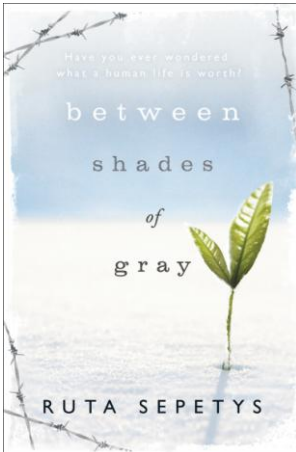


TALKING POINTS

CILIP Carnegie Medal Shortlist 2012



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards



Between Shades of Gray by Ruta Sepetys

HISTORY MADE REAL

The story of Lina Vilkas and her family, deported from Lithuania in 1941 and sentenced to forced labour in Siberia and later the Arctic, is based on the stories of Lithuanians who survived the same experience. How does Ruta Sepetys make a little known period in history real to the reader?

FIND OUT ABOUT THE KEY CHARACTERS

The key group of deportees stays together for much of the journey. How does Ruta Sepetys give us such a strong impression of their characters?

Lina

Lina was about to go to art school when she was deported at 15. She did not return for 12 years.

- List all the ways in which being an artist help Lina survive.
- What do you need to be a visual artist (including materials) and how does Lina get what she needs?

FIND OUT MORE: Read Lina's references to the painter Edvard Munch and find images of his paintings using reference books and the internet. Make a display that shows how Lina was inspired by his works.

Elena, Lina's mother

- Why does Elena smash the family's best china on the night the family are deported?
- Why does she pretend she doesn't know her cousin Regina?
- Why does she burn family photos in the fireplace in the weeks before deportation?
- What are some of the specific things she does to save her children and others at various points during their ordeal?
- How does her ability to speak Russian help the group?
- How does her intelligence help her family and how does it put them in danger?
- Elena is clearly a special person to her community of fellow inmates. Why is this?

Jonas, Lina's brother

His mother calls him 'My sweet Jonas' and manages to keep him with the family although males and females were mostly separated in deportation.

- Younger than Lina, Jonas grows up in captivity. How does this make his experience different to hers?
- How do Elena and Lina protect Jonas at the start of their ordeal?
- How does Jonas show that he is becoming an adult?



JOIN THE DEBATE
www.ckg.org.uk/shadowing

Kostas, Lina's father

We mostly learn about Lina's father from her memories of him. What kind of man is he?

Andrius Aryvdas

Lina and Andrius meet in terrible circumstances. How is the relationship between them none the less normal, like it would have been if they had met back home?

- How does Andrius protect Lina?
- What does Lina learn about Andrius as the novel progresses and how do her feelings for him change?

Mrs Aryvdas

What do we learn about Mrs Aryvdas from her behaviour on the journey to Siberia?

How does she survive once there?

What opinions do the other prisoners have of her and do you agree with them?

Survival spirit

What character traits do Lina, Jonas, and Andrius have that help them survive their ordeal when others do not?

- How are these characters similar to each other?
- How are they different?
- How does Lina's account survive and how do we know what happened to her and her family?

JOURNEY INTO HELL

Being held prisoner on the train to Siberia, brings out the best and worst in the deportees, most of whom do not know each other before they are arrested. What do we learn about:

- The teacher, Miss Grybas
- The librarian, Mrs Rimas
- The grouchy woman
- The bald man, Mr Stalas
- The grey-haired man, Mr Lucas?

Are the first impressions we get of these people accurate?

Does Mr Stalas always behave in the same way? How does he show kindness to Lina's family? How does Lina feel about him by the end of the novel?

FRIENDS WITH THE ENEMY

What do we learn that we don't expect about

- Komorov, the Siberian camp commander
- Kretzsky, the guard

How does Lina feel about them by the end of the novel?



A FORMER LIFE

- What is different about the passages of text in italic?
- What do they tell us about the kind of person Lina was before she was deported?
- What were the things that meant the most to her in her past life?
- Why does she want to send a letter to her cousin Joana?
- Does Lina manage to keep anything of her former life throughout her terrible experiences?
- How do the deported Lithuanians show that they remember their country?

FIND OUT MORE: Research the customs and special festivals that the Lithuanians try to observe in captivity.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The story of the Soviet occupation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and the deportation programme that followed, part of Stalin's reign of terror, is one of the secrets of the Second World War. Those who survived and managed to return to the Baltic countries up to 15 years later found they had lost their homes and were forbidden to speak about their ordeal. Details of their suffering has only emerged since the Baltic countries regained independence in 1991.

FIND OUT MORE: Use the internet and reference books, including the book's website www.betweenshadesofgray.com to gather information about the background to Lina's story. Display your findings.

READ ON: The Diary of Anne Frank is another and very different account of a teenage girl's life in captivity during the Second World War, and compare the styles of writing of the two books. What is similar about them and what is different?

