



**6<sup>TH</sup>**  
**GRADE**  

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**VOLUME 6.3**

# **Book Club Teacher's Guide**

*Four Perfect Pebbles:  
A True Story of the Holocaust*

For pairing with *C. I. A. Unit of Study—  
Historical Fiction, Esperanza Rising 6.3*

**Sarah Collinge**

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### *Four Perfect Pebbles* Text Complexity

QUALITATIVE MEASURES	QUANTITATIVE MEASURES
<b>Levels of Meaning</b> The text offers multiple levels of meaning and nuances of abstract concepts related to genocide, the Holocaust, immigration, and the Jewish culture.	The Lexile level for <i>Four Perfect Pebbles</i> is 1080, based on word frequency and sentence length. This is in the lower range of the complexity band for 9 <sup>th</sup> –10 <sup>th</sup> grade according to the Common Core State Standards.
<b>Structure</b> This narrative is told mostly chronologically, with a flashback near the beginning of the book.	<b>READER TASK CONSIDERATIONS</b>
<b>Language Conventionality and Clarity</b> The setting of this story adds some complexity to the language. Dialogue that incorporates historical and regional language makes this text qualitatively challenging.	These should be determined locally with reference to motivation, knowledge, and experiences as well as to purpose and the complexity of the tasks assigned and the questions posed.
<b>Knowledge Demands</b> This text requires knowledge of the genre memoir. In addition, students will need to rely on background knowledge of the Holocaust.	

# **C. I. A. Book Club Lesson Plans**

*Four Perfect Pebbles:  
A True Story of the Holocaust*

## DAY 1, PART 1: BLURB & MARK THE TEXT

**In this lesson...**you will be reminding students how they can use clues in the blurb to help identify the story elements—character, setting, problem, and main events. After identifying these story elements, students will use them to make predictions.

### **Learning Targets:**

Read closely to monitor comprehension (RI 1)

- Make predictions

Show understanding of story elements (RI 3)

- Main characters
- Setting
- Problem

Infer genre (RI 5)

Gather and categorize information through note taking (W 8)

## Connect:

*We have been learning...*

...that good readers enjoy reading in collaboration with others. Today we are going to start our book clubs. Each of you will be working with a group of students to read a book and uncover the author's message. It will be your responsibility to read the book and take careful notes in your book club notebook. You will be responsible for

1. Reading the book on your own,
2. Completing all assignments on time,
3. Keeping your work neat,
4. Working cooperatively with your assigned partner, and
5. Attending important C. I. A. meetings.

(Hand out a book club text and a book club notebook to each student.

Have each student record the following on the front cover of his or her book club notebook:

- the genre of the book—memoir—on the first line
- the subject—the Holocaust—on the second line
- his or her name on the third line
- the date on the fourth line

On page 3, have each student record his or her partner's name and the names of everyone else in his or her group. Also, have students record the title of the book.)

Notice that all of you will be reading the same book and studying the same genre—memoir.

Memoir is a sub-genre of autobiography. When writing a memoir, the author tells about an important period of time in his or her life. Usually the author writes the story in the first person, but because two authors wrote this book, the story is told in the third person. We will be using our background knowledge of the genres biography and autobiography to help us understand this text better.

(Make a copy of the biography/autobiography genre chart [see Appendix] for each student. Students will paste or tape this chart onto page 4 of their book club notebooks. Review the genre chart for biography/autobiography, using a poster-sized chart that can be displayed in your meeting area throughout this unit of study. Genre posters can be purchased at [www.readsidebyside.com/shop/](http://www.readsidebyside.com/shop/).)

## Teach:

*Today I am going to remind you...*

...that good readers look carefully at the cover of a book and read the blurb prior to starting the first chapter so that they can begin to think about the story elements. The main elements of the story are character, setting, problem, and main events.



## Guided Practice—Work Time:

Please open up to page 5 in your book club notebooks. Notice how you will be reading the blurb of your book club book to gather information about the characters, setting, and problems in the story. Finally, you will make a prediction about what might happen in the book.

Today I am going to have you complete this task with your partners. You will have 5–10 minutes to complete this task together.

(Dismiss students for independent work.)

## Share-out:

Discuss: What are you predicting?

## Link:

*Today and every day when you read...*

...I want you to think about the story elements before you start reading the first chapter, by paying close attention to the cover of the book and the information in the blurb. You can also use that information to help you make predictions.

## Extended Lesson:

**(To prepare for this lesson, give each student three small sticky notes, for marking each quadrant.)**

When good readers begin reading, they have a plan of action for how they will read the text. We know to use the C. I. A. approach to plan for how we will read each quadrant of the text.

Turn to page 6 in your book club notebook and record the total number of pages in your book. To mark the text, we need to first look to see how many pages are in the book, then divide this number by 4. When we mark each quadrant, we are going to make sure that the end of the quadrant is also the end of a chapter.

