



FABRIC OF SURVIVAL STUDENT QUESTIONS

Name:
Teacher:

Class:
Date:

THE EARLY DAYS (PICTURES 1-6)

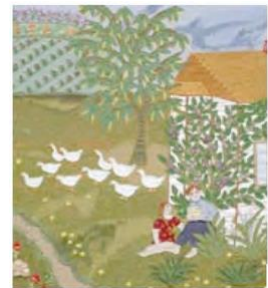


Picture 1

Describe Esther's village. What kind of place did Esther grow up in? What did people do for work?

What impressions do you have of Esther's life as a child?

What can you learn about Esther's family from her pictures? How did Esther feel about her family? How are these relationships and feelings described in Esther's pictures? How do these compare to your own memories of your family life?



Picture 3



Picture 6

What role did religion play in Esther's life? How can you tell?

THE WAR ARRIVES (PICTURES 7- 16)



Picture 7

What happened to the Jews when the Germans first came to the village? What happened as time passed?



Picture 10



Picture 9

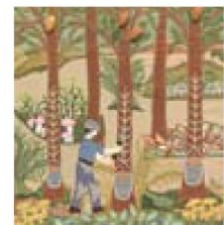
How did Esther and her parents react to these events?



Picture 8



Picture 12



Picture 13

GOODBYE MY CHILDREN, MAYBE YOU WILL LIVE: OCTOBER 15
(PICTURES 17 -20)

On the day Esther and her sister said goodbye to their parents, their mother Rachel packed sacks with bread and cheese, and each took potato-digging tools, pictured alongside their sacks in picture 17. Why do you think they took them?



Picture 17



Picture 18

In pictures 17 and 18, Esther is shown leaving her family from two different perspectives. Esther said that this was the most difficult scene for her to recreate, yet she came back to it again. How are these pictures different?

What sorts of feelings do you think Esther had on this day? Are there objects or colors that convey these feelings?



Picture 19



Picture 20

ON THEIR OWN (PICTURES 2 1-26)

The scenes depicted in picture 21 (only a portion shown here) take place over several days. What happens to Esther and her sister over this period of time? Describe the different scenes taking place in this picture.



Picture 21

Coming out from the woods and onto the open road, in picture 22, Esther sees a Gestapo barracks and two German soldiers in her path. She has to make a choice: to keep going or to turn back and hide in the woods. Why does she decide to keep going and what did she have to do to pass safely?

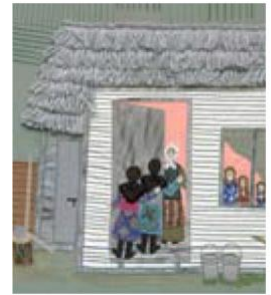


Picture 22



Picture 23

In pictures 23 and 24, Esther shows herself and her sister Mania in hiding. How does she depict these places, and how do you think she feels in them?



Picture 24

Picture 26 depicts a dream in which Esther's mother takes her by the hand, pulling her along in flight from a falling sky. Why do you think Esther had this dream? Can we tell from the picture that this is a dream?



Picture 26

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT (PICTURES 27-29)



Picture 27

All of Esther's pictures reveal a strong sense of her environment and season. In picture 27, what techniques does Esther use to clearly show us that this scene takes place in the winter?

In picture 27, Esther shows a Nazi soldier coming to her aid. How do you think she felt when she first saw him at the well? How do you think she felt after he came to her aid? Might Esther have felt differently about him after he came to her aid? Did this event "humanize" the soldier in some way?



Picture 27



Picture 28

Who is protecting Esther in pictures 28 and 29?



Picture 29

What does it mean to say that Esther and Mania have been "hiding in plain sight?"

LIBERATION AND A NEW LIFE

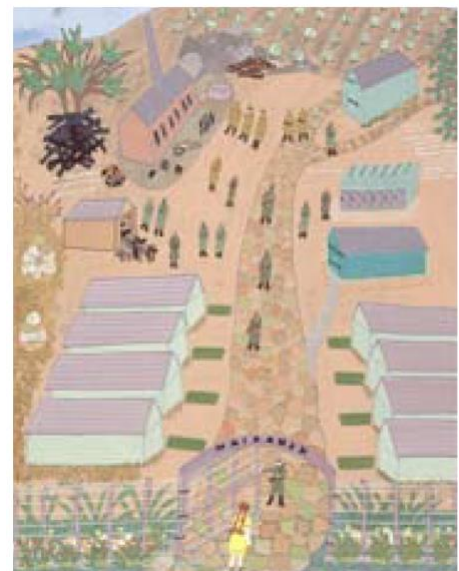
(PICTURES 30 -36)



Picture 30

As the Russians - Esther's liberators - pass through the village of Grabowka, in picture 30, what do you think are the different feelings that Esther is experiencing? And what do you think are the choices Esther now has for where she could go?

The Maidanek (pronounced My-don-ek) concentration camp, recently liberated by the Russian army, was the place where neighbors believed that the Jews of Esther's town had been taken. Take a moment to look carefully at the various places and events that Esther highlighted in picture 31. What did Esther see when she arrived at Maidanek, and how do you think it changed her?



Picture 31



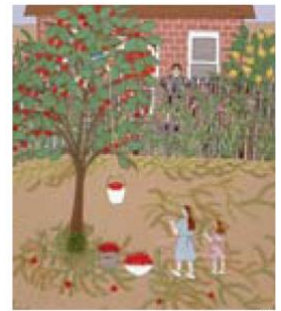
Picture 32

When Esther joined the army, she became one of the liberators shown in picture 32. Although triumphant, the Russian/Polish army still faced many dangers. Why do you think Esther joined, despite this continuing danger? How are the mixed feelings of danger and liberation expressed in this picture?



Picture 33

In pictures 33 and 34, Esther describes her arrival and early years in America, where she has established a new life. Who has she become? What feelings about this new life and identity do these pictures convey?

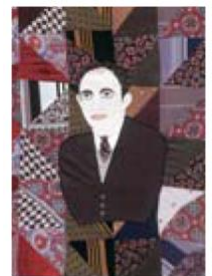


Picture 34



Picture 36

Why do you think that the last two pictures shown (35 and 36) are portraits of Esther's family? What kinds of feelings do these pictures express, and how do they relate to the emotions expressed in other pictures?



Picture 35

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the different groups of people represented in Esther's pictures? How do we know? Does everyone get along? Why do you think that?



Picture 24

How does Esther depict Nazis in her pictures? How does she depict Poles?

When did Esther reveal her identity? When did she hide it?

What aspects of Esther's personality helped her to survive? Where are these aspects shown? Where do you think these traits came from?

Which moments in Esther's story do you think foreshadow later choices in which Esther showed these personality traits?

How did Esther's parents help their children to survive?

Esther's natural environment is a major element throughout her works. In some cases, it provides protection. In other cases, the environment provides clues or signs. Select several pictures in which the natural environment plays an important role in protecting Esther, or in guiding the story, and describe how Esther shows this.