

A  
GUIDE  
TO  
TEACHING

L A U R A  
W I L L I A M S ' S

THE  
SPIDER'S  
WEB



Milkweeds for  
Young Readers



Dear Educator,

Milkweed Editions has developed a series of teaching guides to encourage students to enter books with pleasure and insight—to enjoy as well as understand them.

We began by asking classroom teachers what would help them teach novels and anthologies. The teachers said they wanted open-ended questions for use in guiding students to read more deeply. They also asked for exercises in teaching writing. Their third request was for assistance in teaching with a sensitivity to the needs and goals of multicultural education. The guides were conceptualized to serve those requests.

Literature opens up the classroom to a larger world and to disciplines beyond its own. So we developed the guides while keeping other disciplines and directions in mind.

The guides were developed and written by people who are both teachers and writers. Each guide offers extensive step-by-step writing exercises. The key to successfully using the exercises in your classroom is to take time for the whole process: time for warm-ups, time to brainstorm before writing, time for the writing itself, and time for reading the writings aloud.

We hope that the guides will help you in your teaching. Feel free to use only those parts of them that are relevant to your needs. Jot your own thoughts and lesson ideas in the margins. And, as one teacher interviewed said, “Don’t try to do too much. The main thing is to read and enjoy the books. Enter the stories of the people in them. Pass on your excitement to the students.”

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## BACKGROUND

### Overview of *THE SPIDER'S WEB*

The central character in *The Spider's Web* is thirteen-year-old Lexi Jordan. Disconnected from her parents because of their divorce and her mother's alcoholism, Lexi turns to a group of neo-Nazi skinheads for companionship and comes to view the six-member gang, called *the Pack*, as family. She attempts to secure her ties to the Pack by shaving her head and tattooing a swastika on her scalp, wearing the prescribed paramilitary uniform, and spouting Nazi slogans. In the opening chapters of the book, the Pack's illegal activities have been limited to underage drinking and vandalism. When the gang takes in a new member, however, the Pack engages in riskier and more sinister violence, and Lexi struggles between following the group and following her conscience.

By chance, Lexi meets Mrs. Ursula Zeidler, an elderly woman who grew up in Nazi Germany. She too is disconnected. Ursula has tried to forget tragic memories, but, with the sudden presence of Lexi in her life, she painfully reconnects with them. Though at the outset Lexi and Ursula have very little in common, the reader soon discovers the bonds they share, including inner pain, regret, and the need for forgiveness.

Lexi and Ursula's primary point of connection is their affiliation with a hate group. Ursula knows only too well the acts of cruelty that hate groups engender; Lexi has yet to learn. When Ursula first meets Lexi, she tells her that she was "one of Hitler's children." Lexi believes Ursula is referring to her years as a child in Nazi Germany. By the end of the book, however, the reader will understand Ursula's deeper meaning: that all people who commit hate crimes against innocent people are Hitler's children.

By skillfully weaving together Lexi's and Ursula's stories, the author conveys the timelessness of the book's many themes. Readers will easily identify with Lexi's struggles to belong, to forgive those who have wronged her, to follow her conscience instead of the group, and to get along within her family. The book is also very timely as the activities of hate groups are commonly reported in the news, and as hate groups exist in student communities.

*The Spider's Web* is most suitable for fifth- through eighth-grade English, history, and social studies classes. Because it is a high-interest, fast-paced book, most students will be able to read the book with ease. In addition, *The Spider's Web* would make an excellent contribution to an interdisciplinary course combining English and history or social studies. Teachers will find the book full of social issues that can be used to generate discussions relevant to young people.

## When Did It Happen? Setting the Historical Context

*The Spider's Web* is a novel set in a contemporary American city. Through the author's use of flashbacks, however, the reader is transported back and forth in time between current day United States and Nazi Germany during the 1930s and 1940s. By the end of the book, the reader realizes that Hitler's message of hate and violence did not die with Hitler and Nazi Germany but lives on, carried forward by neo-Nazi groups.

Neo-Nazism has its roots in the German Nazi party, which was founded in 1919. In the 1930s and 1940s, Adolph Hitler led the Nazi party. As a young man, he developed a hatred for the Jews, blaming them for Germany's economic woes and believing they were conspiring to destroy the Aryan race. The Aryan race, to Hitler, was the white race, which he believed was superior to all other races and, therefore, destined to rule. When Hitler became the leader of Germany in 1933, his racist views became public policy. As Germany invaded Eastern Europe during World War II, Nazis carried out Hitler's plan to rid Europe of all Jews and others he considered undesirable or inferior, including those with physical or mental handicaps. Ultimately, Nazis killed six million Jews—over two-thirds of the European Jewish population. One and a half million of those they killed were children. This deliberate and systematic destruction of the Jewish people has come to be known as the *Holocaust*.

In 1945 Hitler and Germany were defeated, but the Nazi message persisted. Neo-Nazi (or "new Nazi") groups sprung up around the world, including in the United States. The first organized neo-Nazi group in the United States was the American Nazi party, founded in 1959. The party spread hatred of all minorities but especially of blacks and Jews. It considered blacks genetically inferior and believed Jews were conspiring to destroy white, Christian America in order to control it.

Today's American neo-Nazi groups are committed to fulfilling Hitler's vision of a white ruling class by cleansing America of undesirables, especially nonwhites, nonChristians, and homosexuals. And like their brethren around the world, they believe the Holocaust is a myth, saying that there is no

evidence to support the claim that six million Jews were killed in Europe during Hitler's reign.

Neo-Nazis communicate their messages of hate to each other and the general public through music, graffiti, rallies, publications, the Internet, and other mass media. Their hate crimes range from vandalism and defacement of property to brutal murder.

The neo-Nazi skinheads are just one of many hate groups under the neo-Nazi umbrella. Like all neo-Nazi groups, the skinheads identify themselves with the swastika; wear paramilitary uniforms; and believe in white supremacy, white power, and the use of violence. The salient characteristic that sets them apart is their shaved heads. It is important to note, however, that not all skinheads are neo-Nazis and not all skinheads perpetrate hate messages or crimes.

Individuals across America have united in a campaign to halt and prevent the illegal activities perpetrated by neo-Nazis. Schools and communities sponsor campaigns that promote anti-violence and teach tolerance of those who are different. Watchdog groups monitor hate groups and their activities; they also prepare and provide materials for groups to use in combating racism and hate-based crimes. Many states have enacted hate-crime laws, which make all hate crimes a punishable offense. The federal government, however, has yet to pass any hate-crime legislation.

Hate groups, like the neo-Nazis, gain power through fear and intimidation. They can, however, be stripped of their power when individuals stay informed and stand united against them.