Please mark your texts according to these numbers and record the page numbers for each quadrant on page 6 of your book club notebooks.

### ***Four Perfect Pebbles***

The end of quadrant 1 will be marked on page 36.

The end of quadrant 2 will be marked on page 72.

The end of quadrant 3 will be marked on page 99.

(Make a copy of the vocabulary words from *Esperanza Rising* [see Appendix] for each student. Have your students paste or tape their copies of this list onto page 46 of their book club notebooks.)

# Read the Blurb

**Main Character:**

Marion Blumenthal Lazan

**Secondary Characters:**

the Blumenthal family

**Setting (time, place, circumstance):**

Nazi Germany

Holland

Refugee, transit, and prison camps

Westerbork & Bergen-Belsen

**Problem:**

The Blumenthal family was trapped in Nazi Germany, where they experienced the horrors and hardships of refugee, transit, and prison camps.

**Prediction:**

I predict the Blumenthals will be courageous and survive.

## DAY 1, PART 2: OUTSIDE TEXT

### Video: Surviving the Holocaust

**Lauren McMillen**

Retrieved on September 10, 2018, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1\\_ZQTXihDb8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_ZQTXihDb8)

**This video tells about...**Marion Blumenthal Lazan's story.

**In this lesson...**you will be reminding students that sometimes readers use outside sources to help them build background knowledge about a topic and setting.

#### **Learning Targets:**

Integrate content presented in diverse media formats (RI 7)

Convey ideas precisely using appropriate vocabulary (L 3, 6)

Engage in collaborative discussion (SL 1, 2, 4, 6)

## Teach:

*Today I am going to remind you...*

...that good readers learn about the time period in which their book takes place and the important events that occurred during this time period. This book takes place during a time known as the Holocaust. The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. During the era of the Holocaust, 1933–1945, German authorities also targeted other groups.

The purpose of broadening your knowledge of an era is to make meaning out of the statistics. By reading personal accounts and memoir literature, you will come to know some of the individual voices of this collective experience.

The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act. Throughout this unit of study, we will focus on these decisions in order to better understand history and human nature, and to become critical thinkers.

Throughout this unit we will be studying primary documents from the time period, some of which are horrific. I will expect each one of you to handle the content of this unit with maturity, sensitivity, and respect.

As a class, we will agree to avoid stereotypical descriptions. Though the Nazi Party targeted all Jewish people, the experiences of all Jews were not the same. Although members of a group may share common experiences and beliefs, generalizations about them tend to stereotype group behavior and distort historical reality. When sharing statistics about a group of people, we will use qualifying terms such as “sometimes,” “usually,” “in many cases,” etc.

Throughout the unit, we will be using diverse media—primary documents, articles, and video—to help increase our knowledge of this time in history. Much of the media we will look at will come from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website and its online encyclopedia.

Today, we are going to watch a video interview with Marion Blumenthal Lazan, filmed at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D. C. As you watch, consider why Marion Blumenthal Lazan chooses to share her story.

**Play the video interview, *Surviving the Holocaust*, by Lauren McMillen.**

## Share-out:

Discuss: Why do you think Marion Blumenthal Lazan chooses to share her story?

## Link:

*Today and every day when you read...*

...I want you to consider how information in outside sources might help you understand the setting of the story better.

## DAY 2, PART 1: CHARACTER LIST

**In this lesson...**you will remind students that good readers pay attention to important characters. You will remind them that good readers keep track of characters as a way to monitor comprehension. Students will be asked to follow along as the teacher reads the prologue aloud and add important characters to their character lists.

### Learning Targets:

Read closely to monitor comprehension (RI 1)

Show understanding of story elements (RI 3)

- Characters

Gather and categorize information through note taking (W 8)

### Connect:

*We have been learning...*

...that good readers use the blurb to help them predict what will happen in the book.

### Teach:

*Today I am going to remind you...*

...that good readers use comprehension strategies to identify important characters. You are each going to make a character list in your book club notebook as we read the prologue of *Four Perfect Pebbles*. The prologue is a separate introductory section of the text that summarizes what the book is going to be about and gives important information to the reader prior to the beginning of the story.

As we read the prologue together as a read-aloud, we will be adding important people to our character lists. Remember that the characters in this story are real people.

Today we will be using this stem for turn and talk:

When the book said \_\_\_\_\_, I thought this was important because \_\_\_\_\_. This helps me understand \_\_\_\_\_.

Open up to page 8 in your book club notebooks. As we read, we will stop each time a new character is named in the text and add this name to our character lists. Then we will read to find information about this character, and add that information to our lists.

**Begin reading the prologue on page ix.**

## Model:

**Stop after:** "...the four members of the Blumenthal family were returned to Germany." (p. ix)

**When the book said** that there were four members of the Blumenthal family who became trapped in Hitler's Germany, **I thought this was important because** this memoir is the story of Marion Blumenthal's life and how she survived the Holocaust. **This helps me understand** that her family members will be important in this story.

