

QAR Strategy

The Devil's Arithmetic

1990 Duffin Edition

Purpose – The QAR strategy is designed to help students become aware of four different levels of questioning and the importance of “tangling with the text.” As they practice the different strategies necessary to answer the different levels of questions, they will also gain experience in finding different kinds of information in the text.

Rationale - The QAR strategy can be used to check for comprehension at various points throughout the novel. Due to the relatively short length of this novel, this specific QAR strategy lends itself well to a broader overview of the book. This strategy could be used to help students review the book as a whole prior to a more formal assessment of their understanding of it. Also, this questioning strategy helps students practice processing information on varying levels. This can help prepare them to approach information in different ways, as they will be able to recognize information that is presented explicitly, information that requires more analysis in order to create meaning, and information that can be applied and extended to their own lives.

Directions –

Step One: Pass out copies of the chart below to each student. You can also put a large poster version of the chart in the front of the room, or put a copy of the chart on the overhead projector for students to refer to throughout the activity.

Step Two: Since students have finished the book, a great way to review what they have read would be to question on passages throughout the text. Pass out a sheet with selected passages on them and model by asking a different level of question on each. For example:

1. Type of Question: Think and Search

(Page 15) “*Why indeed*, Hannah wondered. *Since they’re* [the bitter herbs] *so disgusting. Rosemary gets to eat jelly beans and I get to eat horseradish.* ‘It isn’t fair!’ She realized suddenly that she’d spoken the last words out loud and everyone had heard.”

Question: What Holiday, coinciding with Passover, does Hannah wish she could celebrate like Rosemary?

Answer: Easter

2. Type of Question: The Author and You

(Page 137) ‘If she [the *blokova*] loses control of her *zugangi*, she will be a two-fingered whatever-you-call-her,’ said Rivka, smiling.

'What do you mean?' Hannah and Shifre asked together.

'How do you think she lost those other fingers?'

Hannah mused. 'I thought maybe she'd been born that way.'

Holding up her own hand and wriggling the fingers, Rivka pointed to one. "She lost control and a whole group of *zugangi* rioted. That was right before I got here. They were sent through Lilith's Cave and she lost one finger. Then she lost control and six *zugangi* hanged themselves one night, my aunt Sarah among them. Aunt Sarah had been sick for a long time and could no longer disguise it. She knew she was to be sent to the hospital. Everyone really sick in the hospital goes up the stack. So she said to my mother, "I will do the choosing, not them. God will understand."
' Rivka smiled. 'A second finger. I wish Aunt Sarah could have seen the *blokova's* face in the morning. When they took the finger.'"

Question: Are we supposed to feel sorry for the *blokova* after learning this?

Answer: Could be either – students could emphasize that the *blokova* is also victimized by the Nazis and is trying to preserve her own life, or could agree with Rivka, recognizing that other concentration camp prisoners value things (such as Aunt Sarah valuing control over her own fate) more than life.

3. Type of Question: On your own

(Page 163) "She looked up at Eva, who was staring at her. 'Oh! Your brother. Grandpa Will. That must have been him carrying Fayge. So that's why...'"

Question: In this passage, we can see how Hannah's experience with and increased knowledge of the Holocaust help her better understand her grandfather's behavior. Think of an older relative or friend. What kind of events would you need to know more about to better understand them?

Answer: Very open-ended on this one. Have an example ready.

4. Type of Question: Right there.

(page 28) "Nothing they had said seemed at all funny, but that she'd understood them at all seemed miraculous. For the more they talked, the more she realized they were *not* talking in English. They were speaking Yiddish. And yet she could understand it, every word. Perhaps of all the strange things in the dream, this was the strangest."

Question: What does Hannah think might be the strangest thing about the "dream?"

