Your open palms raised in the air
like two white doves
frame your meager face,
your face contorted with fear,
grown old with knowledge beyond your years.
Not yet ten. Eight? Seven?
Not yet compelled to mark
with a blue star on white badge
your Jewishness.

No need to brand the very young.
They will meekly follow their mothers.
You are standing apart
against the flock of women and their brood
with blank, resigned stares.
All the torments of this harassed crowd
are written on your face.
In your dark eyes—a vision of horror.
You have seen Death already
on the ghetto streets, haven’t you?
Do you recognize it in the emblems
of the SS man facing you with his camera?
Like a lost lamb you are standing
apart and forlorn beholding your own fate.

Where is your mother, little boy?
Is she the woman glancing over her shoulder
at the gunmen by the bunker’s entrance?
Is it she who lovingly, though in haste,
buttoned your coat, straightened your cap,
pulled up your socks?
Is it her dreams of you, her dreams
of a future, Einstein, a Spinoza,
another Heine or Halévy,
they will murder soon?
Or are you orphaned already?
But, even if you still have a mother,
she won’t be allowed to comfort you
In her arms.
Her tired arms loaded with useless bundles
must remain up in submission.

Alone you will march
among other lonely wretches
toward your martyrdom.

Your image will remain with us
and grow and grow
to immense proportions,
to haunt the callous world,
to accuse it, with ever stronger voice,
in the name of the million youngsters
who lie, pitiful rag-dolls,
their eyes forever closed.
“The Little Boy with His Hands Up”
Yala Korwin

SUMMARY
Examining a photograph of a crowd of people being herded off by German soldiers, the speaker of the poem reflects on the thoughts and feelings of the young boy at the center of the picture. The speaker eulogizes the boy’s martyrdom at the hands of the Nazis.

QUESTIONS (Refer to the poem on page 187 to answer these questions.)
1. To what does the poet compare the boy’s hands? What message does this image convey?
2. What other comparisons are used to describe the children and the women? What do these comparisons imply?
3. Why does the poet refer to “useless bundles”?
4. Through the use of figurative language (imagery, similes, metaphors, diction, and symbolism), the poet conveys information about events, perpetrators, bystanders, and victims of the Holocaust. How might the impact of this poem differ from that of a newspaper account of the same circumstances? Why is the poem effective?
CHAPTER 7

Slowly life in the ghetto begins again. With the help of friends, I manage to get a job that I can do from the house: From a rug factory I receive scraps of fabric, which I braid and roll into large rolls to be used in the making of rugs for the Germans.

As a “home-worker,” I lose the right to the daily soup given at the factory. But I get to stay home with Laibele and care for him.

Motele and Moishele save their portions of soup until they come home at five. We all share their soup for our dinner.

Laibele’s condition worsens, and the gallstones that I developed two years ago cause painful attacks—with Mama’s love and care, the pain was easier to endure—but we try to comfort each other with our devotion.

My legs swell up more and more, but there is nothing I can do about it. I try to keep my brothers from noticing it.

They cannot help; why make them worry?

One morning, as I get out of my bed, my legs buckle. I lose my balance and fall back against the bed. I feel silly and try to smile. Startled, Laibele looks at me from across the room. But, seeing my embarrassed smile, he makes a joke of it: “Well, well, my sister is drunk today. I bet you can’t walk a straight line from your bed to mine.”

“Oh, so you are a wise guy now.”

I stand up, but my legs give way again, and I fall to the floor. We stop smiling. I try to hide my fear. “Well, you win. I am drunk.”

“You must be very tired. You have to rest a little more today.” Laibele’s eyes are filled with worry.

I pull myself up and get back to bed. Several hours later I try again and fall again. My feet refuse to hold me up. Day after day, I keep trying; day after day, I keep falling.

Motele tries to get a doctor to come to the house. No luck. Our neighbor, Mrs. Avner, shriveled and hardly holding herself up, looks in on us daily. Her son-in-law, Moishe, spends the evening with us, trying to keep up our spirits.

It is heartbreaking to see the fear in Laibele’s eyes. Now that I am his mother, will he lose me, too?

“Rifkele, please eat my bread. It will help you get stronger,” he pleads. I refuse; he gets angry with me. But he finally gives in and eats his meager portion of bread.

