

LESSON ONE

CHAPTER ONE

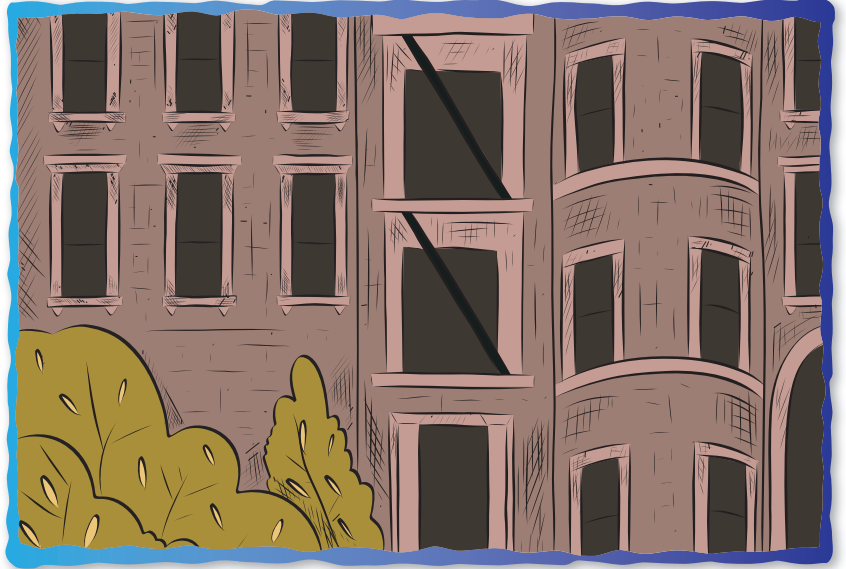
THE GUEST

BY MIRIAM DANSKY

More of Our Lives (Targum Press)

LITERARY FOCUS

Setting



INTRODUCTION

Children like to fantasize about where they'll live when they grow up, like, "When I'm older, I will live in Alaska and play with black bears." As our thoughts and perspectives mature, reality shows us that there are many practical factors that determine where we will live, while the wishful dream locations fade away. Financial feasibility is usually high on the list: Will I be able to afford to buy a property in this area? Geographical closeness to family and friends has an impact, too. Many feel that being close to their parents and siblings is of paramount importance. Others may want to branch out and prefer not to live very close to those they already know well.

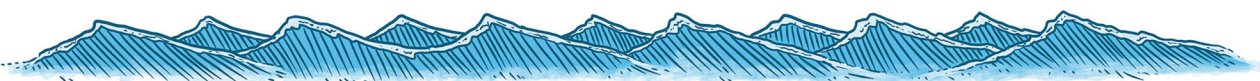
An important point to consider is that the type of people one will be surrounded by makes a big difference to their quality of life. As the popular proverb goes, "Ask about the neighbors, then buy the house." Your neighbors are your closest community; be sure you'd be happy to spend years in their company. In the following story, we will meet a character who made a cross-continental move and struggled painfully through it. The stark contrast between her and her surroundings served to highlight her inner values.

LITERARY FOCUS: Setting

The setting of the story is the time and place in which a story happens. A story can take place in the past, present, or future. It can happen in any place on the globe, in outer space, or in an imaginary place. The setting impacts the plot of a story. Certain things are more likely to happen in specific environments.



Create a setting. Explain how it would influence a story's plot.





In the story *The Guest*, the protagonist, Bobbe, must have left Russia in the early years of the century, while Rosa, the antagonist, left Russia in the later part. This explains why Rosa was not aware of the many laws and traditions of Jewish life.





Highlight the words in this paragraph that are examples of imagery. ★

"There were the large streets, seething with traffic. Then there was the garbage, lying about the streets...the dark labyrinths of fire escapes. And the people were a heaving, pushing, amorphous mass of humanity of all colors and sizes, of all shapes and descriptions."

How does the imagery the author uses enhance the scene being described? ★

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Find an idiom in the second paragraph. ■

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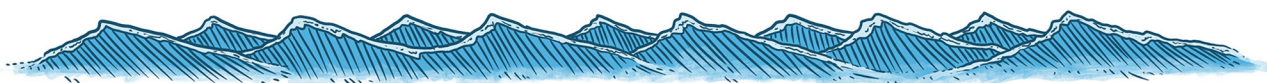
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Every race seemed to be represented here—Italians, Puerto Ricans, Chinese, Black people. They didn't walk, they glided along, sometimes with headphones on their ears, sometimes with huge radios belting out music. They hung in groups on street corners, calling to each other: ★

"How're you doin', man?"

