



Teachers' Notes
written by Andrea Blake

morris gleitzman

ONCE by Morris Gleitzman

Introduction

Once is an amazing and harrowing story. It is 1942 and Felix begins his story from an orphanage – where he thinks his parents have placed him until they sort out their ‘troubles’. Felix knows *‘things got difficult for Jewish booksellers’* but is not sure why. One thing he is certain of is that he will return to his lovely old life one day, with his books and his parents - once they come for him or once he finds them. But what Felix begins to see and experience after making his escape challenges his youthful naiveté and brings an end to his innocence in the most brutal of ways. The novel follows Felix on his quest to find his parents and his search for understanding as he comes face to face with death and evil. While *‘Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Pope, Father Ludwik and Adolf Hitler’* may let him down as protectors and sources of hope, Felix’s faith in himself and others rarely diminishes. Throughout the novel, Felix’s talents as a story teller highlight the humour, courage and strength this character draws on to help himself and support those around him. Herded along the road to a dreaded destination, hiding in a cellar with the heroic Barney, suffocating in a crowded boxcar, distracting sad orphans or a cranky Nazi with a toothache, Felix is a constant reminder of the power of imagination. Books, stories and Felix’s own special notebook are integral to his life and serve as symbolic links in many parts of Morris Gleitzman’s novel. During his journey, Felix forms an intense friendship with Zelda, a young girl he rescues in a devastating scene when her parents have been killed. He too is rescued at a later stage by Barney, a mysterious adult whom he comes to know and appreciate very deeply. Many times in the novel it is overwhelming to imagine the impact and implications of events Felix has lived through. Towards the end of the novel - as Felix comes up with yet another scheme to alleviate the suffering of those around him – this child has now become aware of Death camps, hatred towards the Jews, the role of Adolf Hitler, enforced labour and separation of families, and seen first-hand many other acts of violence and oppression. The reader is saved from succumbing to despair and depression by the resilience of Felix, even though we do not know what his escape from the terrible train will bring. But he is focused on how “lucky” he is – *‘...everybody deserves to*

have something good in their life. At least once. I have. More than once'. Truly amazing.

Using this novel in the classroom

As the author, Morris Gleitzman himself expresses the impossibility of coming to terms with the Holocaust – *'This story is my imagination trying to grasp the unimaginable'*.

So how are we to deal with the issues raised by reading *Once* in our classrooms?

Guidelines and recommendations

Handled with sensitivity and care, there is enormous potential for using this novel as part of your Literacy Program. The Teachers' Notes which follow have been devised in accordance with guidelines and recommendations from valuable resources designed for Educators dealing with the Holocaust in a classroom learning situation. These references are provided below and it is strongly recommended that you read through them before starting work on *Once*. They are imperative if you plan to go beyond Felix's story and conduct a more in-depth analysis with older students, or if you intend to use the novel as part of a unit of study around the Holocaust (e.g.: looking into historical and cultural context, political, social and ethical issues, racial, religious and moral implications etc).

Your Classroom Situation

Consider your goals in using this book. An awareness of the following will determine the depth to which you can explore emerging issues and the value of further research:

- the age and level of your students (e.g.: upper primary. Middle school)
- the emotional and intellectual maturity of readers
- the knowledge and experience students may already have
- the appropriateness of providing further information or other materials.

Draw on Themes

There are many major themes which emerge from *Once* which offer enormous opportunity for reflection and discussion (such as Tolerance, Human Rights, Racism, Survival, Morality).

- Investigate those highlighted in the "Novel Analysis" section
- Monitor students' responses in discussion & elicit their ideas about important themes
- Create a supportive and considerate environment in which students can feel free to express their emotions and ask questions in response to the themes within this story.

Enlist support

The novel is likely to raise many difficult issues and questions so you may wish to enlist support of parents, other teachers or community members where appropriate.

