**Devil’s Arithmetic Notes**

**Ch. 1-3**

1. What is Passover? What is Seder? What is the purpose of Passover according to Hannah’s family?
2. What is wrong with Grandpa Will? Why does he scream at the TV and at Hannah when she draws numbers on her arm?
3. What do you think Grandpa Will means when he says, “A sacrifice unasked is so much the greater”? (19)
4. How does Hannah feel about Passover? Why does she feel this way?
5. Based on Hannah’s words and actions so far in these chapters, what do you think of her? Describe her character traits.

**Ch. 4-5**

1. How has the setting changed in these chapters? How will the change in the setting affect the plot?
2. Why don’t Shmuel and Gitl believe Hannah when she says that she is not Chaya and is from New Rochelle?
3. When Shmuel teases his sister Gitl about a man named Yitzchak who wants to marry her, she says, “Yitzchak the butcher is a monster. All he wants is a nurse for his children.” Shmuel responds, “All butcher are monsters to someone who refuses meat.” (27). What does Shmuel mean? Does Gitl really think Yitzchak is a monster? Use evidence to support your answer.
4. Describe Gitl’s and Shmuel’s character traits. What kind of people are they? Use evidence to support your answer.
5. What does Gitl mean when she says, “Especially these days when laughter is our only weapon”? (29) How could laughter be a weapon and why would they even need such a weapon?

**Ch. 6-9**

1. How is Hannah adapting to this new setting?
2. Hannah remembers how at one point, Aunt Eva had explained to her that no photographs had been saved in the death camps, and she says, “We are our own photos. Those pictures are engraved only in our memories. When we are gone, they are gone.” (44) What do you think she means?
3. Why are the other girls in the shtetl—Rachel, Esther, Shifre and Yente—so fascinated by Hannah?
4. Describe how the mood shifts in around the second half of ch. 8. What words and phrases cause the mood to shift?

**Ch. 9-10**

1. Why do the soldiers tell the people from the shtetl that they are going to be “resettled”? Do you think the villagers believe the soldiers? Why or why not?
2. Why do the people from the shtetl agree to get in the trucks?
3. While in the boxcars, the people from the shtetl begin sharing horrible stories they’ve heard. Why do they share such awful stories?
4. While in the boxcars, the people from the shtetl pass some peasants working in a field. They cry out for help, but the peasants only run their fingers across their throats. Why do the peasants do such a thing? What does this suggest about human nature?
5. Why do the people from the shtetl sing when they’re in the trucks? Why do they tell jokes when they’re in the boxcars? What does this suggest about human nature?
6. Compare how Gitl and Fayge have been behaving in the best two chapters. How have they been handling this adversity differently? How do their responses reveal their different character traits?

**Ch. 11-12**

1. Describe what is has been like in the boxcars.
2. Where is Rachel? How do you know?
3. Remember that when the Hannah first gets to the camp she meets a woman who orders all of the “newcomers” around and bullies Hannah into giving up her hair ribbons. Why is this woman in the camp if she is not Jewish? Why is she in charge of other prisoners if she herself is also a prisoner?
4. Why is Hannah so determined to share her knowledge of the future with the other characters? Why does she decide to stop? Do you agree with her decision?
5. Why does Hannah promise Gitl she won’t cry anymore?
6. When Hannah is being tattooed by an old man, he says to her, “Live…For my Chaya. For all our Chayas. Live. And remember” (100). What does he mean? Why does he say this?
7. Describe what happens to the Jews when they first enter the camp. Why might the Nazis treat the people this way? How is this treatment designed to affect a person’s sense of identity?
8. At the end of these chapters, Hannah discovers that her memories of the future have left her. Do you it’s better or worse for Hannah to not have these memories?

**Ch. 13-14**

1. Why does Gitl slap Hannah when they discover Tzipporah?
2. What advice does Rivka give Hannah and the other girls about surviving in camp?
3. Why won’t Esther listen to Rivka’s advice? Why does Rivka just let her walk off? Is Rivka being cruel to just let Esther go?
4. After reading ch. 14, what do you think the title *The Devil’s Arithmetic* means?
5. Find any evidence you can that the cruelty the characters face in the camps is bringing out the cruelty in the characters. Why would this be? Which characters are able to remain compassionate? Why? How?

**Ch. 15-16**

1. Why does Leye act so ungrateful after Hannah saves her baby?
2. As Hannah gets used to life in the camp, the book says, “Hannah was glad of the routine. As long as she knew what to expect, she wasn’t frightened.” (125). Why would knowing what to expect keep Hannah from being frightened?
3. When Gitl finds out that Hannah has been giving some of her food to Reuven, she tells Hannah to stop because Hannah needs to keep up her own strength. Who is right? Should Hannah be sharing food or eating it herself?
4. What is a Choosing?
5. Where does Gitl work? What are the advantages of her job?
6. Why is Gitl motivated to give Hannah a birthday gift?
7. What motivates the badchan to volunteer for the Choosing?
8. Why does Gitl slap Hannah this time? Was it cruel or justified?
9. On page 135, Yolen writes about how life goes on for Hannah in the camp: “And so one day eroded into the next.” Why do you think Yolen chose to use the word “eroded”?
10. What do you think of how Breuer treats and speak to Reuven right before he takes the little boy away?
11. Hannah claims that Reuven’s death is her fault. Do you agree? Why or why not?
12. After Reuven dies, Hannah says, “We are all monsters.” (141) Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
13. Hannah also claims that “We should go down fighting.” (142) Again, do you agree? Should they try to fight?
14. Rivka responds to Hannah’s outburst by saying, “We are all heroes here.” (142) Is she right? If so, how?

**Ch. 17 to end**

1. When Hannah learns of the escape plan, she asks Gitl why she and Shmuel must be the ones to make the attempt. Gitl says, “If no us, who? If not now, when?” (145). Hannah feels that she’s heard these words before. How might these words apply to the Holocaust in general?
2. Why does Fayge refuse to go with Shmuel and join the escape attempt?
3. Breuer says that people call the prisoners at the camp “Breuer’s dirty little pets.” (151). How does this name reveal how the Nazis see the prisoners?
4. What motivates Hannah and the other prisoners to watch the execution?
5. What motivates Fayge to die with Shmuel?
6. Why does Hannah think the setting is ironic on pages 154-155?
7. Why is Hannah motivated to sacrifice herself for Rivka?
8. How does Hannah come to realize her aunt Eva is Rivka?
9. Throughout the book the idea of “remembering” keeps coming up. What message do you think Yolen might be trying to communicated about remembering?