And among all those strange faces, Jewish faces, men, women, children, rushing to work, to school, on buses, in cars, on the sidewalks. Only once had she ridden the subway. You descended downwards to the bowels of the earth. The carriages of the train, when it arrived, were all scribbled on, as if by some **demented delinquent**. Once inside the train, everyone just hung, packed up against each other. One man was swaying above her to the rhythm of the train. When she looked up, she saw he was asleep. Asleep standing up! She wondered if these swaying, somnolent, sweaty creatures could be called human beings. ■

And all this frantic activity did not cease with the end of the day. Even at night there was no peace. She was awakened by strange sounds, the sounds of drums, or bongos maybe, police sirens wailing, dogs barking somewhere in the park a few blocks away where no one dared to walk anymore. So this was America, the "*Goldene Medinah*" they used to talk of with such awe at home.



Sometimes she dreamed she was back in the shtetl in Russia—a tiny village where half the population was Jewish. It had been a good life, though simple; one eked out a living, the men studied in their spare time. Sometimes she dreamt about those hard years in Seattle trying to bring up a growing boy in a secular environment. And then the decision to send Yosef Chaim away to school in New York. She remembered him clinging to her, pleading with her not to send him.

“But Mummy, I’m afraid, afraid...”

But then, she would awake. The sun would be breaking over New York City largely unseen, ignored.

Lately, she didn’t venture out much. One of her main outings for the week was her trip to the corner shop, Goldberger’s, where Mr. Goldberger, a huge figure in his soiled apron, sat wedged behind the till. It was a supermarket now. One had to pick out what one wanted, but he always greeted her with a nod. ●

“So Bobbe, how’s life treating you?” he would ask expansively, as if greeting an old friend.

It didn’t take long for him to total up her few groceries.

“I live, I survive,” she would invariably answer.

Sometimes she met people she knew here, people who knew her son or his wife, Chana, or someone familiar from the small social club she attended on weekends. They all called her Bobbe. For with her small, bowed frame, she was the **epitome** of a Jewish grandmother, symbolic of another era. She was always on the lookout for guests. For she did not take easily to living alone, to being alone, to having no one with whom to share whatever little she possessed of worldly goods.

“Goldene Medinah” is a Yiddish phrase meaning the “golden land.” America was often referred to as such by the Jews living in Eastern Europe. The information they got about America made it sound like a dream place to live in and make a fortune.

READING CHECK

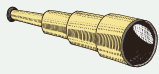
Describe the life Bobbe used to lead and contrast it with her present-day life.

A



Notice how the author makes specific word choices to connote certain associations. Point out specific phrases and explain their effect. ●





PREDICTION TWO

What will happen next? ★



Identify some more phrases that have connotations and explain their effect. ★

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READING CHECK

What attracted Bobbe to Rosa?

B

"Kum arein zu mir" is a Yiddish phrase meaning "come along with me." Yiddish was the mother tongue of most Jews living in Russia during the 20th century.

One day in Goldberger's, from the other side of the shelves, she heard a familiarly Russian-sounding voice breaking over the English words with guttural, harsh, grating sounds. She peeked around the boxes at the end of the row. A dark, heavy-eyed woman was standing, tins in hand, trying to read the unfamiliar labels or perhaps make out the prices. ★

"Shalom aleichem, can I be of help?" she greeted her. The woman looked up. She must have been well into middle age, she judged. She wore a heavy wool cardigan, the ends of which she kept trying to gather with her free hand. She seemed deeply puzzled, her brows knitted together in a heavy look of deep earnestness.

"My name is Rosa. Iz new here. Come from Russia two weeks maybe. Not know a lot," she concluded vaguely, extending her hand.

"You all alone?"

"Some relatives in Miami. Will call later.

No husband. Is dead. Son still in Russia. Not let him come."

"Kum arein zu mir," Bobbe Teitlebaum answered almost automatically. "I have a place. Fine bed, too."

So they returned to the small apartment together. Together they trudged up the dark, cheerless staircase.

