

A Teaching Unit  
for  
The Devil's Arithmetic  
By Jane Yolen



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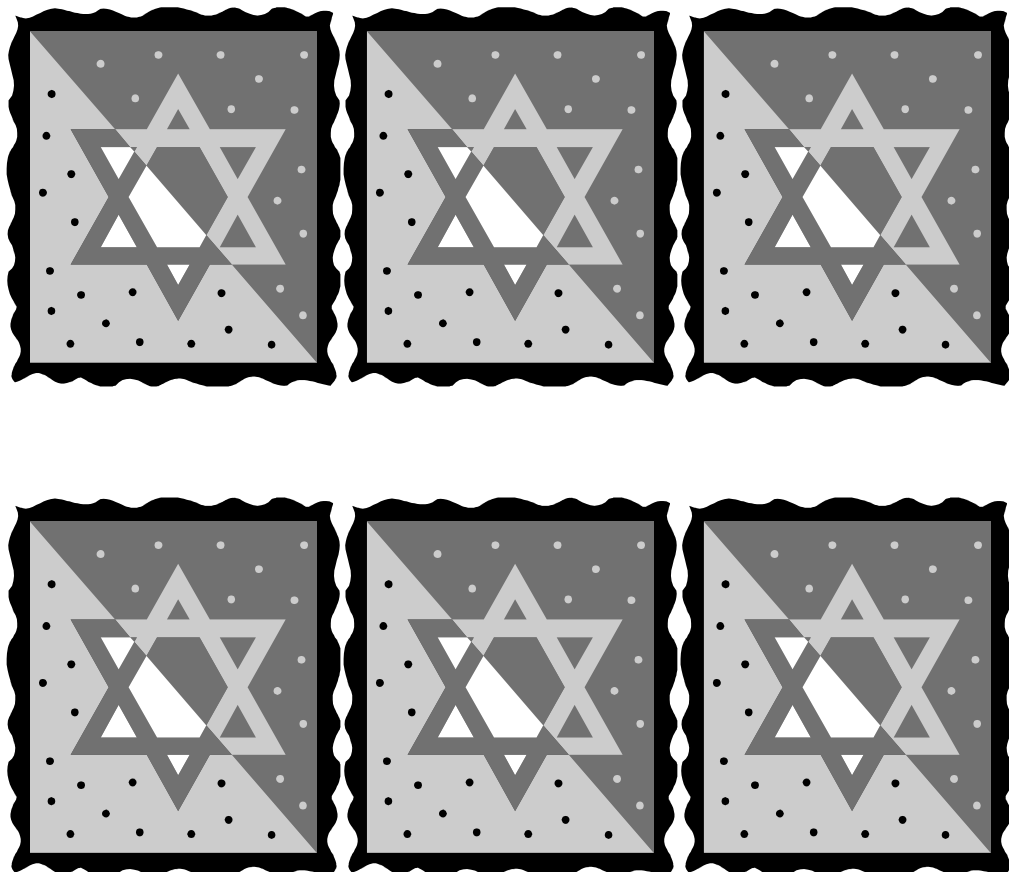
# The Devil's Arithmetic

## Prereading Activity

Below are pictures of Stars of David. Cut each star out. On the day that you plan to begin the unit, tape the stars on random desks throughout your classroom.

As students enter the classroom the next day, begin to treat those students who have a star on their desk differently than you do the other students. For example, make them stand instead of sit. Have them remove their shoes and put them under their desks. Take away their pencils and give them to those students who do not have stars. Tell them that they cannot talk, but allow those without stars to talk all they want, etc. Your point is to make the "the have nots" experience just a "pinch" of what it feels like to be mistreated for no reason at all, and to allow the "haves" to experience what it feels like to watch others be mistreated for no apparent reason.

Once you can tell that your point has been made, hold a discussion allowing both students with stars and without to talk about how they felt. This discussion can then lead you into the beginning of your Holocaust unit.



# The Devil's Arithmetic

## Chapter 3 ~ Symbolism and Foreshadowing

Jane Yolen's novel is full of symbolism, and it is introduced in this early chapter.

### Symbolism

A symbol is something that stands for something else, like the American flag stands for freedom, and a dove represents peace. It is any object, person, place, or experience that means more than what it is.

A literary symbol has literal meaning in a story but stands for something else.

If something is symbolic, it will most likely

- *be repeated in the book*
- *be written in a memorable or vivid way*
- *be emphasized with imagery*
- *mean something else than what it is*

Opening the door to Elijah is symbolic. What does this ritual symbolize?

Be on the look out for more symbolism in this novel.

### Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a clue or hint of what is to come later. Authors use this literary technique to add suspense and affect the tone. Answer the following questions about foreshadowing in this chapter.

At the beginning of the chapter, we read *A full moon was squeezed between two of the project's apartment buildings.* (page 13) When Hannah opens the door for Elijah, we read again about the moon. This time, it states, *The moon hung ripely between two heavy gray clouds.* (page 20) What does the moon foreshadow the second time it is mentioned in this chapter?

At the end of this chapter, Hannah sees a shadowy figure, and hears him singing a song. What does this song foreshadow? What does it seem to mean? Can you use it to predict what will happen next to Hannah?

The Devil's Arithmetic  
Chapter 7 ~ The Badchan's Poem

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

In this chapter, we meet the very interesting Badchan. Reread the following poem that he says to Hannah, and then answer the questions about the poem.

*Pretty girl, with faraway eyes  
Why do you look with such surprise?  
How did you get to be so wise?  
Old girl in young girl disguise.*

Let's analyze the poem by looking at each line of it. On the following lines, write what you think the badchan may mean. Put it in your own words, and try to "read into" what the badchan sees in Hannah and is trying to say to her. Do not be afraid to write what you are thinking. There are no wrong answers.

My thoughts:

Line 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Line 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Line 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Line 4: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the rhyme scheme of this short poem?

Write a short poem that the badchan could recite to Gitl or Shmuel. Use the same rhyme scheme that is used in the badchan's poem to Chaya.

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