

Prestwick PowerPacks™

Practical Activities for Comprehension and Key Skills



The Devil's Arithmetic

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity I: Context Clues **Chapters 1–4**

Context clues help you determine the meaning of new words. These clues can be descriptions, actions and reactions, opinions, and direct definitions. They often appear in the same sentence as the unfamiliar word, or within two sentences before or after it. In the following example, you want to know the meaning of the word **embankment**. You need to look for clues, such as descriptions, in the sentence:

“They were forced by the soldiers to scramble down the high gravel embankment, and the slippery stones slid away underfoot.” (Pg. 87)

If “slippery stones slid away underfoot,” the people are having a difficult time keeping their footing. In addition, they are scrambling down a gravelled path that is high. It is very possible that embankment means some type of mound. Since the stones are slippery, we can also assume that water may be near. An embankment may be a mound of stones or earth to hold back water.

Of course, if you cannot define a word using context clues, you should look it up in the dictionary to learn its meaning.

There’s an interesting twist to this assignment. Have you heard of magic number puzzles? Here’s an example:

8	1	6
3	5	7
4	9	2

Study this number grid. Do you see what makes it unique?

Part I

The following **VOCABULARY LIST** contains Jewish terms and other vocabulary words that are found in Chapters 1–4. The author has provided context clues to help you understand their meaning inside the text. The page numbers where you will find each word are given. Look up the words in the novel, and match each vocabulary word with its definition using context clues. Put the number of the definition in the proper place on the grid. Remember, the total of the numbers will be the same across each row, down each column, and diagonally. Your task is to define each term and find the magic number.

Name: _____

Date: _____

VOCABULARY LIST

- A. unleavened (Pg. 5)
 - B. Seder (Pg. 3)
 - C. Passover (Pg. 3)
 - D. Haggadah (Pg. 5)
 - E. distorted (Pg. 9)
 - F. guttural (Pg. 9)
 - G. steerage (Pg. 10)
 - H. saga (Pg. 10)
 - I. compensation (Pg. 10)
 - J. encircling (Pg. 11)
 - K. droned (Pg. 13)
 - L. yarmulke (Pg. 14)
 - M. plunged (Pg. 14)
 - N. mortified (Pg. 14)
 - O. cloying (Pg. 16)
 - P. matzoh (Pg. 16)
 - Q. earnestness (Pg. 18)
 - R. reluctantly (Pg. 19)
 - S. Yiddish (Pg. 23)
 - T. shtetl (Pg. 26)
 - U. Torah (Pg. 29)
 - V. solemn (Pg. 29)
 - W. rabbi (Pg. 29)
 - X. apparently (Pg. 30)
 - Y. nightshift (Pg. 30)
- 1. talked in a persistently dull manner
 - 2. a ceremonial dinner held during Passover
 - 3. unwillingly
 - 4. making up for something; making something equivalent
 - 5. an old-fashioned term for pajamas
 - 6. twisted out of shape or condition
 - 7. unleavened bread eaten at Passover
 - 8. cheapest section of a passenger ship
 - 9. a Jew trained for religious leadership
 - 10. to suffer extreme embarrassment
 - 11. a language spoken by Jews
 - 12. surrounding; forming a circle
 - 13. the books of the Pentateuch studied in Jewish Scripture
 - 14. a skullcap worn by Jewish males
 - 15. holiday recognizing the Hebrews' freedom from slavery
 - 16. a long, detailed story
 - 17. seemingly; evidently; visibly
 - 18. disgusting because of extreme sweetness
 - 19. made without yeast or other leavening agent
 - 20. seriousness; importance
 - 21. marked by a religious sanction; serious
 - 22. to begin suddenly
 - 23. prayer book containing the seder ritual
 - 24. a small Jewish town or village
 - 25. a harsh, grating quality to a voice

The magic number is ____.