One evening, Moishele, his blue eyes shining, bends over my bed, his hands hidden behind his back. “Close your eyes and open your mouth.”

“What are you up to?” I ask.

“Come on, listen to him,” Motele and Laibele join in. “Open your mouth, close your eyes. Trust us.”

They are excited and very mysterious.

“All right, I’ll play your game.” I open my mouth slightly.

Moishele slips something soft through my lips. “Bite into it,” he urges. “Come on, bite into it.”

Slowly, cautiously I bite into the plump, soft object. A burst of sweet, tangy juice fills my mouth suddenly with a delightful, long-forgotten taste.

Is it real? Is it possible? A tangerine? A real tangerine in the ghetto? In our home? In my mouth?

I open my eyes. Motele’s joyous smile, his proud look tells me it is real. Holding the tangerine in his hand, Moishele says, “We traded our bread for it at the black market. This will help you get well. You’ll see, you’ll see.”
The Cage: Chapter 7 and 17
Ruth Minsky Sender

Tears choke me. My darling brothers, they gave up their bread—they will go hungry a whole week—for one tangerine. I should be angry at them, but they are my miracle. Their devotion is the greatest wonder in this cage.

My tears finally break loose. “I love you all so much.” I take the tangerine, break it into sections, put it on a plate. “I will not eat it alone. We’ll give Laibele half—he is sick—and we’ll share the rest. We’ll have a party.”

But it’s for you, to make you well,” they protest.

I push the plate aside. “We’ll share, or I will not eat. I mean it.” We share. I swallow the sweet pieces of the fruit slowly, savoring each drop of the delicious nectar, my heart bursting with love for those three beautiful kids, my kids.

I must get well. I must get well.

QUESTION

Despite desperate circumstances, Ruth manages to care for her brothers, and they, in turn, demonstrate the strength and tenacity of their love for her. Describe how the family now functions in the ghetto, and discuss how their actions might be interpreted as a form of resistance to the oppression of the Nazi regime.

CHAPTER 17

An order comes from the ghetto government. We must vacate our home within a few weeks. The building we live in is going to be torn down and used for firewood. We have expected this to happen. Still, it shakes us up.

The ghetto suffers a shortage of heating supplies. The cold in the homes brings more sickness and more death. The ghetto population is getting smaller and smaller. To help the people to survive, the older buildings are being torn down and used for heating.

I look around me. This place has been our home all our lives. My entire family fills the house with memories. I feel Laibele’s presence around us. I hear his sweet, gentle voice. Courage, my dear sister, courage.

Motele and Moishele speak very little as we pack our belongings. We all know in our hearts that we are attending a funeral. There are no words to ease the pain. We are the last three survivors of our family, parting forever with the traces or our childhood, with memories that still live here.

I stare at the empty house. My feet stay nailed to the floor, refusing to take the last step that will cut us off from here forever.

Yulek [a friend who visits daily] takes my arm gently, walks me to the door. “They will always live in your heart and mind. You are taking them all with you,” he says.

Our new home, a one-room walk-in, was once a small grocery store. It has a front and back entrance and a very large cellar.

“It may be of great value to us,” Motele says while he examines the huge, clay opening in the
floor. “It is big and deep.

It will make a good hiding place from the Nazis. Just think: This place that was used to store potatoes, vegetables, coal—this dark, cold hole—will now be used to hide people for as long as possible.”

I listen to the sound of Motele’s voice and try to picture this place filled with sacks of flour, sugar, rice, beans. This cellar filled with vegetables. Shelves of bread and rolls. Buckets of milk, butter, eggs. And people: mothers with children by their sides, buying food for their families, busy with their daily chores.

Where are they all now? Where are the mothers? Where are the small children? Where are the people whose voices filled this room?

“Riva!” Moishele startles me. “Are you wandering in the past again? What were you thinking of?” He looks at me with so much warmth, this sweet, young child who never had any childhood.

He was only eight years old when the Nazis marched into Lodz. They crushed his world. He is twelve now, an orphan with a heart full of sorrow but also love and tenderness. A gentle soul, full of hope.

“Riva, this is our home now. Life must go on.” He swallows hard. “Let’s get organized. Let’s keep going.”

I put my arms around him and hold him close. I kiss his light brown hair.

“I am so lucky to have you two, my wise and darling brothers. I still have you two to hold onto. I love you both so much.”

