



DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

Elly: My True Story of the Holocaust



LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To engage students in a class discussion about memoir texts and introduce them to textual analysis.

MATERIALS:

- Cooked Up from a Book Printout
- *Elly: My True Story of the Holocaust*

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Read *Elly: My True Story of the Holocaust* with your class.
2. Assess your students by asking them the following questions:

“My mother, Elly Gross, is not only a survivor; she is an achiever.” —Agneta Weisz (p. 4)

What does this quote tell you about the person you will be reading about?

“In 1944, the Hungarian government issued a decree that we Jews must wear a yellow Star of David. The local population now could recognize a fearful Jew from far away on the street....That I was born a Jew was a daily shame” (p. 28).

How did Elly feel wearing the Star of David? Why?

When Elly, her mother, and her brother were set free from the cattle car, Elly is pushed to the right while her mother and brother are pushed to the left. At the end of this chapter, Elly asks: “Was I selfish by not speaking up at that moment? By not saying, ‘Mommy, try to come with me’? You, Reader, be the judge. Did I do wrong?” (p. 34)

How would you answer Elly’s question?

“Surrounded by barbed wire and in the shadow of four smoky chimneys, we reported to roll call twice a day” (p. 47).

Elly uses a lot of descriptive language in the text. Based on this sentence, what do you picture is happening? What do you think Elly is feeling?

In the chapter “My First Craft in Fallersleben,” a female overseer in the factory where Elly works asks Elly to design both a cup and a sweater. Elly says of the experience: “I did not receive a reward or extra privilege for my work. I was a slave. I continued to work in the factory, but it gave me great satisfaction that I had created something” (p. 68).

Describe how Elly’s words connect to the overarching theme of hope.

Elly’s life isn’t perfect once she and her husband arrive in the US. Still, Elly writes that she is “pleased” (p. 88).

What evidence from the text supports this statement?

“Nature never gets old;/the cycle is repeated,/year by year.” (p. 101)

What do you think Elly is trying to say in this poem?

3. Share the accompanying vocabulary sheet as a follow-up to your discussion.