## Getting Started

1. Show the students a picture of a spider's web. Have them generate characteristics of spiders' webs. Record these characteristics somewhere in the room where the students can view them. Then tell the students they will be reading a book called *The Spider's Web* and that the book is about a thirteen-year-old girl named Lexi. Ask them to make a prediction about the book's plot. After they have had time to write their predictions, have the students share their ideas. (To extend the students' predicting abilities, pass out the books and have them look at the illustrations.)
2. Show the students a picture of a neo-Nazi skinhead. After they have had time to react to the picture, ask them to write down five questions that they would like to ask the skinhead. Then read "When Did It Happen? Setting the Historical Context" to them.
3. Display the swastika on the board or an overhead. Ask the students to identify it. Then find out what they know about the swastika: ask them the meaning of the swastika; their experiences, if any, with the swastika; and the emotions they feel while viewing the swastika. Then instruct them to ask an adult at home the same questions. When the students return to class the next day, have them compare their responses with the adults' responses.
4. Six million Jews were killed by the Nazis. Make this number more concrete for the students. Divide the class into groups. Pass out a map of the United States and a current atlas to each group. Tell them their goal is to add up either city or state populations until they total six million. Instruct them to highlight cities or color in states (they should not do both) on their maps. When the groups have completed their task, have them display the maps on the wall. Last, have them create and post a title for their displays.

## LESSONS

### LESSON ONE: CHAPTERS 1 & 2 (PAGES 3–19)

#### Summary

When the book opens, thirteen-year-old Lexi Jordan is on the run, pursued by three policemen. She tosses an empty can of red spray paint and escapes onto the porch of a nearby home. As Lexi hides, she overhears the policemen converse, and the reader learns that Lexi and her friends have just spray painted a Jewish temple. After the policemen disappear, the homeowner, Ursula Zeidler, an elderly woman with a German accent, confronts Lexi. When Lexi tells Ursula that she is being chased, Ursula invites Lexi into her home. The elderly woman reminds Lexi of Nanna, Lexi's deceased grandmother, and Lexi feels drawn to her. Anxious to leave, however, Lexi abruptly opens the front door, and the wind blows the hood off her head. Ursula is horrified to see Lexi's shaved head and the tattooed swastika on her scalp.

The sight of the swastika triggers Ursula's memory of herself as a young girl marching proudly with her *Jungmädels* in a torch parade to honor Adolf Hitler. Ursula remembers marching next to her best friend, Hildegard, who wants to do something heroic to best her twin brother. When the two girls walk home after the parade, Ursula notices a weak, flickering light in the home of Hildegard's next-door neighbors, the Reinekes.

#### Comprehension Questions

1. Why was Lexi being pursued and by whom?
2. What do you think the swastika tattooed on Lexi's scalp means to Lexi? What does it mean to Ursula?
3. What do you learn about Ursula from her flashback?
4. In what way was Ursula connected to Hitler?

### **Getting Involved with the Story**

1. What do you learn about Lexi's parents in these chapters? What do you learn about Ursula's connection with the German Nazis of the 1930s and 1940s?
2. What kinds of activities are Lexi and her friends involved in? What are their beliefs?
3. Why, on page 10, does Lexi want to take Ursula's hands into her own hands? Then why, at the end of chapter 2, does Lexi sneer at her and speak disrespectfully? What does this shift in behavior tell you about Lexi?
4. Do you think Lexi believes the racist things she says to Ursula? What leads you to your conclusion?
5. Can you imagine yourself marching for hours and not complaining, as Ursula and Hildegard did? Reread this section and determine what motivates Ursula to behave so well. What do you think was the purpose of this huge display of children marching as one very disciplined unit? Describe the feelings of the following people as they observed the march: a pro-Hitler German, a German who was uncertain about Hitler, a Jew.

### **What Would You Do?**

1. If Lexi came to your class today as a new student, how would you react to her physical appearance? What ideas would you have about her as a person? Would you welcome her? fear her? dislike her? Would you be friendly to her, or would you ignore her? Take a minute and write a quick note to your best friend about this new classmate and your feelings about her. Would your reactions be the same or different if the new student were a boy?
2. Reread Lexi's racist remarks to Ursula on pages 17 and 18. What would you do, if anything, if you overheard the new student (Lexi) say those racist remarks? Would you tell anyone? Who? Do you think Lexi believes the racist things she says to Ursula, or do you agree with Ursula that Lexi doesn't know what she's talking about? What leads you to your conclusion?
3. Because people are social beings, we enjoy forming relationships with others and being a part of a group. Belonging to a

group requires some degree of conformity. List the groups of which you are a member. These groups can be familial, religious, social, academic, artistic, athletic, political, or interest groups. From your list, choose one of the groups that is most important to you and write down the beliefs, behaviors, activities, manner of dress, and language that people in this group share. In what ways do you conform in order to belong to this group? What would happen to your relationship with the group if you began to behave, think, talk, and dress in ways that were contrary to the group's? How might you be treated?

4. Are there times when you choose not to conform? Why? Do you know of some classmates who do not fit in with the popular groups? What are the ways in which they do not conform? When is nonconformity creative? When is it destructive?

## Exercises

### *Characterization*

1. *Characterization* describes the ways an author develops the personalities of characters. A writer can state a character's personality directly ("She was lazy") or indirectly. In indirect characterization, the writer reveals the character's personality through physical description, action, thoughts, speech, or perceptions of the character or of other characters. Skim through the two chapters you have just read. Look for examples of direct and indirect characterization of Lexi and Ursula.

2. Write these examples down and label them as direct or indirect; then tell what they reveal about the characters' personalities. Continue this exercise as you read the rest of the novel.

### *Foreshadowing*

1. The author creates suspense in a story by presenting events or characters in such a way as to hint at what is going to happen in the story and to the characters (or, in the case of Ursula, hints about what has already happened to her). This is called *foreshadowing*. Find an example of foreshadowing in

the section in which Ursula recalls the night of the torch parade. Now make a prediction about what will happen.

2. Find another example of foreshadowing at the end of chapter 2, in which Ursula tells Lexi about her involvement with the Nazis. Make a prediction about what more you will learn about Ursula.

### **Interdisciplinary Activity**

Etymology is the study of the histories of words—their origins, development, and usage over time. Be an etymologist and study the history of the words *Holocaust*, *swastika*, and *Aryan*. Find out each word's point of origin and language of origin. Then trace its use over time. Have the meanings of these words changed since their original use? You will need to consult more than a dictionary for this exercise. Ask your librarian for resources.

### **Word Mastery List**

You came across the following words as you read chapters 1 and 2. Find each word on the page listed after it and copy down the phrase or sentence in which the word appears. Next, look up the word in the dictionary. Then write a synonym or phrase that could replace the word in its given context.

wincing (4)  
gingerly (4)  
rasped (5)  
rendezvous (5)  
ruffians (6)  
topographical (7)  
mantle (8)  
comrades (12)  
disciplined (13)  
absently (16)



**Special Words and Phrases**

*ach*

*Sieg Heil*

swastika

*Jungmädel*

*Führer*

*dummkopf*

Aryan

## LESSON TWO: CHAPTERS 3 & 4 (PAGES 21–39)

### Summary

After leaving Ursula's, Lexi hurries to the Big Tree, a meeting place of the Pack, the six-member skinhead gang to which Lexi belongs. When Lexi tells them she hid on a porch belonging to an old lady who said she was one of Hitler's children, Serge, the newest member of the gang, says he wants to meet the lady. Although Lexi doesn't want to return to Ursula's, she follows her friends.