A recurring theme in all guidelines and information regarding teaching about the holocaust is the purpose or reason for doing so: *'...for the sake of the future, as well as to remember the past, we want to teach children about it, in the hope that in remembering horror and in searching for the wisdom to understand it, we may assure that it will not happen again'* (Claire Rudin – Introductory Section to Children's Books about the Holocaust. Ref no.1).

Valuable references:

1. Holocaust Teacher Resource Centre
www.holocaust-trc.org/chldbook.htm
2. "Coming to grips with teaching the holocaust" by Mark Weitzman, Adapted from Momentum: Journal of the National Catholic Educational Association, February, 1988
c. 2002-2005 Simon Wiesenthal Centre, Museum of Tolerance
<http://teachers.museumoftolerance.com/content/markweitz.htm>
3. Australian Memories of the Holocaust
www.holocaust.com.au/jn/teachers/t_young.htm
4. Resource book for educators – United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
<http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/>

Using the Teachers' Notes

Read the novel together. Unless working with much older students (e.g.: upper middle or secondary), the best approach is to have all students complete the book before beginning any of the activities. This may help to avoid problems if students are engaged in individual or small group activities.

A) Novel Analysis – chapter by chapter review and investigation. Key themes for discussion and purposeful reflections are suggested to promote sharing of thoughts and responses.

B) Bloom's Taxonomy grid - a selection of tasks designed to promote critical and analytical thinking skills (at lower, middle and higher levels), critical and analytical thinking, and tap into emotional, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence.

C) Focus on Felix – commentary on the central character and suggested ideas for analyzing and evaluating through Character Study.

D) Follow Up activities to Dedication (novel's start) **and Author's Letter** (novel's end).

A) Novel Analysis

Morris Gleitzman cleverly defines each chapter with a sentence beginning ‘Once...’ (the author’s intention in doing this is worth discussing in itself.) But for the ease of this following activity, Chapter and page numbers have been allotted. The Novel Analysis is best conducted when everyone has had the opportunity to complete *Once*. Work in small groups, set as individual tasks, or delegate to pairs then share outcomes as a whole class. Encourage students to present responses in an appropriate product of their choice – e.g.: written work, art, drama, music, technology-generated etc.

Assign specific steps or set the whole sequence of tasks 1 - 6.

1. Read aloud the opening sentence of your given chapter. (There may be an additional sentence or two you think important to include.)
2. Identify the context and explain the meaning of the sentence.
3. Review and outline what happens in this chapter.
4. Discuss the set questions and talk about any other issues which emerge.
5. Explore the given theme. This is open to interpretation so allow each group member to comment according to the links he/she draws with the story.
6. Reflection: this question asks you to reflect on something inspired by that particular chapter. You are asked to reflect and analyze this, not in isolation but with the whole story in mind. Awareness of connections may enable a fresh perspective or interpretation of events.

Consider how you will share or present your responses to the larger group (if required).

Chapter One. p.1

‘Once I was living in an orphanage in the mountains and I shouldn’t have been and I almost caused a riot.’

1. Describe your first impressions of Felix, Mother Minka and one other character introduced in the opening chapter (consider the traits they appear to possess and your response to meeting them).
2. What is the significance of the carrot and what are Felix’s plans for it?

Theme: Living with others

Reflection: Hopes and Dreams. What sustains Felix? What “shelters” him at this point compared with mid-way through the story or at the conclusion of the novel?

Chapter Two. p.9

‘Once I stayed awake all night, waiting for Mum and Dad to arrive.’

1. What memories and physical evidence does Felix have of his parents? What beliefs does Felix hold about what will happen?
2. Explain the importance of Felix’s notebook. Identify 4 things this notebook symbolizes.

Theme: Being displaced

Reflection: The book burning. What did Felix “think” the men in armbands were doing? What were they actually doing and why?

Chapter Three. p.17

‘Once I saw a customer, years ago, damaging books in Mum and Dad’s shop. Tearing pages out. Screwing them up. Shouting things I couldn’t understand.’