Please turn to page 43 (unmarked) in your books. Here you will find a picture of the Blumenthal family.

Please add the names of the Blumenthal family to your character list on page 8 of your book club notebook.

(Model adding these people to the character list—Ruth, Marion's mother; Walter, Marion's father; Albert, Marion's brother; and Marion.)

Now turn to page 9 in your book club notebooks. Here you will be adding other people or groups of people that are important in this memoir.

**When the book said** that the Blumenthals were trapped in Hitler's Germany, **I thought this was important because** this tells me that Hitler is the leader of Germany during this time period of the Holocaust. **This helps me understand** that Hitler, and the members of the Nazi Party (the National Socialist German Workers' Party), are important to the events of Marion's story.

(Model adding Hitler and the Nazi Party to page 9.)

## Guided Practice:

**Stop after:** "...and other diseases, starvation, exposure, and neglect." (p. x)

Who are the important people in this section of the text?

Turn and talk to your partners using this stem:

When the book said \_\_\_\_\_, I thought this was important because \_\_\_\_\_. This helps me understand \_\_\_\_\_.

(Model adding the ages of Marion and Albert, and British troops, to the character list.)

## Guided Practice:

**Stop after:** “When liberation came at last, it was at the hands of Russian troops who had little to offer those who staggered weakly from the train.” (p. x)

Who are the important people in this section of the text?

Turn and talk to your partners using this stem:

When the book said \_\_\_\_\_, I thought this was important because \_\_\_\_\_. This helps me understand \_\_\_\_\_.

(Model adding Russian troops to the character list.)

## Stretch It:

**Stop after:** “...must remain forever in human memory.” (p. xi)

Discuss: Why do you think Marion Blumenthal Lazan chooses to tell her story?

## Link:

*Today and every day when you read...*

...I want you to think about what you know about important characters in order to monitor comprehension as you read.

## Character List

CHARACTER	DETAILS
Ruth Blumenthal	Marion's mother
Walter Blumenthal	Marion's father
Albert Blumenthal	Marion's brother 11 years old
marion Blumenthal	9 years old



# Character List

CHARACTER	DETAILS
Hitler	leader of Germany during the Holocaust
Nazi Party	National Socialist German workers' Party
British Troops	Liberated Bergen-Belsen work camp
Russian Troops	Liberated the train headed to Auschwitz extermination camp

## DAYS 9–10, RETELL SUMMARY WRITING

**In this lesson...**students will be synthesizing their understanding of the first quadrant of their book club texts by writing retell summaries. Students will be using the retell summary frame to organize their writing. Students should be expected to produce quality work.

### Learning Targets:

Summarize the text (RI 2)

- Retell summary of the first quadrant

Show understanding of story elements (RI 3)

- Character
- Setting
- Plot

Write an expository piece (W 2)

- Retell events from the beginning, middle, and end of text, in sequence

Write clearly and coherently for task and audience (W 4)

Recall information and draw evidence from the text (W 8, 9)

Write in a short time period (W 10)

Acquire and use key vocabulary (L 6)

### Connect:

*We have been learning...*

...that good readers read slowly at the beginning of the book in order to make sure they understand all the story elements, including character, setting, and plot.

### Teach:

*Today I am going to remind you...*

...that good readers write a retell summary of the first quadrant of a book in order to monitor their comprehension. When we summarize, we think about the most important events and details from the story. The process of summarizing helps us recognize when we are confused so that we can go back and clear up that confusion.

## **Guided Practice—Work Time:**

Now turn to page 14 in your book club notebook. You will use this retell summary frame to organize your retell summary for your book club book. (Review the retell summary frame with students.)

Now turn to page 15 in your book club notebook. This is where you will write your retell summary for your book club book. You will use the summary frame to organize your writing. You may also use the entries in your notebook as tools. The problems list and the important events list will be especially helpful to you.

You will each be completing your retell summary independently. If you need help, first go to your assigned partner to get help. If you are still stuck, sign up for a conference and I will come and coach you and your partner in order to quickly help you get back on track. You will have two days for this assignment.

When you finish, please turn to page 19 in your book club notebook and complete the prediction-writing stem.

Additionally, please complete the following empathy stem:

When the book said \_\_\_\_\_, I felt empathy for \_\_\_\_\_. I felt \_\_\_\_\_. This helps me understand \_\_\_\_\_.

Be prepared to share these prediction and empathy stems with your group at your C. I. A. book club meeting.

(Assign each group their C. I. A. meeting date and dismiss students for independent work. Conduct conferences with partnerships as necessary.)