Meanwhile, Ursula continues to recall painful memories that she has tried to bury. She remembers the night she and Hildegard kept watch on the Reineke's house to find out if they were hiding someone or something. Hildegard takes notes in her little book and the two girls plan to report their observations to their *Jungmädel* leader.

### Comprehension Questions

1. What more do you learn about Lexi's family and her feelings about them? What do you learn about her Pack family and her feelings toward them?
2. Who is Serge, and what kind of person is he?
3. Why does Hildegard want to do something heroic?
4. According to Ursula and Hildegard, what is a "good German"? What has Fraülein Klute, the *Jungmädel* leader, told the girls about the enemy?

### Getting Involved with the Story

1. Lexi thinks a lot about family in chapter 3. Reread this section and list the qualities that Lexi believes a good family has.
2. Describe Lexi's Pack family. Include the names and characteristics of each member. Do any of her friends remind you of any of yours? In what ways?
3. Why did Mick choose the name "the Pack" for the group? What territory is the group protecting and from whom?

4. Lexi doesn't believe the Pack has hurt anyone. Do you agree?
5. What motivates Lexi to participate in the Pack activities? What motivates Ursula and Hildegard to spy on the Reineke's? Which motivation do you identify with more?
6. Which character do you dislike the most so far? Why?

### **What Would You Do?**

1. In chapter 2 Lexi experiences conflict between what she wants to do and what the Pack wants to do. Have you ever experienced a similar conflict? Did you choose to follow the group? If so, how did you feel? If you didn't follow the group, how did you feel? When you look back do you regret the choice you made?
2. Perhaps Lexi needs advice. Choose a partner. One of you will compose a letter in which Lexi describes the conflict she feels in chapter 3. The other will then write back to Lexi, offering her advice.
3. What does family mean to you? What do you get from your family? What do you give to your family? If people are unhappy with their family life, can they do anything to improve it? If so, what?
4. When Lexi asked Mick why "white is might and right," he yelled, "Because it is!" Would his answer satisfy you? Why did he yell at Lexi? Have you ever asked your parents "Why?" or "Why can't I?" only to have them respond, "Because I said so"? Why do you think people in authority, such as your parents or teachers, sometimes don't give reasonable answers? When you are given an unsatisfactory answer again, how can you draw out a complete answer from the person without making him or her angry?
5. Imagine a situation in which you are a hero. Now write a short story in which you describe the situation and your heroic act. Then give your story to a classmate and have him or her list the characteristics of a hero as revealed in your story.

## Exercises

### *Comparison and Contrast*

Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast young Ursula with Lexi. Draw two circles that intersect. In the circle that represents Ursula, list characteristics unique to her. Do likewise with the circle representing Lexi. In the overlapping area, write the characteristics Ursula and Lexi have in common. Make the circles and the overlapping area big enough so characteristics can be added as you continue to read the novel.

### *Symbolism*

1. A *symbol* is something that stands for something other than itself. Look at the swastika on page 26. Then, with a group of classmates, skim chapters 1–4 and write down the words and phrases that convey what the swastika means to Lexi and what it means to Ursula.
2. With your same group, make a list of symbols (e.g., wedding ring, American flag, skull and crossbones, Nike swoosh). Choose three of the symbols that have both positive and negative meanings. Explain in writing each symbol's positive and negative meanings and for whom each symbol holds these meanings.
3. What might the storm at the end of chapter 4 symbolize? What form does the lightning take behind the Reineke's, and what does this form symbolize?

### *Figurative Language*

1. On pages 22 and 23, Lexi makes her way in the dark to the Big Tree in the woods. The author wants to convey to the reader a certain mood about that walk in the dark. She accomplishes this by using *figurative language*, descriptive language that is not meant to be taken literally. Find the following items on pages 22 and 23 and copy down the figurative language the author uses to describe each: hedges, picket fences, the hole in the chain-link fence, a log blocking her path. What mood does this figurative language convey? Using the same items, describe them with figurative language that conveys a happy mood; then try describing them to convey a sad mood.

2. Find the description of the storm on page 38. Rewrite this description by removing all the figurative language. Which version do you prefer?

### **Interdisciplinary Activity**

Create a mask for one of the characters. The mask should convey what you have learned about the character's personality. Use a white paper plate as your base. Using tempera paint or thick markers, completely fill in the space so that no background is showing. Then add designs, using paints, markers, or other materials. When you have finished, glue a tongue depressor or Popsicle stick to the bottom of the mask. Can your classmates guess which character you have represented?

### **Word Mastery List**

You came across the following words as you read chapters 3 and 4. Find each word on the page listed after it and copy down the phrase or sentence in which the word appears. Next, look up the word in the dictionary. Then write a synonym or phrase that could replace the word in its given context.

hicks (24)

skin (24)

punk (24)

recruits (25)

puberty (29)

senile (30)

warden (33)

### **Special Words and Phrases**

*Guten morgen*

Gestapo

*Herr*

*Fraülein*

*Frau*

Fatherland

### LESSON THREE: CHAPTERS 5 & 6 (PAGES 41–56)

#### Summary

The Pack pays a visit to Ursula. When they realize that she doesn't share their views of Hitler, they circle her, and Serge shoves her. Lexi tries to block his second shove but loses her balance and knocks Ursula down. The Pack scrambles out of the house, leaving Ursula on the floor where she has fallen.

As she lies on the floor, Ursula remembers a night when she was five years old. Her father was without work and the family was poor, but this particular night her father came home happy and full of hope. Earlier that day he had heard Adolph Hitler speak, promising to rebuild Germany, provide jobs for everyone, and rid the country of its enemies—such as the Jews—so it could be the power it once was.

#### Comprehension Questions

1. What does Serge mean by the "Holocaust myth"?
2. Why did Ursula's papa come home filled with happiness and hope?
3. What is the Treaty of Versailles, and why does Ursula's papa bring it up?

#### Getting Involved with the Story

1. In Chapter 5, Lexi sees similarities between her grandmother, Nanna, and Ursula. Find these similarities. How does this association affect Lexi's feelings toward and treatment of Ursula?
2. Change is often a slow, gradual process. Reread pages 47–48. Find those things Lexi says, thinks, and does that show she is changing. Were you surprised that Lexi didn't help Ursula? Were you disappointed?
3. If Ursula's papa had had a well-paying job, would he have been receptive to Hitler's speech? If someone made such a speech America right now, what kind of people might be receptive to it?

4. When Ursula's papa spoke about Jews being the enemies of Germany, what thoughts went through Ursula's mind?
5. Ursula says that Hitler was evil. Do you agree? What does *evil* mean to you?

### **What Would You Do?**

1. Why has Lexi retreated from her family? Do you think her mother and father are to blame for her belonging to the Pack? Why or why not? What are some other ways Lexi could deal with her loss, pain, and anger?
2. People often blame others when things don't go their way or when people don't do as they would like. Whom does Lexi blame? Whom does the Pack blame? When have you blamed someone for things not going your way?
3. Pretend you're a blaming kind of person. Tell whom you would hold responsible in each of the following situations and why: getting a poor grade on a school project; not getting an assignment in on time; getting detention for being tardy to class; not being allowed to watch TV because you failed to get your chores done on time; not being able to find an overdue library book. Now imagine you are a responsible, problem-solving person. Pick two of the situations and tell whom you would hold responsible and what you would do to improve the situations.

