

# IS IT NIGHT OR DAY?

## *Teacher's Guide*

FOR  
USE WITH  
COMMON CORE  
STATE  
STANDARDS



Ages 10–14 • Grades 5–9  
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### ABOUT THE BOOK

It's 1938, and twelve-year-old Edith is about to move from the tiny German village she's lived in all her life to a place that seems as foreign as the moon: Chicago, Illinois. And she will be doing it alone. This dramatic and chilling novel about one girl's escape from Hitler's Germany was inspired by the experiences of the author's mother, one of twelve hundred children rescued by Americans as part of the One Thousand Children project.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**FERN SCHUMER CHAPMAN** is the author of *Motherland: Beyond the Holocaust: A Mother-Daughter Journey to Reclaim the Past*, which was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. She lives in northern Illinois.

To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!



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## LISTENING AND SPEAKING

After reading *Is It Night or Day?* engage students in a variety of discussion groups (one-to-one, teacher-led, student-directed), which provide students with the opportunity to express their own thinking clearly and build on classmates' ideas. This group work invites students to construct comprehension through collaboration. Students should enter into the discussions having been assigned predetermined sections and/or chapters to examine and be ready to share developed ideas with the group. Teachers may choose to assign students specific roles for these discussions such as word wizard (who uncovers new or interesting vocabulary or phrase usage), questioner (who considers the chosen passage and asks provocative queries to deepen the group's thoughts), synthesizer (who strives to bring together the big ideas across the passage), or predictor (who suggests some thinking of what may occur next and works to provide evidence regarding the accuracy of their predictions); these roles can be rotated to encourage students to work on various comprehension strategies. Teachers should model ways to provide evidence from the text to support thinking.

**CCSS: SL. 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1**

Encourage students to recognize the significance of character development in *Is It Night or Day?* by asking them to discuss in pairs how specific characters drew them into the reading and/or how the author utilized the characters' words and actions to provide a strong sense of the setting, both time and place.

**CCSS: SL. 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1**

Fern Schumer Chapman wrote many scenes that come alive visually and could be interpreted by readers as a means of utilizing their visual literacy (mental imaging) while synthesizing sections of the text. In small groups, ask students to interpret a chapter from *Is It Night or Day?* using an alternate art medium such as acting, painting, or collage. A few powerful examples include the scenes when Edith leaves on the boat while her family stays behind on the dock (p. 32-35); when the children travel and meet the distressed boy on the train (p. 79-80); or when Edith finds her friend from the ship, Julius (p. 141-143).

**CCSS: SL. 5.2, 5.5, 6.2, 6.5, 7.2, 7.5, 8.2, 8.5**

## READING LITERATURE

Individually or in partners, ask students to choose a theme from the story based on their reading of the text. Then ask students to document the theme's development over the course of the story, citing examples from the text including the theme's relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; evidence from the book should support their thinking. Possible themes include war, relocation, family relationships, immigration, and economic considerations.

**CCSS: RL. 5.2, 6.2, 7.2, 8.2**



Throughout the story, Fern Schumer Chapman uses German words and phrases to provide context, adding to readers' experiences and connecting readers to Edith's experiences also. After reading, ask students to determine the meaning of the German words and phrases as they are used in the text. Then ask students to consider the following questions: Why did the author use German? How do these German words and phrases impact the story? How do we learn more about the characters, the setting, and/or the significance of the historical period by hearing the characters speak in German?

**CCSS: RL. 5.4, 6.4, 7.4, 8.4**

*Is It Night or Day?* has an evident first-person narrative. Edith tells the story from a 12-year-old's point of view. In pairs, ask students to consider the importance of the author's chosen point of view. Consider questions such as, how would the story be different if it was narrated from another character's point of view? How would it be the same? How do we "hear" from other characters?

**CCSS: RL. 5.5, 6.5, 7.5, 8.5**

## WRITING

Throughout Edith's journey there are many events and characters that elicit reactions from readers, making the creation of an opinion piece a meaningful way to utilize this text. After reading, ask students to develop an opinion about the book, based on a character or theme, and support that perspective with relevant information from the text. A few examples include: Julius's Americanization; Aunt Mildred's cool welcoming of Edith; Father and Mother's earlier decisions to stay with grandmother.

**CCSS: W. 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1**

After reading Edith's story, ask students to imagine being in the place of the children traveling from Germany and then have them write a short narrative about their imagined experience. Students should create settings, characters, and situations that transport readers into their narratives. Sensory details should be included, and a conclusion should wrap up this narrative piece. *Is It Night or Day?* acts as a mentor text for these narrative techniques.

**CCSS: W. 5.3, 6.3, 7.3, 8.3**

In pairs, ask students to conduct short research projects on nonfiction topics that arose from reading this piece of historical fiction. Students should utilize several sources to build knowledge on a self-selected topic. *Is It Night or Day?* provides entry points into multiple areas of U.S. and world history that would engage writers and encourage them to find out more—with an informational writing piece as the final product.

**CCSS: W. 5.7, 6.7, 7.7, 8.7**

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