"Light is broke. Landlord will soon fix," Bobbe muttered.

"All that I have is yours," Bobbe proclaimed as soon as they opened the dark door. "My house is yours. My table is your table. My food is your food..."

"But iz so little. You have little," Rosa interrupted. "How can I take?" her glance taking in the sparsely furnished room.

"I have plenty." Bobbe waved her hand in a large **encompassing** gesture. "You're welcome to whatever I have."





READING CHECK  *How does Rosa relate to her difficult past?*



PREDICTION THREE

What will happen next? ★



Bobbe tried to fill the gaps in Rosa's Jewish knowledge. She spoke to her mostly of our history, stories of famous Jewish men and women, heroes of our heritage, and other stories too, from her long life. Sometimes they spoke in Yiddish, sometimes in Russian, sometimes a strange mixture of languages. Rosa didn't remember or even understand everything, but she was left with an overwhelming impression of pride. Bobbe was proud of her heritage, proud of her place among this eternal nation. Her faith was simple yet rock-like.



READING CHECK

List several ways Bobbe gave to Rosa.

D

Rosa was included in all of Bobbe's activities. They went shopping together, attended social gatherings together. When Bobbe was invited to her son's house, she insisted Rosa come too. Everywhere the frail, bent old lady and the large Russian woman were seen together.

One day her son spoke to her. He was concerned, he said, about the situation. It had gone on for too long.

"When is she going to find a place of her own? People are talking. They say she is out for what she can get from you—a free bed, a free meal. And she gives you nothing in exchange for this..."

"The good deed, the good deed of hospitality. It brings its own reward. For what more should I ask?" she answered firmly, and turned away.

It was winter again. There had been a heavy snowfall. Bobbe had gone to see the landlord in the next block. He had to do something about the heating. They would freeze to death, she had argued. It was not just for herself she asked, she had a guest.

When she returned, the apartment was quiet. Rosa never went out till about midday. ■

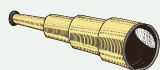
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READING CHECK

How did Rosa take leave?

Bobbe noticed a small square sheet of paper on the table. On it the words, "Called Cousin Max in Miami. I go to him now. Thanks for it all, Rosa."

Perhaps it had ended as people had said it would. Perhaps she had been, after all, a victim of **duplicity**, of ungratefulness and selfishness beyond her understanding. But somehow, she didn't feel that way. We come, we go, we pass through, we take, we are all guests in this world. She had been privileged to offer, to share, to give. It was far better, she thought, to be on this side of the fence. For she was, after all, fortunate. She had had what to give. And with that, she was content.