1. Identify 2 things that unsettle Felix and explain how his thinking starts to change.
2. Felix has plans to help his Mum and Dad. What are they and what motivates him to take action?

Theme: Kindness

Reflection: On the “truth”. How might knowing the truth (about what could have happened to his parents) have made a difference to Felix at this point? Recall some moments when the truth begins to dawn on him or he suspects his impressions may be false. At the end of the novel, what do you imagine he thinks the truth really is?

Chapter Four. p.27

‘Once I escaped from an orphanage in the mountains and I didn’t have to do any of the things you do in escape stories.’

1. List some of the reasons Felix considers himself ‘lucky’ (p.30)? List things you think he could complain about.
2. What indications are there – recognized or missed by Felix - that something is terribly wrong? What explanations does Felix come up with to make sense of things?

Theme: Keeping the Faith

Reflection: Making sense of the inexplicable. Why would the “truth” be the furthest thing from Felix’s mind given what he is witnessing? Is it a blessing or a curse for him to be able to explain everything or reason an acceptable outcome?

Chapter Five. p.38

‘Once I walked all night and all the next day except for a short sleep in a forest and all night again and then I was home.’

1. Contrast Felix’s dreams with the reality of what he discovers when he makes it home.
2. Describe the range of emotions he experiences. Analyse emotions he observes in other people encountered at this point in the story. How would you classify them? (e.g.: negative, strong, fleeting...)

Theme: Hope or Disappointment

Reflection: Help in unexpected places. Why are Mr.Kopek’s actions meaningful? Why do you think he chose to do what he did and how did it help Felix? What other unexpected sources of assistance did Felix encounter on his journey?

Chapter Six. p.49

'Once I walked as fast as I could towards the city to find Mum and Dad and I didn't let anything stop me. Not until the fire.'

1. What changes have taken place in Felix (e.g.: more cautious, fearful of Nazis) and how do they influence his actions?
2. How does Felix control his anxiety and make use of his story telling ability?

Theme: Instinct or Courage

Reflection: Felix's choices. Do you think Felix did the right thing by a) taking Zelda and b) not telling her the truth about her parents at that point? What other choices did he make for Zelda's benefit?

Chapter Seven. p.57

'Once I woke up and I was at home in bed. Dad was reading me a story about a boy who got left in an orphanage. Mum came in with some carrot soup. They both promised they'd never leave me anywhere. We hugged and hugged.'

1. What is the significance of the following: the armbands? Felix's predictions about the future?
2. How does Felix answer his own question – *'Why would the Nazis make people suffer like this just for the sake of some books?'* (p.64) Why is this a turning point?

Theme: Loss

Reflection: Displacement. Think about the many things the people forced to travel on the road had to abandon. Apart from material possessions, what else would they have had to leave behind? (e.g.: other people, businesses, family heirlooms, pets, freedom, wealth etc...) What could they bring with them? (e.g.: spiritual beliefs, knowledge, loved ones etc...)

Chapter Eight. p.66

'Once I spent about 6 hours telling stories to Zelda, to keep her spirits up, to keep my spirits up, to keep our legs moving as we trudge through the rain towards the city.'

1. Why does Felix go from 6 hours of story telling to keeping Zelda's spirits up, to the point where he suddenly hasn't *'got any more stories'* (p73)?
2. Describe the toll such a journey takes on Felix and Zelda – physically and emotionally. How is it they manage to survive?

Theme: Oppression (or it may be better to discuss feelings/questions emerging from this chapter).

Reflection: On what existed before. Felix refers to *'Dad's big book about two thousand years of Jewish history'* (p.71). Share what you know or find out more about the rich history and culture of the Jewish community before the events of this novel.

Chapter Nine. p.74

'Once I lay in the street in tears because the Nazis are everywhere and no grown-ups can protect kids from them, not Mum and Dad, not Mother Minka, not Father Ludwik, not God, not Jesus, not the Virgin Mary, not the Pope, not Adolf Hitler.'