A	B	C	D	E
F	G	H	I	J
K	L	M	N	O
P	Q	R	S	T
U	V	W	X	Y

Student's Page

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part 2

Now, use the definitions to write an original sentence for the following ten terms. Correct any of your sentences that contain punctuation or other errors. Be sure to use your own context clues to show the meaning of the term in your sentence. For the first seven questions, the word has been chosen for you. For the last three questions, you may choose any other three words from the list in Part 1.

- 1. apparently: _____

- 2. distorted: _____

- 3. compensation: _____

- 4. droned: _____

- 5. plunged: _____

- 6. mortified: _____

- 7. solemn: _____

- 8. _____: _____

- 9. _____: _____

- 10. _____: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity II: Prediction **Chapters 1-4**

Making predictions about what might happen to characters helps readers connect with and remain interested in a novel. Remember that predictions are more than mere guesses. They are inferences based on what has already happened in the book. Consider Aaron's nervousness in Chapter 1. He has to read the Four Questions from the Haggadah for the first time. He is so nervous that he feels sick, but Hannah reassures him: "You've been reading right since you were three, Mr. Smarty." (Pg. 5) Based on this statement and Hannah's actions toward her brother, we can reasonably predict that Hannah will try to help her brother feel comfortable while reading the Four Questions and for the remainder of the Seder. This is a sensible prediction because we have evidence from the novel to support our opinion.

Now, make your own prediction about the novel. Hannah expresses her dislike of the Jewish traditions that her family practices. She dreads the Seder and seeing her family members. The only part of the Seder she enjoys is drinking watered wine. When it is her turn, Hannah empties her wine into the goblet because her head feels funny from the wine. Her Grandpa Will praises her for being so generous and states that she has the privilege of opening the door for Elijah. Feeling ridiculous, Hannah flings the door open on page 20.

1. Make a prediction about what you expect to happen to Hannah at this point. Before responding, consider the following:
 - her statement: "Ready or not, here I c..." (Pg. 20)
 - the green field and sky outside her apartment door
 - the "shadowy figure" (Pg. 20)
 - the figure's song

2. Find at least three pieces of evidence from the novel to support your prediction about what will happen to Hannah. Be sure to include page numbers for any quotations.

I predict that _____

For the following reasons:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity III: Plot**Chapters 1–4**

The plot of a novel is the sequence of events that take place within it, beginning with the introduction and ending with the conclusion. The plot of a novel is divided into the following sections:

- A. **Introduction:** the setting and the characters' background information—names and personalities; may be either descriptive or brief
- B. **Conflict:** the big problem that the characters spend most of the book trying to solve
- C. **Rising Action:** smaller problems that the characters experience as they try to solve the larger conflict
- D. **Climax:** the turning point; the most exciting, most suspenseful point in the novel
- E. **Falling Action:** the calming action and decrease in tension following the climax
- F. **Resolution:** the conclusion of the story; the outcome

At this point in the novel, you have discovered the conflict and moved into the rising action. In small groups, complete as much of the **PLOT OUTLINE** as possible. Since you have not reached the climax yet, you will leave some of the outline blank. You will rejoin your group and add to your diagram after reading the remainder of the novel.

Name: _____

Date: _____

PLOT OUTLINE

A. Introduction:

B. Conflict:

C. Rising Action:

D. Climax:

E. Falling Action:

F. Resolution:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity IV: Characterization**Chapters 1–4**

The Devil's Arithmetic includes many characters. To help you remember each character's part in the novel, keep a **CHARACTER LOG**, in which you list important facts about each character. Here are examples of information you may wish to include:

- the character's relationship to Hannah or another character
- the character's place in society and occupation
- important quotes by the character
- descriptions of the character
- actions and thoughts of the character
- important character traits

The characters that have been introduced in Chapters 1–4 are included on your log. Fill in facts for each character. A few facts about Hannah have been provided for you.

As you continue reading the novel, add additional characters and facts to your log. Since there are many minor characters in *The Devil's Arithmetic* and many major characters that are not introduced until later in the novel, this log will be valuable and should help you study for tests and complete writing assignments.