PREDICTION FOUR

What will happen next? ■



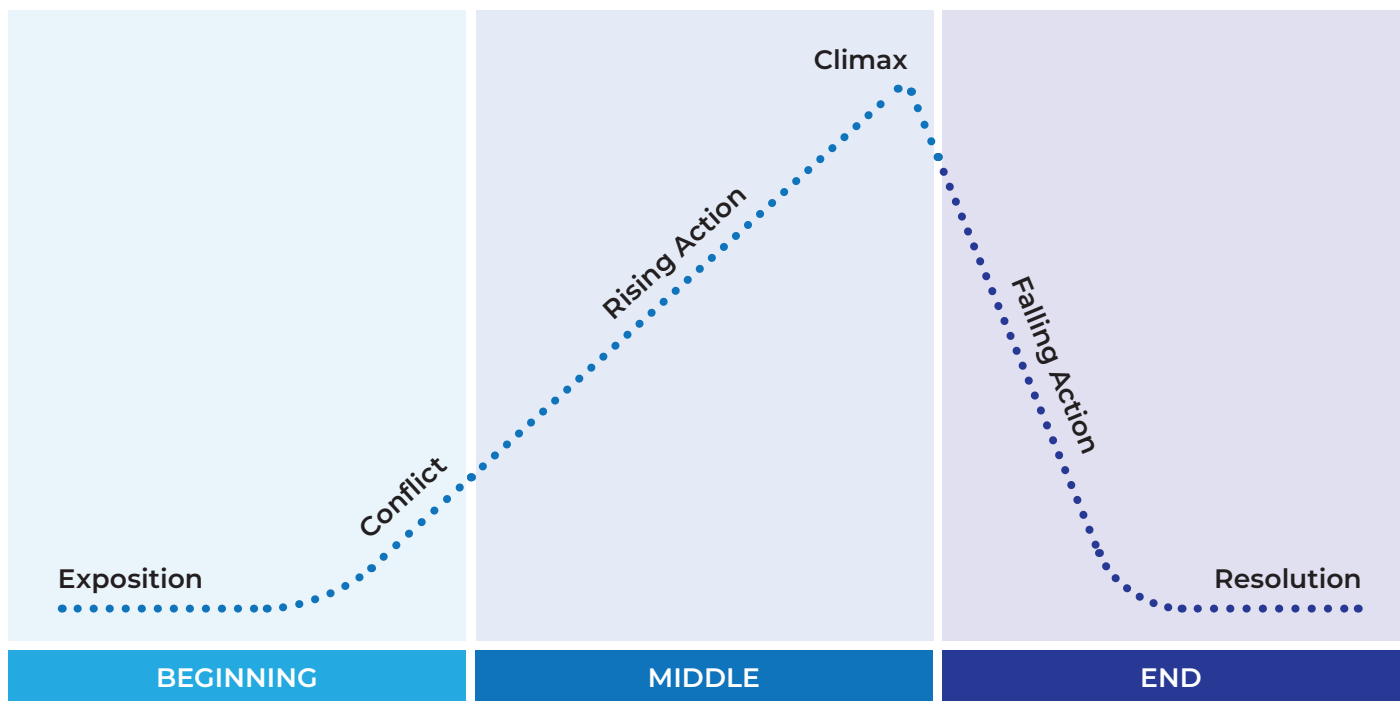
LESSON ONE

REVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Let us think about the essential question of the chapter: *Can people's experiences from different times or cultures be relevant and apply to our lives?* What ideas have you learned from this story that can help you answer this question by the end of the chapter?

PLOT



The diagram above shows all the parts of a plot. Use it to identify the parts of the plot in the story.



Exposition

Conflict

Rising Action

Climax

Falling Action

Resolution

CONFLICT

What is the conflict in this story? What type of conflict is it? Explain your answers.



THEME

What is the theme of the story?

PROTAGONIST/ANTAGONIST/POINT OF VIEW

Identify the protagonist and antagonist and explain from whose point of view the story is told.

VOCABULARY REVIEW

Choose the best definition of each of the words below using the context in which they are written.

VOCABULARY WORD	QUOTE FROM THE STORY THAT GIVES CONTEXT FOR THE WORD	DEFINITION THAT BEST FITS THE CONTEXT
enigma	"An impossible-to-fathom enigma ."	A. mystery B. experience C. predicament D. difficulty
labyrinths	"The dark labyrinths of fire escapes."	A. lines B. twists and turns C. mazes D. pathways
amorphous	"And the people were a heaving, pushing, amorphous mass of humanity of all colors and sizes, of all shapes and descriptions."	A. large B. formless C. mixed up D. indefinite



VOCABULARY WORD	QUOTE FROM THE STORY THAT GIVES CONTEXT FOR THE WORD	DEFINITION THAT BEST FITS THE CONTEXT
demented	"The carriages of the train, when it arrived, were all scribbled on, as if by some demented delinquent."	A. unstable B. crazy C. forgetful D. damaged
delinquent	"The carriages of the train, when it arrived, were all scribbled on, as if by some demented delinquent ."	A. young person who commits a minor crime B. robber C. sleuth D. imbecile
epitome	"For with her small, bowed frame, she was the epitome of a Jewish grandmother, symbolic of another era."	A. perfect example B. symbol C. picture D. antithesis
encompassing	"Bobbe waved her hand in a large encompassing gesture."	A. all-including B. surrounding C. inviting D. questioning
stultifying	"The summer heat was choking, stultifying ; it caught Rosa unprepared."	A. simmering B. inhibiting C. over-heating D. burning
simultaneously	"This strangles you, takes you by the throat," she complained, and simultaneously fanned herself with a large newspaper especially folded for the purpose."	A. in a quick motion B. at the same time C. with harsh movements D. in desperation
duplicity	"Perhaps she had been, after all, a victim of duplicity , of ungratefulness and selfishness beyond her understanding."	A. sadness B. boredom C. loneliness D. deceitfulness