### **Exercises**

#### ***Bullies***

1. How does Serge treat others? Why do you think he enjoys bullying, or intimidating, others? Do you know a bully? What behaviors cause you to label him or her a bully? Can a parent, for example, be a bully? Can a leader of a country? What kinds of behaviors would each exhibit? We usually think of bullies as boys. Why? What behaviors would a girl bully engage in?
2. Can bullying behavior be stopped? With a group of classmates, role-play a situation in which someone is bullied and the behavior is dealt with effectively. What actions, if any, might the victim take? What actions might the witnesses

take? When your group has concluded its role-playing, ask your classmates if they thought the participants acted realistically or ideally.

### ***Scapegoats***

1. What does the word *scapegoat* mean? List the scapegoats in the book so far.
2. Find the origin of the word *scapegoat*. What was its original meaning?

### ***Symbols***

1. Explain the meaning of the following symbols: Ursula's upside-down image in the spoon; Ursula's constant stream of tears.
2. What symbol would you choose to represent what you like best about yourself? Draw it. Your teacher will collect everyone's and then ask the class to determine what each symbol represents.

### ***Animal Imagery***

1. In this section, the author uses animal imagery when she writes about the Pack. In other words, she describes the Pack with words used to describe animals. The Pack, according to Mick, is like a pack of white wolves. The author uses this image in chapter 5. What words convey wolf behavior on page 43? On page 47, what does the Pack do that makes you think of wolves closing in on their prey?
2. Write a paragraph using animal imagery to describe someone. Can your classmates tell which animal you used?

### **Interdisciplinary Activity**

What age was Hitler when he began to dislike Jews? Who and what influenced his prejudice? After you have researched the answers to these questions, prepare a report or a timeline that explains your findings.

### Word Mastery List

You came across the following words as you read chapters 5 and 6. Find each word on the page listed after it and copy down the phrase or sentence in which the word appears. Next, look up the word in the dictionary. Then write a synonym or phrase that could replace the word in its given context.

roused (41)

synagogues (46)

ranting (47)

sober (47)

lunged (49)

flailing (49)

dispersed (48)

unruly (48)

ample (51)

rout (55)

wrenching (56)

### Special Words and Phrases

blitzkrieg

howitzer

Holocaust

master race

*Ach, mein Liebling*

*Ich liebe dich*

Treaty of Versailles

## LESSON FOUR: CHAPTERS 7 & 8 (PAGES 57–78)

### Summary

Lexi returns to her home where her mother is entertaining a "business associate." During an angry exchange of words, Lexi's mom slaps Lexi on the cheek. Later Lexi's younger sister, Shelby, tells Lexi she wants to be like her and begs Lexi to take her to a Pack meeting. Lexi continues to worry about Ursula and calls 911 to report a possible emergency at Ursula's house.

The Pack's next act is to terrorize a blind boy. After the Pack breaks into the boy's home, Serge shoves and kicks him. Then he instructs Lexi to kick the boy. She is saved from having to make a decision by the arrival of the police. Later Lexi visits Ursula and meets a Jewish girl, Ellen Rabinowitz.

### Comprehension Questions

1. Why does Lexi's mom slap Lexi?
2. What people does Lexi miss in her life? Where are they?
3. What did you learn about Lexi's sister, Shelby?
4. Why does the Pack pick on a blind boy?

### Getting Involved with the Story

1. Serge has taken the Pack to a new level of violence. Describe the differences between the attack on the blind boy and the Pack's previous acts. What is different about the time of the attack on the blind boy? Why is the time difference significant?
2. Lexi is saved by the arrival of the police from having to choose between kicking the blind boy and disobeying Serge. If the police hadn't come, what do you think Lexi would have done? Rewrite the ending of the scene to show what Lexi does when the police do not come.
3. Lexi's mother calls Lexi's friends "animals." In what way, in Mrs. Jordan's mind, are they like animals? Serge calls the blind boy a "disgusting animal." Why? Does anyone in the

book seem more animal than human to you? If so, who? Why do you feel that way?

4. Lexi wants her mother to hold her in her arms and reassure her that everything will be all right. What prevents Lexi from telling her mother what she needs? Do you believe people who love you should know your needs without being told?

5. Are you surprised that Lexi tells her sister that she loves her? Why or why not? What does this tell you about Lexi?

6. Devon says, "Anyone who isn't good Aryan blood is no good" (70). What does he mean? Does a person's blood have anything to do with his or her worth or character?

7. How did you react to the Pack's treatment of the blind boy? While you read this section, did you feel his fear? Pretend you are the blind boy. Write down his thoughts from the moment the Pack invades his home until they leave.

8. Lexi believes that classmates laugh at her because "they didn't have enough guts to make a statement for themselves. Instead, they dressed the same and talked the same and thought the same" (73). Do you think she has described these "insiders" at school accurately? Why or why not? Might this describe "outsiders" as well? Explain, using Lexi and her group as an example.

9. People in groups might dress the same and talk the same, but do they really think the same? Think about a group you belong to. What are the differences among you?

10. At the end of chapter 8, Lexi wonders if Ellen cried when she saw the swastika. What does this question tell you about Lexi's growing understanding about vandalism?

### **What Would You Do?**

1. If your younger sister or brother started to show an interest in things you thought were illegal or unhealthy, what would you do? Whom would you tell?

2. What would you do if you thought a friend was involved in illegal, unhealthy, or disturbing activities? What if you thought a classmate was in trouble? Whom would you tell?

## Exercises

### *Euphemisms and Epithets*

1. What is a *euphemism*? Lexi's mother uses the euphemism "business associate" when she introduces her boyfriend to Lexi. Why? With your classmates, make a list of euphemisms used in our society. Then break into groups and generate a list of words that can have negative connotations, such as *homework*, *chores*, and *drugs*. Now create euphemisms for these things. What is the effect of the euphemisms? Can you see the purpose of euphemisms?

2. An *epithet* is a disparaging or abusive word about a person. Make a list of the racial epithets used in this book so far. Look these words up in the dictionary. To whom do they refer? Why do you think people use epithets?

### *Description*

1. The author could have directly told the reader that Lexi lives in an upscale home. Instead, she indirectly told the reader through her use of specific details. Reread pages 59 and 60 and list the details that tell you Lexi lives in an upscale home.

2. Now you describe a shabby home or room, a messy room, an out of control classroom, or an orderly classroom. First, list the specific details that you will use to describe the room. Now write your description in paragraph form. Exchange your paper with a classmate. Could your classmate tell what kind of place you were describing?

### *Dialogue*

*Dialogue* is the conversation between or among characters. Lexi and her mom argue with each other, and the result is that they lash out, hurt each other, and feel even angrier. Break this cycle. In play form, write dialogue in which Lexi and her mother communicate effectively without arguing. Begin the dialogue with Mrs. Jordan's lines on page 60: "You were supposed to be home at nine. You have school tomorrow."