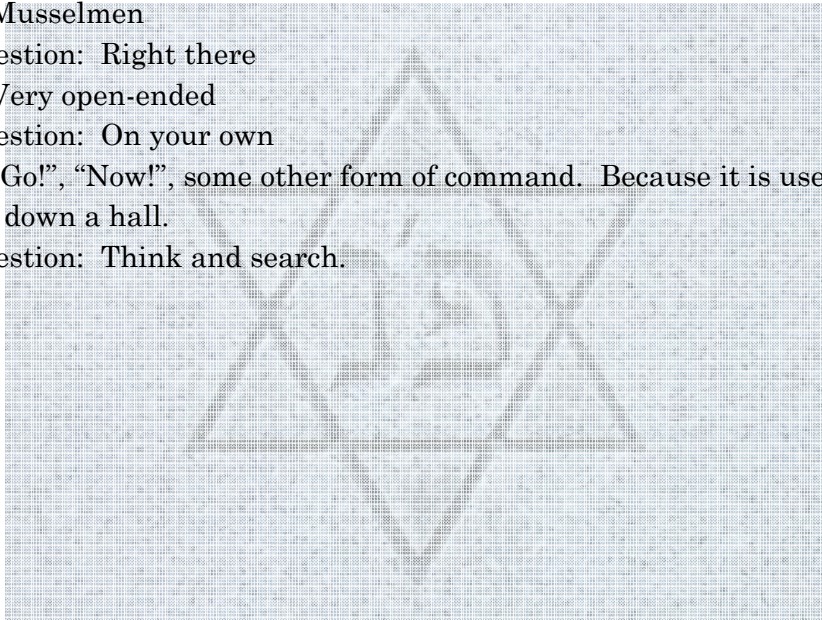
Answer: That she can understand Yiddish

Step Three: Distribute worksheet, and have students work on it individually or in small groups. Monitor their progress.

Step Four: Ask students to review the novel and find two passages on which to write two questions (one “Right There” or “Think and Search”, and one “The Author and You” or “On Your Own”. Have them turn in their questions for participation points, and choose some of these questions to appear on the unit assessment.

Worksheet Key

1. Answer: Can vary – just make sure it is supported well.
Type of question: The Author and You.
2. Answer: Nazi soldiers – they can tell because of the description of the uniform and surrounding information from the text/background historical knowledge.
Type of question: Think and search.
3. Answer: Musselmen
Type of question: Right there
4. Answer: Very open-ended
Type of question: On your own
5. Answer: “Go!”, “Now!”, some other form of command. Because it is used to tell them to go down a hall.
Type of question: Think and search.



Name: _____

Period: _____

QAR Worksheet for *The Devil's Arithmetic*

1. “‘Monsters!’ Hannah said suddenly. ‘Gitl is right. We are all monsters.

‘We are the victims.’ Rivka said. ‘*They* are the monsters.’

‘We are all monsters,’ Hannah said, ‘because we are letting it happen.’ She said it not as if she believed it but as if she were repeating something she had heard.

‘God is letting it happen,’ Rivka said. ‘But there is a reason. We cannot see it yet. Like the binding of Isaac. My father always said that the universe is a great circle and we – we only see a small piece of the arc. God is no monster, whatever you think now. There is a reason.’” (page 141-142)

Question: Are we supposed to see Rivka, Hannah, and the other Jews as monsters for letting such horrible things happen? Why or why not?

Type of question _____

2. “Just then the door of the first car opened and a man in a black uniform with high black boots stepped out. He turned and opened the car’s back door. Another man, similarly dressed, unfolded himself from the seat. The medals on his chest caught the light from the spring sun, sending undecipherable signals across the market to them.” (page 62)

Question: Who are the men getting out of the cars? How do you know?

Type of question _____

3. “Sometimes people get like that. They stop listening. They stop seeing. It is as if they decide that life is not worth fighting for. We call them *musselmen*. It is sad. Very sad. I will be sorry if your friend chooses that, but if she does, I will let her. And you must let her as well.” (page 114)

Question: What do they call people who decide “that life is not worth fighting for”?

Type of question: _____

4. “Hannah tried to speak again, but this time Gitl’s hand covered her entire mouth. ‘Be still, child,’ Gitl whispered. ‘Whatever your objections, be still. This is not one of your stories that ends happy-ever-after. There are not imaginary bullets in those guns. Listen to the rabbi. He is right to calm us. If we go quietly, no harm will come.’” (page 70)

Question: This passage shows how no one believes Hannah when she tries to warn them about where the Nazis are really taking them. What would you have done in Hannah’s situation? The same thing? Something different?

Type of question: _____

5. “Good,’ the woman said, stuffing the ribbons into a pocket in her dress. ‘And now you will all go in there.’ She pointed down a narrow hall. ‘*Schnell*. It is a most important word that you should learn. Whether I say it or the Germans say it, it is to be obeyed. *Schnell!*’”

Question: What does “schnell” most likely mean? Why do you think so?

Type of question: _____

4 Kinds of Questions Chart

"Right There"



The answers to these questions are found stated explicitly in the text.

"Think and Search"



The answers to these questions can be implied from the text, using information in the text as clues.

"The Author and You"



Answers to these questions are not found in the text. Rather, they are found by considering the broader context of the novel. What has the author already said? What do you think his or her point is?

"On Your Own"



Answers to these questions are also not found in the text. Rather, you must consider the information you have been given and form your own opinion based on what you know.