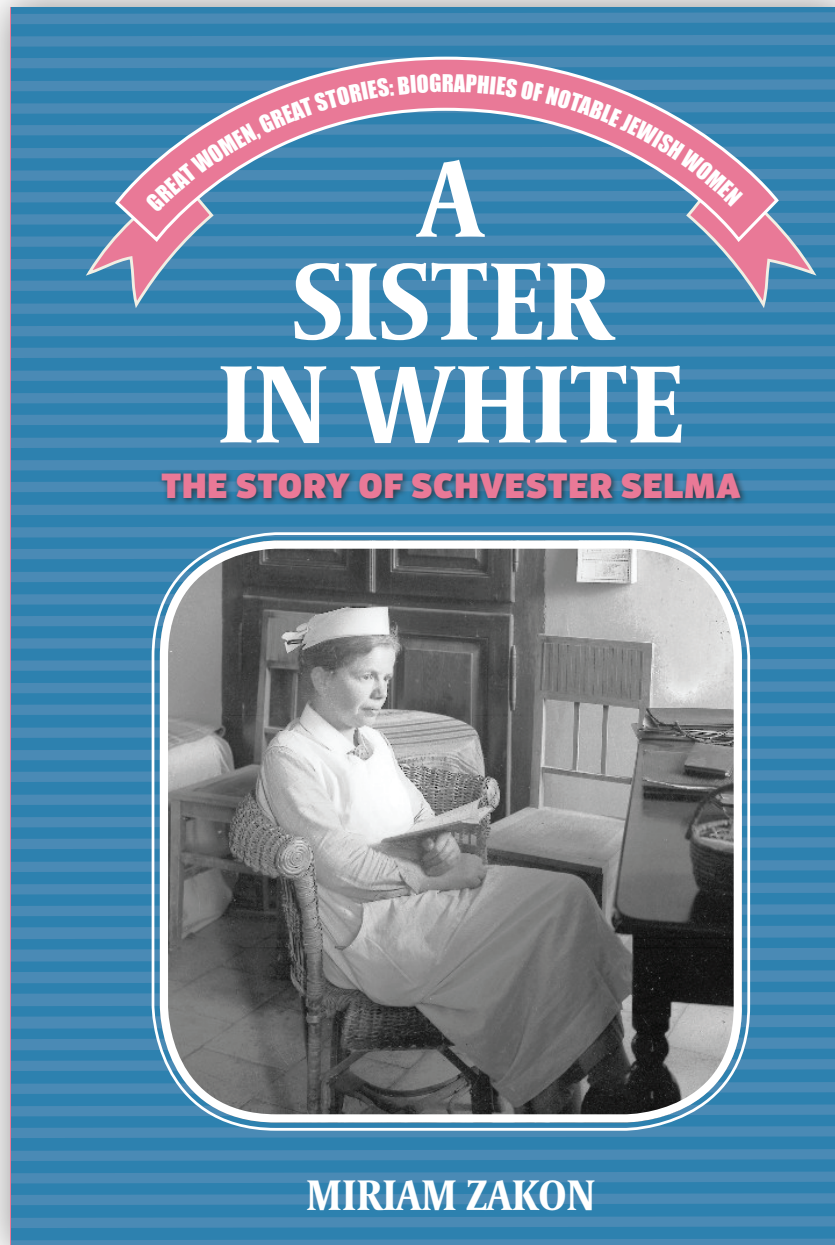


Educator's Guide



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FOR THE TEACHER

This guide consists of lessons to assist you in using *A Sister in White: The Story of Schwester Selma* in your classroom. The guide is written in a chapter-by-chapter format and includes a synopsis, pre-reading activities, and comprehension questions, as well as supplementary activities to be used at the end of the book.

The book and its accompanying guide can be used in a number of ways. Students reading at the same level might participate in a small-group guided reading of the book, returning to it over several weeks as they read and discuss it with the teacher. The entire class might read the book and discuss it in small groups using literature circles or reciprocal teaching. The teacher can then use the suggested questions to guide students in their discussions. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. Students should be encouraged to support their answers with evidence from the text. Students might keep a notebook of their responses throughout the year, which can then be used for progress monitoring and assessment purposes.