### Interdisciplinary Activity

A storyboard is a series of pictures drawn for a movie, much like a comic strip. The director uses a storyboard to see what the movie will look like before it is filmed. Storyboard artists look closely at the script to make sure they draw the scene carefully. Underneath each picture they write the appropriate dialogue. Create a storyboard for one of the scenes in chapters 7 or 8. Use appropriate amounts of color and scenery and write down the dialogue from the scene you chose.

### Mastery Word List

You came across the following words as you read chapters 7 and 8. Find each word on the page listed after it and copy down the phrase or sentence in which the word appears. Next, look up the word in the dictionary. Then write a synonym or phrase that could replace the word in its given context.

giddy (59)  
foyer (59)  
sconce (60)  
imperiously (60)  
subtle (60)  
bleary (62)  
impulsively (63)  
infinitely (63)  
extracting (66)  
jumble (72)  
cowering (73)  
quizzically (75)

## LESSON FIVE: CHAPTERS 9 & 10 (PAGES 79–96)

### Summary

While Lexi and Ellen Rabinowitz visit, Ursula remembers the evening she spent with her friend Helen Gutemann. The Gutemanns had invited Ursula, who was ten years old at the time, to observe the beginning of the Sabbath and to share a Sabbath dinner with them. The Gutemanns explained to Ursula the Sabbath preparations, food, and rituals. She was amazed by the Sabbath observance and was pleased she had been invited to participate.

After Ellen leaves, Lexi apologizes to Ursula for hurting her. Ursula shares with Lexi newspaper clippings and photographs she has collected about the Holocaust. But when Ursula criticizes Lexi's friends, Lexi becomes angry. Lexi leaves Ursula's and stops at Devon's house. While she is there, Mick and Serge have a fight over leadership of the gang. Later, Lexi finds out that Devon's dad is black. She promises Devon she won't tell anyone.

### Comprehension

1. At the dinner table, Frau Gutemann says, "Don't worry, this insanity will stop." What does she mean?
2. Did the Sabbath dinner at the Gutemann's occur before or after the night Hildegard and Ursula spy on the Reinekes? What tells you?
3. Why does Ursula collect photographs and newspaper clippings about the Holocaust?
4. What difference does Ursula see between Lexi's given family and her chosen one?

### Getting Involved with the Story

1. What does Devon mean by "this whole Nazi skinhead stuff" (95)? Do you agree with him that Lexi doesn't get it? What does the "Nazi skinhead stuff" mean to Lexi?
2. Were you shocked to find out Devon's father is black? Now

that you know his father is black, why do you think Devon hates blacks?

3. The author continues to use the wolf image to characterize the Pack. How is Mick and Serge's fight like wolf behavior?

4. In the groups to which you belong (school, social, athletic, national), how are leadership challenges handled? Would you want to belong to a group in which the leaders use violence to gain control? Imagine one of your groups handles leadership challenges through violence. What effect would the fighting have on the group and on you?

5. Why do you think the author chose to go into great detail about the Sabbath dinner? What did you learn? After reading this section, what is your attitude about the Sabbath preparations and dinner? What are your feelings about the Gutemanns? Why is knowledge about a racial, religious, or ethnic group's culture and rituals important? Ursula is lucky to have firsthand, personal knowledge about a Jewish family's practices. Have you had a firsthand experience with a family that has different customs and practices from those of your own family? Share your experience with the class.

6. Ursula says that the love that once held Lexi's family together is still there. Do you agree? If so, how do you think love can be strong in her family again? What is preventing that love from being stronger? What can Lexi do to have a loving and healthy relationship with her mother again? What can Mrs. Jordan do to create a loving relationship with her daughter?

7. What does Ursula mean when she says, "I failed as a human being" (88). How can a person fail as a human being?

8. Ursula tells Lexi, "You still have heart and soul" (88). What did she mean by "heart and soul"? Describe a person without heart and soul.

9. Something tragic has happened to Ursula. She tries to keep it buried and has told no one of her shame. From what you have read so far, what tragedy do you think Ursula has tried to bury?

### **What Would You Do?**

1. Where are the adults in the Pack members' lives? Do teenagers need caring adults in their lives? What can caring adults do for teens that friends cannot? What are the obligations adults have to children in general and teenagers in particular? What adults do you hold responsible for the troubled lives of the Pack members? Where might the Pack find adults who care about them?

2. Something tragic has happened to Ursula. She tells Lexi on page 88, "I failed as a human being." If you were Lexi, how would you try to help Ursula forgive herself and find peace?

### **Exercises**

#### ***Flat vs. Round Characters***

1. A *flat* character is built around a single quality or trait. Sometimes a flat character is a stereotype. Identify the flat characters in this book. What is their single quality or trait?

2. A *round* character has a variety of traits, just as real people have. Round characters often have traits that are contradictory, thus causing conflict within the character. Round characters also develop as the story progresses—they change and grow. Identify the round character or characters in this book. What qualities and traits do they possess? Are any of them contradictory? Are the characters changing and growing because of their experiences?

### **Interdisciplinary Activity**

Find someone who knows Hebrew. Have him or her teach you the proper pronunciation of the Hebrew words used in chapter 9. Then teach your class.

### **Mastery Word List**

You came across the following words as you read chapters 9 and 10. Find each word on the page listed after it and copy down the phrase or sentence in which the word appears. Next, look up the word in the dictionary. Then write a synonym or phrase that could replace the word in its given context.

sacramental (80)  
solemnly (82)  
kindle (85)  
commandments (85)  
despicable (85)  
rifled (94)  
kinked (94)  
hatchway (96)

### **Special Words and Phrases**

yarmulke  
Sabbath  
*chalot*  
*Eishet Chail*  
*Shalom Aliechen*  
*Shabot*  
*chulent*  
Torah  
*Barooch ahta Adonoi, Ellohaynoo Melech ha-olawm*  
Gentile  
neo-Nazi  
*oi*

LESSON SIX: CHAPTERS 11 & 12 (PAGES  
97–112)

**Summary**

Lexi arrives home from Devon's to find policemen waiting for her. Her 911 call had been traced, and the police have searched her room. They found her sweatshirt with the red spray paint on it, proof that she had defaced the synagogue. Upon hearing this accusation, Lexi's mom angrily forbids Lexi to see her friends anymore. Lexi, in defiance, shoves back her hood, revealing to her mother the swastika tattooed on her scalp.

The next day, Lexi visits Ursula to find out why she hadn't told the police the truth about her fall. Ursula tells Lexi she didn't tell because she could tell Lexi had been sorry for what she had done. Lexi, under curfew now, returns home to find a transformed Shelby. She has shaved her head, drawn a swastika on her scalp with a marker, and put on the Pack uniform.

After Lexi leaves Ursula's home, Ursula remembers with despair the day she bullied Helen Gutemann. While adults looked on, Ursula and Hildegard made Helen crawl on her hands and knees to her home, kicking her when she slowed.

**Comprehension Questions**

1. What does Mrs. Jordan learn about Lexi?
2. Why hadn't Ursula told the police the truth about her fall?
3. Why is Ursula cruel to Helen?
4. Describe Shelby's new look.