1. Explain what Barney is doing. What sort of a person do you think he is? What does he represent?
2. What impact does the realization that no-one can protect the children have on Felix? How does this affect his belief in the power of stories?

Theme: "Resistance". Discussion on this theme could include talk about the Resistance Movement itself but should also focus on physical and spiritual, emotional and cultural "resistance" in a situation such as the characters in this novel endured.

Reflection: Heroism. Barney became something of a hero for Felix and the other children. Think about Barney's actions and words through the course of the novel. Identify what was "heroic" about his behaviour and the "goodness" of human beings it reflects.

* You could further this discussion by researching stories of "heroism" in the time of the Holocaust – not just that of the very well-known figures, but also of quiet survivors & other children like Felix who maintained their hope in the face of utter desolation. (see website references)

Chapter Ten. p.83

'Once I was living in a cellar in a Nazi city with seven other kids when I shouldn't have been.'

1. Use an example of Felix's behaviour or "self-talk" to illustrate his unusual degree of maturity and self-awareness. Explain your reasoning.
2. What story "saved his life" and what connections has he finally made?

Theme: Hiding

Reflection: Wishes. Finding his parents is a driving force for Felix. Does his hope ever fade as his journey continues? What do the other children wish for in this chapter? Why do you think these things are so important to them?

Chapter Eleven. p.90

'Once I escaped from an underground hiding place by telling a story. It was a bit exaggerated. It was a bit fanciful. It was my imagination getting a bit carried away.'

1. What lengths does Felix go to when trying to "escape"? How does Barney handle it?
2. What does Felix discover about Barney and how does Barney enlist Felix's help?

Theme: Power – consider ethical and unethical uses as well as aspects such as "bargaining" power, personal strength, the power of stories and of relationships.

Reflection: On the Nazi dental patient (p.100). Review p.102 -103, and p.137 – 139. Felix is able to hand over the promised story. What do his actions in the surgery and

at this later stage say about Felix's "faith" in people? Why does he hope for in spite of all he has seen of the Nazi soldiers?

Chapter Twelve. p.102

'Once a dentist stopped me from asking a Nazi officer about my parents and I was really mad at him.'

1. Why did Barney stop Felix from asking about his parents? Why do he and Felix decide Zelda needs to know the truth?
2. Describe the range of reactions the children are showing a result of the traumas each has suffered. How do you feel about the stories shared by the children?

Theme: Relationships – consider the factors which create and nurture bonds between people in the context of this novel, e.g.: dependence, common experience, adversity, frailty, leadership.

Reflection: Individual experiences. Think about the different experiences of the seven other children. Discuss why generalizations cannot be made about experiences of people as a "group" (e.g.: Jews, Victims, Perpetrators) or within a "group" (based on age, race, culture, beliefs etc).

Chapter Thirteen. p.111

'Once I told Zelda a story that made her cry, so I lay on her sack with her for hours and hours until she fell asleep.'

1. Analyse Barney's gesture of giving Felix new boots. What does he mean by what he says (p.112) to Felix? What other "good things" does Felix seem to think he's got and what can you see (e.g.: his hope and optimism etc) in him that is good?
2. Felix makes a terrible discovery in this chapter and Barney is forced to tell him some awful truths about what is going on. What is Felix torn between as he tries to take it all in?

Theme: Trust

Reflection: What it means to "save" another. Barney takes something from his surgery. What do you think is going through his mind? Talk about the many ways in which people "saved" each other throughout the novel? (e.g.: physical rescue, telling stories, finding food, explaining the truth etc...)

Chapter Fourteen. p.121

'Once I loved stories and now I hate them.'

1. Describe Felix's state of mind as this chapter opens. Describe your own feelings as you read about his close shaves and what he discovers upon returning to his hideout.
2. The importance of books is emphasized again in this chapter. Felix's favourite gets him into terrible danger but other books "save" him. What do books symbolize and mean for Felix?