Moishele touches my hand, slightly embarrassed by my show of emotion.

“We love you, too, Riva, but let’s not get mushy. We have work to do.” But his voice betrays the fullness of his heart.

Motele puts his arms around Moishele. “Hey, look at those shoulders,” he says with a twinkle in his eyes. “Boy, you are growing so big. Big enough to move furniture around. So let’s get going. Let’s start with the beds. How about putting them against the wall over here?” He points to the wall on our right and stops, his eyes fixed on the corner of the left wall as if writing invisible to our eyes but clear and calling to him were written there.

“The library! The secret library!” he cries out with excitement. “This corner will be perfect for it! Look closely. It is right near the back door. Easy for people to come and go without the neighbors noticing. We’ll put curtains over the shelves, and it will look like a closet. Riva! Moishele! Let’s do it! Let’s bring the library over to our house!”

Moishele and I look at his radiant eyes, burning with an inner flame. We, too, feel his excitement. We, too, are caught up in his vision. The library!

It took so long for the members of the adult socialist movement, the Bund, to get the library together. Young and old, risking their lives, slowly collected, slowly salvaged hidden books that were not burned by the Nazis, forming the secret library.

Books are not allowed in the ghetto. Still, they are here! We read. We study. We learn and we draw strength from the books.

The library is hidden at the home of the Rosenfarb family now. But its popularity, the traffic it brings to the Rosenfarbs’, is putting those kind, dedicated people in constant danger.
The time has come to move the library to a different place.

Learning takes the place of food now. The books give us hope; strengthen our will to live, to plan for a better, brighter tomorrow. The knowledge they bring to our hungry minds gives new energy to our weak bodies.

We cannot give up the library. But what price do we have to pay to house it? We must put our lives in danger. Motele’s, Moishele’s, my own.

I look at Moishele. I look at Motele. Their faces show no fear. Only determination. They are waiting for a sign of my approval.

“Well, someone has to do it, so why not us? Why not here?”

The boys from the woodworking shops steal wood for the shelves piece by piece, risking their lives with each little board they smuggle out of the shops. I make curtains from fabric that Mama never had a chance to use up. I wonder, What would Mama say if she knew what we were doing? I think she would approve.

Slowly but surely, a few books at a time, we move three hundred books to their new home at 18 Berka-Joselewicha Street.

QUESTIONS

1. Life in the ghetto involves daily struggles to survive; how could Ruth wistfully refer to the ghetto as home?

2. Motele speaks of the new dwelling, a former grocery store, as a great place to hide from the Nazis, and Riva (Ruth) dreams of families who used to shop from the well-stocked shelves. How do both practical thinking and wishful thinking contribute to a person’s ability to survive?

3. How does the creation of a library exemplify both a survival strategy and a means of resistance?
He banged his fists against his chest like a gorilla and ran after them with his back hunched and his arms swinging, making gorilla noises. The boys went crazy with delighted terror and ran off. It was just a bad fight, she told herself. All couples fight. Right, said Celeste. Thanks so much. A playdate with the little boy who—. Yes, said Madeline. The little strangler. An Indian boy who lost his mother in 1986 has found her 25 years later from his new home in Tasmania - using satellite images. Saroo was only five years old when he got lost. He was travelling with his older brother, working as a sweeper on India's trains. "It was late at night. I thought my brother would come back and wake me up but when I awoke he was nowhere to be seen. I saw a train in front of me and thought he must be on that train. So I decided to get on it and hoped that I would meet my brother." Saroo did not meet his brother on the train. Instead, he fell asleep and had a shock when he woke up 14 hours later. The little boy learned to fend for himself. He became a beggar, one of the many children begging on the streets of the city. "I had to be quite careful. Boy and girl having their hands up. Cute children waving hand. Little boy in green shirt whispering. Girl of a victory Pose/It is an illustration of a girl who poses a victory. Little boy licking lollipop. Girl in pink dress crying. Happy Dark-Haired Little Girl Standing and Drinking Water From Plastic Bottle Vector Illustration. Girl and boy dancing illustration. Children shmoney dance move illustration. Little girl with question marks. Girl vector cartoon illustration. Boy and Girl. Usage Information. Vector image "Little boy with his hand up" can be used for personal and commercia