**Getting Involved with the Story**

1. Have you wondered why Serge seems to have it in for Lexi? The beginning of chapter 11 reveals a possible motivation for his dislike of her. What is it? Why do you think her economic situation is important to him? What other character is influenced because of his economic condition?
2. What does Lexi's mom notice about her for the first time?

Were you surprised she hadn't known? What does this lack of awareness say about her involvement in Lexi's life?

3. What does Ursula say about tears on page 105? Which two characters have cried tears in this book? Of what is each character being cleansed?

4. Lexi tells Ursula she is sorry for her actions. Why is asking forgiveness of someone you've wronged necessary? Ursula cannot ask the people she has wronged for forgiveness. What is the effect of this inability on her? Can you think of a way she can redeem herself for the terrible wrong she has done?

5. Were you surprised by how cruel Ursula was to Helen, especially after reading her flashback of the Sabbath dinner they shared? What motivates Ursula to act cruelly? Do you find her cruelty believable? Do you think you could be convinced to hate someone because he or she belongs to a group that is different? What do you think would be the characteristics of someone who resists that kind of pressure?

6. You are nearly finished with the book. Based on the hints the author has given you, what do you think will happen to Lexi? Shelby? The Pack? What do you think Ursula's horrible crime was?

### **What Would You Do?**

1. Everyone has committed a cruel act. Recall an incident in which you acted cruelly. How was or has your relationship with the person you were cruel to been affected? Does the incident still haunt you? What, if anything, can you do to make up for your unkindness? If you were to write a letter to the person to whom you were cruel, what would you say in it?

2. How did you react when you read that as Ursula and Hildegard bullied Helen, "children laughed and ran circles around them . . . and adults just stared" (108)? If you had been one of those children, how would you have felt? What do you think would have happened if you were one of those children and you had refused to participate? Why do you think the adults who saw Helen bullied did nothing? Does a bystander who witnesses a cruel and violent act but does nothing share responsibility for any tragic consequences?

## Exercises

### *Point of View*

1. A person's *point of view* is his or her physical and personal "spot" from which he or she considers or evaluates something. For example, a person involved in a car accident would have a different point of view from a bystander. These different positions from which to view things result in differences of opinion about those things. A person's "spot" can be many things, such as age, gender, experience, or occupation. Lexi and her mother have different points of view about many things, including the divorce. Lexi recalls that when she told her mother that the divorce was all her mother's fault, her mother replied, "You don't know anything." Reread Lexi's view of the divorce and the events leading up to it (pages 110 and 111). Now write, in journal form, about the divorce and the events leading up to it from Mrs. Jordan's point of view.

2. Why is knowing someone's point of view important? How important is it to express your point of view in a respectful way? How important is it to listen to differing points of view in a respectful way? Explain your answers.

### **Interdisciplinary Activity**

Controversy and conflict are the result of differing points of view. Using a talk-show format, present different points of view about a controversial subject. First, work with a group of classmates to brainstorm common conflicts or controversies that affect your age group. Pick one conflict or controversy; then describe it and the parties in conflict. Next, select a student in your group to play the part of talk-show host. The host will introduce the controversy and the guests, ask questions of the guests, and select members of the audience (the class) who wish to ask the guests questions. Then choose students from your group to play the guests on the talk show. The guests will represent different points of view about the controversial subject. They should be prepared to communicate their views effectively and persuasively.

### **Mastery Word List**

You came across the following words as you read chapters 11 and 12. Find each word on the page listed after it and copy down the phrase or sentence in which the word appears. Next, look up the word in the dictionary. Then write a synonym or phrase that could replace the word in its given context.

prestige (97)

deface (100)

crude (101)

skittled (103)

despicable (105)

trio (108)

flaunting (107)

gingerly (109)

diminished (109)

### **Special Words and Phrases**

Jewess

working class

LESSON SEVEN: CHAPTERS 13–15 (PAGES  
113–134)

**Summary**

Lexi's mom reaches out to Lexi, but Lexi is not willing to forgive her. When Lexi retreats to her room to write in her journal, she realizes that Shelby is not at home. Suspecting that Shelby has met up with the Pack, Lexi races to the Big Tree where she finds Devon bloody and battered. The Pack beat him up upon learning that his dad is black. He tells Lexi that Shelby is with the Pack, setting the synagogue on fire.

Meanwhile, Ursula hears sirens and remembers the night the Gestapo broke into the Reineke's home. Because she and Hildegard reported the Reineke's suspicious lights, the Reinekes, Helen, and Frau Gutemann are taken prisoner. Rabbi Gutemann is shot and killed.

When Lexi reaches the synagogue, it is in flames. Frantic, she runs into the burning building and sees firemen carrying out three bodies. One of them is Shelby, but she is unharmed. Relieved, Lexi cradles Shelby in her arms. When their mother joins them, Lexi welcomes her in a loving embrace.

**Comprehension Questions**

1. Describe the change in Lexi's mom at the beginning of chapter 13.
2. Why do you think Shelby told the Pack about Devon's father?
3. What proves to Lexi that the Pack isn't a family that cares about its members?
4. What event causes young Ursula to understand that the game of being a good German she had been playing was not a game?
5. How does Lexi show she loves Shelby? How does she show she loves her mother?

## Getting Involved with the Story

1. What event has made Mrs. Jordan realize she needs to change? What changes in her do you see in chapter 13?
2. On page 111, you read that "Lexi's pain was too great to keep to herself." In what ways has Lexi shared her pain throughout the book? Why do people express pain as anger and in destructive ways? Is their pain diminished by this? Do you think kids and parents always know how to express their pain in ways that lead to healing, or do they sometimes need to be taught? See if you can help Lexi and her mother share their pain in a healing way. Turn to the scene starting on page 114 in which Lexi and her mother attempt to communicate. Rewrite the scene, showing Lexi and her mother expressing their pain in a way that results in healing and understanding.
3. What difference does Lexi now realize exists between her real family and the Pack?
4. In what way is Ursula drowning in her memories? How can she start swimming to shore?
5. Hildegard believes she is a hero. Would you consider her a hero? Explain. Is there a person in your life who is a hero? Write about this person and what he or she has done. If you don't know a hero, is there a character in a book you've read or in a movie you've seen who is a hero? Write about what makes this character a hero.
6. Do you think Hildegard is right that because of her "heroism" her parents will love her like they do Wolfgang? Can love be earned? Hildegard dislikes her brother because she thinks her parents love him more than they love her. Write a letter in which Hildegard, instead of hiding her feelings of insecurity or taking them out on her brother, tells her parents in a thoughtful and respectful way how she feels.
7. Ursula is horrified by what happens to the Gutemanns. Are you surprised that she didn't know what the consequences of her act of telling would be? What are some reasons that could explain her ignorance?
8. Ursula wonders if "the deadly spider snared yet another victim in its treacherous web" (127). Did it? Explain your answer.

### **What Would You Do?**

1. Imagine you are Lexi. What changes will you make in your life in order to improve it? Be specific.
2. Imagine you are another character from the book and detail the changes you will make in your life.

