's definition of The Devil's Arithmetic.
 8. Why does Hannah think that Reuven's choosing was her fault?
 9. How does Rivka respond when Hannah suggests that they should at least go down fighting.
 10. The night she finds out her father has been chosen, Fayge finally speaks to the girls. What is her story about?
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Chapters 17-Epilogue

1. Why does Hannah come to expect that something out of the ordinary will soon happen?
2. What was the plan and who was included?
3. Was it successful?
4. How did Fayge react to Shmuel's impending punishment?
5. What did Hannah notice about the Kommando that carried Fayge's body to Lilith's Cave?
6. In what way did Hannah find irony in the everyday events of nature surrounding the camp?
7. What was Hannah trying to tell the girls when the new guard confronted them?
8. What does the new guard tell them?
9. Which three girls does he choose?
10. How does Hannah change the course of events?
11. Explain what happens after Hannah takes Rivka's place with the other girls.
12. Where does Hannah find herself after the dark resolves itself?
13. After she sits down at the laden table with her family, at what does Hannah stare?
14. When Aunt Eva wants to explain it's meaning, how does Hannah surprise her?

15. What does Aunt Eva share with Hannah about her past when they were alone?
16. What does Emmanuel Ringelblum, Jewish historian, claim were the only victories of the camps?