Theme: Moral Choices

Reflection: Making judgments. Felix thinks others might wonder – *‘If Zelda’s Dad’s a Nazi, does she deserve carrot soup and aspirin?’* (p.130). Despite his own experience of Nazis, his knowledge of Zelda and what she has been through determines his decision. What are other people in the novel basing their judgments on? Can you suggest what might be influencing them? (e.g.: fear, ignorance, selected information etc...)

* Older students looking at the broader picture could reflect on issues such as tolerance and respect for the rights of others - how Nazi propaganda, prejudice and social pressure (among other things) helped to create a wave of racist fear and repulsion, culminating in genocide.

Chapter Fifteen. p.132

‘Once the Nazis found our cellar. They dragged us all out and made us walk through the ghetto while they pointed guns at us.’

1. Barney and Zelda wouldn’t go. Why not? Think of 3 or more reasons.
2. What is important to Felix as they head to the Railway station? What is important to the others as they are tossed aboard the train?

Theme: Separation

Reflection: Resilience – *‘You know how when things are really bad and you feel like curling up and hiding but instead you take deep breaths and the air reaches your brain and helps you think better?’* (p.134). There are many examples of the strategies Felix uses to keep focusing on what is good or hopeful. Find further evidence of Felix’s resilience and discuss its impact on the situation and the people around him. Why is it so valuable?

Chapter Sixteen. p.141

‘Once I went on my first train journey, but I wouldn’t call it exciting, I’d call it painful and miserable.’

1. Once again, a book becomes a “saviour” of sorts. Explain how. What is the significance of the fact that Felix is willing to use - and virtually lose -his notebook?
2. What choice and possible outcomes does the hole in the carriage create for the people inside?

Theme: Sacrifice

Reflection: An incredible bond. *‘And Barney. Now I’ve got my arms around him, I don’t ever want to let go’* (p.147). Reflect on what Barney and Felix have been through together. How did they become friends, how was the relationship tested and why did it endure? How do you feel as you share the intensity of this poignant farewell?

Chapter Seventeen. p.149

‘Once I lay in a field somewhere in Poland, not sure if I am alive or dead.’

1. Felix feels fortunate – *‘However my story turns out, I’ll never forget how lucky I am’* (p.150). What is your explanation of this?

2. Knowing Felix as you do by the end of the novel, make a prediction about how you think his story might continue to unfold or end.

Theme: Chance

Reflection: Your thoughts. Can you articulate your thoughts and feelings about the story's ending? Explain what struck you the most in the character of Felix? What is the dominant emotion you feel at the conclusion of the novel?

(You may wish to write a private response or share your views to find out others' perspectives.)

B) Grid Based on Boom's Taxonomy

(please see separate PDF file)

C) Focus on Felix

Explore and analyse the powerful roles that Hope, Resilience and Optimism play in Felix's story.

Though just a young boy, he clearly possesses these psychological tools to a remarkable degree. We witness Felix's use of them over and over again in his fight for survival and understanding. Felix's wonderful story telling gift reflects not only his humour and imagination, but a noble sensitivity. Putting others' needs before his own, Felix often tells his tales to distract and cheer up his friends. His story telling prowess also helps to preserve his own mental and physical health - getting him out of the occasional negative frame of mind and several other precarious situations!

But, as the tragic reality of what is happening around him begins to sink in, Felix understandably experiences profound lapses into overwhelming frustration and grief. Even at its most creative, Felix's imagination sometimes struggles and becomes simply incapable of overcoming the horror and brutality with which it is continually confronted. At times like this, his stories cannot help him - yet he always comes back to them. As the novel draws to a close, Felix and the reader are left wondering what the future holds, *'I don't know what the rest of my story will be'* (p.150). But the love of stories and incredible resilience we have witnessed throughout Felix's journey create a sense of hope and optimism for us - enough to believe he may one day share his ultimate story, one of survival.