### **Interdisciplinary Activity**

Which characters in the book are connected and in what ways is each affected by the other? With a group of classmates, make a list of all the characters in the book. Choose students to represent the characters. Have them stand in a fairly large circle. Then give a ball of yarn to the student representing Lexi. Instruct her to hold onto the end of the yarn while she tosses the yarn ball to a student representing a character to whom Lexi was connected. Then "Lexi" should say, "My name is Lexi Jordan. I am connected to (name of character) because . . ." The student holding the ball of yarn then tosses it to a person who identifies herself or himself using the same form as the student representing Lexi. Continue tossing the yarn between connected characters until connections are exhausted. What have you created?

### **Mastery Word List**

You came across the following words as you read chapters 13–15. Find each word on the page listed after it and copy down the phrase or sentence in which the word appears. Next, look up the word in the dictionary. Then write a synonym or phrase that could replace the word in its given context.

- illusion (117)
- disintegrated (117)
- skittering (118)
- undulating (118)
- rampage (123)
- tremulous (123)
- vortex (124)
- hobnailed (125)
- treacherous (127)



**Special Words and Phrases**

neo-Nazi  
Gestapo  
rabbi

## FOLLOW THROUGH

### Thinking Back over the Story

1. With a group, plot the events in Lexi's and Ursula's lives chronologically on two separate time lines. Begin Lexi's time line with her parents' divorce. Begin Ursula's with the day in 1932 when she was five years old. You will have to use your detective skills as you skim through the book. Before beginning, decide how your group will divide up the work. When you have finished plotting the events, add illustrations. Then highlight the major event in each character's life. Be prepared to explain your choices.

2. Ask and then answer "What if . . . ?" questions. When an author writes a book, she does not say that what happens in it is what *should* happen, only that she is presenting one way life for those characters *could* happen. By asking "What if . . . ?" questions, you will change the story's events and the characters' choices and create a new story. The following are two examples of "What if . . . ?" questions: What if Lexi had not met Ursula? What if Ursula had told the police the truth? With your group, ask additional "What if . . . ?" questions. Then answer them. Last, plot a story line of Lexi's life based on the results of this "What if . . . ?" exercise.

3. Before you read *The Spider's Web*, you wrote a list of questions that you would like to ask a neo-Nazi skinhead. Now answer those questions using what you have learned from this book and class discussions.

4. Ursula wonders on page 127, "Had the deadly spider snared yet another victim in its treacherous web?" Draw this treacherous web: Who or what will be in the center? Who or what will be the spider? Who or what will be caught in the web? Don't limit your ideas to the book; include people and events in your own life, throughout history, and in the news.

5. The following literary devices were discussed in conjunction with this book: characterization; foreshadowing; symbolism; figurative language; imagery; dialogue; description; and point of view. Divide into groups and choose one literary device to teach the class. Define the device; then find examples of it in the book. Don't rely solely on the examples discussed in class. Present this device to the class using overhead transparencies. As the teacher, you will want to assess your classmates'

understanding of the device: prepare questions, a quiz, an activity, or some other means of assessment. As you make your presentation, divide the responsibilities among your group members.

6. Create a picture collage that conveys a theme or mood or reveals various ideas or relationships among characters contained in the book. Use a variety of materials including newspapers, magazines, brochures, product labels, stamps, as well as nonprint materials (wire, string, bottlecaps, and so on). In making the collage, consider whether you want the viewer to see each component separately or to derive an overall impression. To have the viewer come away with an overall impression, place the small parts of your collage close together. To convey a sense of the collage's parts, increase the size of the individual components or increase the spaces between them. Experiment with various patterns. Then affix your pieces to a flat surface or a three-dimensional object, such as a beach ball, Styrofoam form, or shoe box.

7. Make a sound collage that conveys a theme or mood or reveals various ideas or relationships among characters contained in the book. Find out ahead of time your school's sound recording capabilities, as you will need to mix and overlay sounds and voices. Then tape-record various sounds (such as traffic, lockers banging, students walking to class, sports events, conversations, people reading aloud materials you have selected, and so on). Use the same suggestions given for making a picture collage when planning this sound collage. Last, mix and overlay the sounds. Play it for the class.

8. Pick three to five favorite quotes from the book. Write a paper about these quotes. Include in your paper the quotes, the context of each quote (who said it, to whom, and when), and their meaning within the book and beyond the book. Last, state your reasons for selecting these particular quotes.

9. Write a letter to the author. Tell her the things you like about the book; things in the book about which you have questions; and things you wish the author would have done differently.

### **Using *The Spider's Web* in Your Own Life**

1. For one week, you and a group of your classmates act as a watchdog group. Keep track of the name-calling, bullying, or other unkind acts kids in your school perpetrate against each other. Do not use students' names; simply record the time, place, and describe the act. When your week is concluded prepare a report of your findings and conclusions. If you find any disturbing patterns, decide on a plan of action. What adults will you involve?
2. Write a biopoem (a poem containing biographical information) about Lexi and Ursula. Your teacher will give you the biopoem form (see Addenda). Now write a biopoem about yourself. Do you have anything in common with Lexi or Ursula?
3. *The Spider's Web* talks about family, enemies, friends, and heroes. Survey your classmates. Ask them for characteristics that, to them, identify someone as family, an enemy, a friend, or a hero. Interpret the results. Do any patterns emerge? Is there a lot of agreement among your classmates?
4. Lexi has learned some important things about relationships that she might want to share with Shelby. Pretend you are Lexi and write a letter telling Shelby what you have learned about relationships with friends and parents.
5. Create a videotaped performance about groups and individuals. With some of your classmates, list the groups that are common in your school, such as jocks, nerds, and so on. Pick three of these groups; then write a script for one member of each group. This script will reveal his or her inner thoughts, feelings, dreams, and fears. Next, you and two classmates represent these three students. Act as you believe they do and hold one prop that represents that person's group. Videotape your performance. Show the videotape to your class. Discuss the similarities and differences among the students represented.



### How to Learn More

1. Read *Behind the Bedroom Wall*, another novel by Laura E. Williams. Find the similarities between the two books. Then write a paper about two or three of those similarities, using examples and quotes from the books.
2. Read one of the books with similar themes to *The Spider's Web*. After reading the book, write up a book report. Then draw a symbol that captures the meaning of the book. Post the book report and the symbol in your classroom or library.
3. Write to peace organizations (see Addenda). Find out about the programs and materials they offer. Review the information the organizations send you. Present the information to your class. Perhaps your class will want to take charge and implement some of the suggestions in the school or community.
4. With classmates, interview your school counselor and principal. Does the school have a policy for identifying and helping troubled students? Review the policy, if your school has one. Can you improve upon it? Perhaps your school does not involve students from the student body in the process of identifying and mediating. If you believe you can make the policy more effective, draw up a formal plan and present it to your principal and counselor.

## ADDENDA FOR PHOTOCOPYING

### FURTHER RESOURCES

#### Fiction

Casey, Maude. *Over the Water*. A girl's rite of passage from conflict with her mother to understanding her mother as a person.