## ***Four Perfect Pebbles***

### **Retell Summary Sample**

The first three chapters of the book *Four Perfect Pebbles*, by Lila Perl and Marion Blumenthal Lazan, tell the true story of the Blumenthal family and their experience during the time of the Holocaust. They tell about how the Blumenthal family experienced fear and discrimination, and eventually left Germany for Holland in hopes of emigrating to the United States.

At the beginning of the book, Adolf Hitler is appointed chancellor of Germany and then becomes president after the former president dies. He orders a nationwide boycott of all Jewish businesses and passes the Nuremberg Laws, which strip Jews of their German citizenship.

While more than 130,000 of Germany's Jews emigrated by 1937, the Blumenthal family remains in Germany. On November 10, Kristallnacht, the synagogue near their home in Hanover is blown up. Later that day, the Gestapo takes Walter Blumenthal away to Buchenwald, a concentration camp. He spends 11 days as a prisoner before he is released. He and his family are ordered to leave Germany within three months.

The Blumenthals make plans to go to Holland, where they will stay with Walter's sister. They will wait there for a visa needed to emigrate to the United States.

As you can see, the Blumenthal family and other Jewish people experienced incredible hardship and injustice during the time of the Holocaust. In conclusion, I disagree with the way the Jewish people were being treated.

## DAYS 11–12, QUADRANT 1 BOOK CLUB MEETINGS

### Book Club Meeting 1

**In this book club meeting...**students will be responding to questions about the characters, setting, problems, and main events revealed in quadrant 1 of their book club books. Students will use the charts in their book club notebooks to aid their discussion. Students will also share their predictions about what they think will happen next in the story. Throughout the discussion, students should each share and respond to thinking.

#### Learning Targets:

Summarize the text (RI 2)

Show understanding of story elements (RI 3)

- Character
- Setting
- Plot

Prepare for collaboration with others (SL 1)

Express ideas and respond to others' ideas clearly and persuasively (SL 1)

Acquire and use key vocabulary (L 6)

#### Connect:

*We have been learning...*

...that good readers read slowly at the beginning of a book in order to make sure they understand all the story elements, including character, setting, and plot. At the end of quadrant 1 they stop and write a retell summary as a way of monitoring their comprehension.

## Teach:

*Today I am going to remind you...*

...that good readers discuss their thinking about a book with others in order to synthesize their thinking and evaluate the thinking of others.

When we meet together in book clubs, the expectations will be that you each

1. Bring your book and book club notebook to the meeting, with all assignments completed;
2. Come prepared to respond to questions and to share your thinking about the book with the group;
3. Participate by both sharing with and listening to group members;
4. Respond to another student's thinking before sharing your own; and
5. Use polite language and mannerisms with everyone in the group.

When you respond to another person's thinking, please use one of our response stems:

- I agree with you because...
- I disagree with you because...

## Opening discussion questions:

**(Have 2–3 students share their responses to each of these questions. Ask a student to respond to another student before sharing his or her own thinking. As you move through the series of questions, make sure each student gets a turn to talk.)**



### *Four Perfect Pebbles*

*Open up to the setting map on page 10 of your book club notebooks.*

Discuss: The story begins by telling Marion's experience in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at the age of nine. Why do you think Marion chooses to start her story here, before flashing back to the time of Hitler's rise to power?

Discuss: What do you think it might have been like for Marion to live in a concentration camp at the young age of nine?

*Open up to the important events list on page 11 of your book club notebooks.*

Discuss: How did Hitler and the Nazi Party rise to power in Germany?

Discuss: What was the significance of the Night of Broken Glass?

*Open up to the problems list on page 11 of your book club notebooks.*

Discuss: How did the US immigration quotas make it challenging for people like the Blumen-thals to enter the United States during the Holocaust?

Discuss: Do you think it is the responsibility of other nations to protect or support persecuted citizens of another nation?

### **Time for questions:**

Do any of you have any questions at this point in the story that you would like the group to answer or help you with?

(Allow time for students to ask their questions, if any. Encourage group members to respond to the questions. Step in to answer questions only when group members are unable to.)

### **Share-out:**

Now you are each going to have an opportunity to share the prediction stem and/or empathy stem you prepared on page 19 of your book club notebook. Please turn to your stems now.

(Allow each student a chance to share his or her stem or stems. Ask a student to respond to another student before sharing his or her own thinking.)



# Book Club Meeting 1

Be prepared to talk about:

- Character
- Setting
- Problem
- Main Events

Be prepared to share a prediction about what will happen in the book.

Be ready to listen and respond to the members of your group!

When the book said this was going to be the start of  
an uneasy and worrisome life

I made a prediction. I think the family will have to  
worry about their survival

because with Hitler in power, their lives  
are in danger.

When the book said they had to leave behind almost everything I felt empathy for the Blumenthals. I felt sad that they couldn't keep things that were special to them. This helps me understand how unfairly Jews were treated.