Morris Gleitzman has created a wonderful character and vehicle in Felix. Through the eyes of this central character the reader will witness humanity's capacity for inhumanity. The events and experiences endured by Felix (and many other characters) are extremely difficult and complex to comprehend, if comprehensible at all. The reader for whom this is an introduction to the Holocaust may experience the same terrible dawning realization of what was truly happening at that time. A study of Felix (his history, personality, actions & impact) should encourage this reader, and those with a greater depth of knowledge about the Holocaust, to spend time thinking, reflecting and sharing questions or views in an attempt to find some understanding.

There are many ways to undertake character studies. Some suggestions are offered below or your students may be able to tailor their own studies according to aspects or issues of interest to them.

Meaningful Quotes

- Select (or ask students to select) some thought-provoking quotes from different points in the story.
- Give specific guidelines (e.g.: before Felix knows the truth, or the first 3 chapters, or dialogue Felix has with other children etc...) or work on random selections to see what students pick up on.
- Use these as starting points for discussion or to develop dramatisations, oral presentations, reflective or creative writing, music or art work and other appropriate response activities.

Mapping & Graphic Representations

- Chart an aspect of the character's development – for example: emotional spectrum, beliefs and understandings, relationships and interactions, impact of positive and negative experiences etc.
- Identify changes and turning points in written or graphic form.
- Analyse context and influences at work to provide annotated detail.
- Use these to inform and inspire journal writing or reflective poetry, music or art work.

Thinking about Questions

- Students develop a series of rich questions they would like to ask the character in focus.
- Provide different models of questioning and discuss the importance of diverse invitational stems.
- Questions could then be shared with a partner for purposes of writing or role play which explores the character's potential responses.

Compare and Contrast Tasks

- Evaluate the character in terms of criteria which compares and contrasts his/her behaviour, traits and attitude.
- Try to identify the forces at work which shape these aspects and explain how events and experiences impact on outcomes. For example: simple "before/after" headings, time line or sequential markers, specific events (such as getting caught, witnessing death, making choices), interactions with other people or overarching themes (such as loss, hope, survival, persecution).

D) Follow Up Activities

Dedication (novel's start)

Morris Gleitzman makes this Dedication to open the novel:

'For all the children whose stories have never been told'

- Discuss what you think this means.
- Find out about things that have been done to ensure the stories of children who experienced the Holocaust are told – for example: Museum displays, books, films, biographical records and archival materials, Memorials, Days and Rituals of Remembrance.
- Why is it important to share these stories today?
- Research for and share some views of people or organizations that have endeavoured to collect and share real-life stories of victims and survivors.
- Follow Morris Gleitzman's lead by *'reading diaries, letters and notes of those who were young at the time of the Holocaust'* and discussing their impact on your students.

View some children's stories using the following resources:

[Website of the Museum of Tolerance](#)

This has a special section devoted to "Meeting the Children of the Holocaust" containing images and biographies to tell each child's story.

[Website of the U.S. Holocaust Museum](#)

Another child's story is followed in an exhibition entitled "Remember the Children: Daniel's Story."

Author's Letter (novel's end).

Read Morris Gleitzman's letter to his readers.

- What is your response?
- Why do you think he included this?

Students may wish to undertake further research into Janusz Korczak who inspired the heroic character of Barney in *Once* or choose another real-life identity who features in a compelling tale of heroism during the Holocaust (e.g.: German businessman Oskar Schindler, Raoull Wallenberg, Giorgio Perlasca). Many heroes and heroines have been honoured in literature and art, in films and on the internet. Their stories - and those of many others who risked or gave their lives to help others – may be a source of interest and inspiration for your students. Guidance and supervision in use of the internet is important in distinguishing the more worthwhile and reputable websites. Attention can be drawn to the less obvious, "quiet heroism", shown by many of the characters in *Once* through acts of resistance and ultimately survival. In the more high-profile stories as well as in the lives and deaths of countless victims, discovery of positive role models may plant seeds similar to that which Morris Gleitzman has nurtured. Writing thoughtful stories may be a way of exploring and reflecting for your students.

