

THROUGH THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE FABRIC OF SURVIVAL

THE EARLY DAYS (Pictures 1-6)

Describe Esther's village – what kind of place did Esther grow up in?
What did people do for work?



Picture 1

What impressions do you have of Esther's life as a child?

What can you learn about Esther's family from her pictures? How did Esther feel about her family? How are these relationships and feelings described in Esther's pictures? How do these compare to your own memories of your family life?



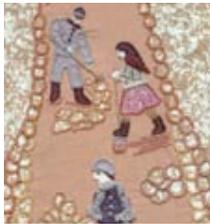
Picture 3

What role did religion play in Esther's life? How can you tell?



Picture 6

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Picture 8

THE WAR ARRIVES (Pictures 7-16)

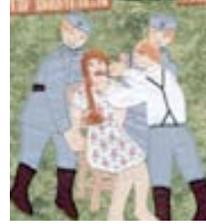
What happened to the Jews when the Germans first came to the village? What happened as time passed?



Picture 10



Picture 7



Picture 9

How did Esther and her parents react to these events?



Picture 12



Picture 13

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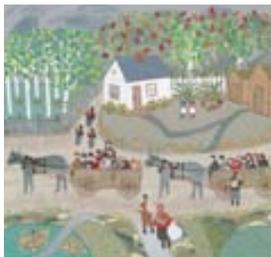
GOODBYE MY CHILDREN, MAYBE YOU WILL LIVE: OCTOBER 15 (Pictures 17-20)

On the day Esther and her sister said goodbye to their parents, their mother Rachel packed sacks with bread and cheese, and each took potato-digging tools, pictured alongside their sacks in picture 17. Why do you think they chose these items?



Picture 17

In pictures 17 and 18, Esther is shown leaving her family from two different perspectives. Esther said that this was the most difficult scene for her to recreate, yet she came back to it again. How are these pictures different?



Picture 18

What sorts of feelings do you think Esther had on this day? How does she convey them? Are there objects or colors that convey these feelings?



Picture 20



Picture 19

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ON THEIR OWN (Pictures 21-26)

The scenes depicted in picture 21 take place over several days. What happens to Esther and her sister over this period of time? Describe the different scenes taking place in this picture.



Picture 21

Coming out from the woods and on to the open road, in picture 22, Esther sees a Gestapo barracks and two German soldiers in her path. She has to make a choice: to keep going or to turn back and hide in the woods. She decides to keep going. What did she have to do to pass safely?



Picture 22

In pictures 23 and 24, Esther shows herself and her sister Mania in hiding. How does she depict these places, and how do you think she feels in them?



Picture 23

Picture 26 depicts a dream in which Esther's mother takes her by the hand, pulling her along in flight from a falling sky. Why do you think Esther had this dream? Can we tell from the picture that this is a dream?



Picture 26

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LIBERATION AND A NEW LIFE (Pictures 30-36) *Continued*

When Esther joined the army, she became one of the liberators shown in picture 32. Although triumphant here, the Russian/Polish army still faced many dangers. Why do you think Esther joined, despite this continuing danger? How are the mixed feelings of danger and liberation expressed in this picture?

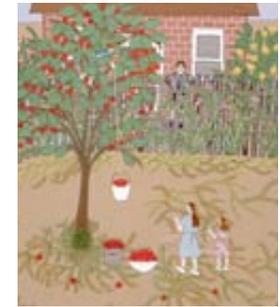


Picture 32

In pictures 33 and 34, Esther describes her arrival and early years in America, where she has established a new life. Who has she become? What feelings about this new life and identity do these pictures convey?



Picture 33



Picture 34

Why do you think that the last two pictures shown (35 and 36) are portraits of Esther's family? What kinds of feelings do these pictures express, and how do they relate to other emotions expressed in other pictures?



Picture 35



Picture 36

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ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the different groups of people represented in Esther's pictures? How do we know? Does everyone get along? Why do you think that?



Picture 24

How does Esther depict Nazis in her pictures?
How does she depict Poles?

When did Esther reveal her identity? When did she hide it?

What aspects of Esther's personality helped her to survive? Where are these aspects shown? Where do you think these traits came from?

Which moments in Esther's story do you think foreshadow later choices in which Esther showed these personality traits?

How did Esther's parents help their children to survive?

Esther's natural environment is a major element throughout her works. In some cases, it provides protection. In other cases, the environment provides clues or signs. Select several pictures in which the natural environment plays an important role in protecting Esther, or in guiding the story, and describe how Esther shows this.