Crutcher, Chris. *Athletic Shorts: Six Short Stories*. Themes such as father-son friction, insecurity, friendship.

Gallo, Donald R., ed. *Join In: Multiethnic Short Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young Adults*. Seventeen stories concerning the problems teenagers of ethnic backgrounds have living in the United States.

Honeycutt, Natali. *Ask Me Something Easy*. A teenager analyzes her fractured family.

Mowry, Jess. *Way Past Cool*. Kids struggle to survive in a violent California ghetto.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Scorpions*. Boy takes over leadership of his older brother's gang.

Rhue, Morton. *The Wave*. Teacher attempts to demonstrate to a history class how it felt to live in Germany under Nazism.

Santiago, Danny. *Famous All over Town*. Boy from the barrios joins a gang.

Williams, Laura E. *Behind the Bedroom Wall*. Girl in Nazi German finds out her parents are hiding a Jewish mother and daughter.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This*. Two girls resist the bigotry in their school and give each other strength to go on.

Wright, Richard. *Rite of Passage*. Boy survives on the street with a violent gang.

## Nonfiction

Able, Deborah. *Hate Groups*. Traces the hate crime phenomenon through American history.

Ayer, Eleanor H. *Parallel Journeys*. Personal narratives by a Jewish woman and a member of the Hitler Youth who grew up a few miles from each other.

Banfield, Susan. *Ethnic Conflicts in Schools*. Examines multicultural issues.

Carnes, Jim. *Us and Them: A History of Intolerance in America*.

Duvall, Lynn. *Respecting Our Differences: A Guide to Getting Along in a Changing World*. Promotes cultural diversity and discussions of stereotypes, immigration, and bigotry.

Ezekiel, Raphael S. *The Racist Mind: Portraits of American Neo-Nazis and Klansmen*. Klansmen and neo-Nazis speak of their lives, revealing the roots of their hatred.

Gay, Kathlyn. *Neo-Nazis: A Growing Threat*. Discusses the history of neo-Nazism.

Greenberg, Keith E. *Out of the Gang*. Revealing look at gang life.

Kranz, Rachel. *Straight Talk about Prejudice*. A look at prejudice and its effects.

Kuklin, Susan. *Speaking Out: Teenagers Take on Sex, Race, and Identity*. An exploration of how prejudice is engendered by fear and fostered by stereotypes.

Oliver, Marilyn Tower. *Gangs: Trouble in the Streets*. Includes

aspects of modern gang life and how a member quits a gang.

Reichel, Sabine. *What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?* Girl faces guilt for the Holocaust, even though those involved came from her parents' generation.

Webb, Margot. *Drugs and Gangs*. Advice on how to avoid gangs and where to go for help.

### **Other Resources**

Teaching Tolerance  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
400 Washington Ave.  
Montgomery, AL 36104  
(334) 264-0286

(Teaching Tolerance can give you information about the following videos and accompanying teaching kits: *The Shadow of Hate*, which examines the history of intolerance in America; and *A Time for Justice*, a 1995 Academy Award winner for best short documentary about the history of the Civil Rights movement.)

The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies  
University of Minnesota  
105 Jones Hall  
27 Pleasant St. SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 624-0256  
[www.chgs.umn.edu](http://www.chgs.umn.edu)

(The Center has speakers who speak at schools; videos; an extensive book collection; art exhibits; and teaching materials, including *Teaching about the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators*.)



## HOW TO WRITE A BIOPOEM

Line 1: The person's first name

Line 2: Four words that describe the person

Line 3: Important relationship (daughter of . . . brother of . . .  
friend of . . .)

Line 4: Loves . . . (three things, ideas, people)

Line 5: Feels . . . (three feelings the person experiences)

Line 6: Needs . . . (three things the person wants or needs)

Line 7: Gives . . . (three things or ideas)

Line 8: Fears . . . (three fears the person experiences)

Line 9: Would like to see . . . (three things the person wants to  
see happen or wants to experience)

Line 10: Resident of . . . (where the person lives)

Line 11: The person's last name (or only name)

## GLOSSARY

### TRANSLATIONS OF FOREIGN TERMINOLOGY

*Ach*: Alas!

*Ach, mein Liebling*: Oh, my darling.

*Barooch ahta Adonoi, Ellohaynoo Melech ha-olawm . . .* :

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of all the universe, who has made us holy through Your commandments, and has commanded us to kindle the lights of the Sabbath.

*chalot*: braided egg breads prepared for the Sabbath

*chulent*: stew

*dummkopf*: idiot, fool

*Frau*: Mrs.

*Fraülein*: Miss

*Führer*: leader or ruler; refers to Hitler in this book

*Guten morgen*: Good morning

*Herr*: Mr.

*Ich liebe dich*: I love you.

*Jungmädel*: Nazi youth group for girls

*Sieg Heil*: Hail Hitler

*Shabot*: Sabbath

*Shalom Aliechen*: Peace be with you.

## UNFAMILIAR WORDS AND PHRASES

**Aryan:** used in Nazism to designate a supposed master race of non-Jewish Caucasians

**blitzkrieg:** literally, "lightning war"; a violent surprise offensive by massed air forces and mechanized ground forces

**Eishet Chail:** a song in Hebrew that is sung during the Sabbath in honor of the mother of the house

**Fatherland:** in this book, refers to Germany

**Gentile:** someone who is not Jewish

**Gestapo:** German state police force

**howitzer:** a short cannon used to fire projectiles

**Jewess:** a Jewish girl or woman—sometimes taken to be offensive

**master race:** a people held to be racially superior and hence fitted to rule and enslave other peoples

**neo-Nazi:** "new" Nazi; a member of a group that espouses the programs and policies of Hitler's Nazis

**oi:** a label for an offshoot of punk music that was popularized in Great Britain in the late 1970s; also a common Yiddish expression of consternation, as in *Oi Vay!*

**rabbi:** the official leader of a Jewish congregation

**Sabbath:** period of religious observation by Jews that starts at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday

**swastika:** the official emblem of the Nazi Party; a symbol of anti-Semitism or of Nazism

**synagogue:** Jewish place of worship

**Torah:** the body of wisdom and law contained in Jewish scripture; the five books of Moses

**Treaty of Versailles:** post-World War I treaty which required Germany to pay for the majority of war reparations costs and was designed to prevent Germany from becoming a potent military power again; signed reluctantly by Germany in the Palace of Versailles, France, in 1919

**yarmulke:** a skullcap worn by Orthodox and Conservative Jewish males in the synagogue and the home

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823 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017  
(212) 490-2525

Center for Peace  
118-C E. Main St.  
Carrboro, NC 27510  
(919) 929-9821

Children's Creative Response to Conflict Program (CCRC)  
521 N. Broadway  
Box 271  
Nyack, NY 10960  
(914) 353-1796

Consortium on Peace Research, Education, and Development  
(COPRED)  
c/o Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
(703) 993-2405

COPRED Students Peace Working Group  
4400 University Dr.  
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Institute for Peace and Justice  
4144 Lindell Blvd., #408  
St. Louis, MO 63108  
(314) 533-4445

Simon Wiesenthal Center  
9760 W. Pico Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90035-4792  
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