Additional Resources

The following books were read by the author in preparation for writing *Once*.

- *The King Of Children* by Betty Jean Lifton
- *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries Of The Holocaust* edited by Alexander Zapruder
- *The Hidden Children* by Jane Marks
- *Words To Outlive Us: Eyewitness Accounts From The Warsaw Ghetto* edited by Michal Grynberg
- *Witness: Voices From The Holocaust* edited by Joshua M Greene & Shiva Kumar
- *A Childhood* by Jona Oberski
- *Maus* by Art Spiegelman
- *The Diary Of A Young Girl* by Anne Frank
- *Born Guilty* by Peter Sichrovsky
- *The Hidden Children* by Howard Greenfeld
- *Children Of The Ghetto* by Sheva Glas-Wiener
- *Konin: A Quest* by Theo Richmond
- *The Boys* by Martin Gilbert
- *Flares Of Memory: Stories Of Childhood During The Holocaust* edited by Anita Brostoff with Sheila Chamovitz
- *Yiddishland* by Gerard Silvain & Henri Minczeles
- *Children With A Star* by Deborah Dwork
- *Ghetto Diary* by Janusz Korczak

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Knowledge (remember/recall)	Comprehension (understand)	Application (apply/use)	Analysis (analyse/differentiate)	Synthesis (create/generate)	Evaluation (Justify/critique)
What situation does Felix find himself in as the novel begins?	Describe the physical environment and conditions of the orphanage.	Use examples drawn from Felix’s memories to build a picture of his ‘previous life’ – what were his experiences of home, parents and family life?	What is Felix’s explanation for what is happening during his time at the orphanage? How has he come to these conclusions?	Focusing on the first part of the story (to page 52) draw up 2 columns to highlight the contrast between <i>Felix’s rationalization</i> of what he experiences and sees with the <i>reality</i> of what is actually happening.	Why does Felix choose the particular identities he does in his “prayers”? (eg: p.2. God, Jesus, Mary, the Pope, Adolf Hitler).
In what geographical area and period of history is the novel set?	Why do you think Felix’s parents made the decision they did? In what ways did they ‘prepare’ him for what was to come?	Choose one of these emotions and find a scene you think reflects it strongly: Hate, Fear, Grief, Love, Relief, Joy.	Barney, Mother Minka, Mr.Kopek – distinguish between these characters who help Felix. Why is each special? How/what do they contribute to Felix’s experiences?	Create a listing of Felix’s stories. Include brief detail about when & where he told it, who to and why. What was the topic he chose each time?	How and why does the list change over time as the story unfolds? What does this reflect about the impact of Felix realizing more and more of the truth?
Find examples from the story to illustrate these contrasting aspects: <u>Behaviour:</u> 1.selfish & 2. unselfish <u>Decisions:</u> 1. difficult 2. clear cut <u>Expectations:</u> 1. realistic 2. unrealistic <u>Your choice</u>	What role have ‘books’ played in Felix’s life? How do you think they have contributed to his development? Use an example from the text to demonstrate how books actually “save” Felix at some point.	Develop a list of Felix’s strengths as you find out more about him. How does he react to other people and to the horrors he is confronted by? What positive attributes enable him to continue his personal journey – emotionally and mentally?	Indicate the early turning points for Felix. What causes him to start questioning his understandings to date? Eg: the problems for Jewish booksellers and the bigger picture - the implications of being Jewish; the carrot and the letters – part of the truth about his parents; the soldiers’ actions and his first encounter with dead bodies etc.	Generate a “for” and “against” chart which explores ‘telling the truth’. Choose a situation (eg: Jankiel p.26, Zelda p.108, Barney & Felix p.118) and weigh up the outcomes of telling or hiding the truth. Consider the positives and negatives before proposing what your solution would be.	Judge the value of Felix’s story telling abilities. In what way does it help him? How does it impact upon the other children he encounters? Who else benefits? Why do you think this talent is so special in Felix’s circumstances?