This teacher's guide includes many document-based questions. These questions focus on utilizing critical-thinking skills. Students are also asked to make comparisons, draw analogies, and apply historic analysis using primary and secondary sources from this time period. Source material for questions include photographs, maps, and documents. The questions can be used to teach students how to analyze source documents and deepen their understanding of the life and times of the person featured in this biography.

Using this guide can help you as a teacher create more active readers. Students who are encouraged to think about their reading, make inferences, compare and contrast events and characters, and notice author's language will read more closely and carefully. They will become more thoughtful readers, and their reading comprehension will improve. Working on this in the context of authentic literature helps to inspire a motivation and love for reading.

SYNOPSIS Schvester Selma served as a nurse at the fledgling Shaare Zedek hospital for over seventy years. She healed thousands of patients in Jerusalem.

Pre-Reading Activities

Use one or more of the following activities to introduce the book.

1. **Predictions:** Have students preview the book by reading the title, the author, and looking at the photograph on the cover. Ask them what they think this book will be about. Have they read any other books in this series? What language is the word *schvester*, and what does it mean? What clues can they gather about the book from the phrase “The Story of Schvester Selma”?
2. **Building Background:** Selma Meir trained as a nurse in Germany in the early 1900s. Give students background on nursing at that time, including information on Florence Nightingale, who opened the first nursing school in 1860 in London, and Clara Barton, who founded the American Red Cross after the Civil War.
3. **Building Background:** When Schvester Selma traveled to Palestine, it was in the midst of the First World War, or the Great War, as it was known at the time. Make sure students have a working knowledge of the two sides at war and who the allies were on each side.
4. **Genre Focus:** *A Sister in White: The Story of Schvester Selma* is a biography, meaning it tells the true story of a person’s life. As students read this book, have them complete the graphic organizer at the end of this packet to describe Schvester Selma’s character traits, life, and accomplishments.

A Note to Readers

1. What are some questions you now have about Schvester Selma? Note these questions and leave space to record their answers as you read the rest of the book.
2. Look closely at the photograph of Schvester Selma on page 7. Based on this photo, what predictions might you make about her personality?

CHAPTER 1 — TAKING THE TEST

SYNOPSIS Selma Meir takes the nursing test for the German State Diploma and receives top marks.

→ Prompt: Read to find out about Schvester Selma's beginnings as a nurse.

Guided Questions



1. Based on the descriptions of the professor and the students, what can you conclude about schooling at that time?
2. "Yet something about her caught his eye." What about Schvester Selma caught the teacher's eye? Refer to specific details in the text.
3. What experiences as a nurse did Schvester Selma already have by the time she passed her licensing exam?

CHAPTER 2 — TRAINS AND DONKEYS

SYNOPSIS Selma Meir, called Schvester Selma, is sent to Palestine to serve as head nurse at Dr. Wallach’s hospital in 1916.

→ Prompt: Read to find out why and how Schvester Selma travels to Palestine to take a position there.

Guided Questions


1. Add to your description of Schvester Selma that you began in the reader’s note. What else do you know about her now?
2. Explain how traveling to become a nurse in Palestine could fulfill Schvester Selma’s wartime obligation to her country.
3. Describe the factors pulling Selma to accept the position in Palestine and the factors pushing her to stay home. What finally convinced her to go?
-  4. **Creative writing:** Write a diary entry for Schvester Selma as she leaves Europe for Palestine. Include her thoughts and feelings as she departs.
-  5. **Geography:** Trace Selma’s train route from Germany to Palestine. How is this different from the route one would take today?

CHAPTER 3 — JERUSALEM OF OLD

SYNOPSIS Schvester Selma arrives at the hospital for the first time and is introduced to her boss, Dr. Wallach.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out what happens when Schvester Selma enters the hospital and meets the hospital director for the first time.

Guided Questions


1. Explain why Dr. Wallach left Germany to open a hospital in Palestine.
2. Why do you think Dr. Wallach was a particularly good choice for the director of this new hospital?
3. Describe Dr. Wallach's personality based on details provided in this chapter.
4. When Dr. Wallach offered Selma a rest or a drink, she responded, "I've come here to work, not to rest." What does this indicate about her personality? Explain.
5. Contrast the hospital setting in Palestine to the hospitals Selma was used to from back home in Germany.
-  6. **Creative writing:** Write a letter from Schvester Selma to her family and friends at home, describing her first impressions of Shaare Zedek Hospital.

CHAPTER 4 — THE NEW SCHVESTER

SYNOPSIS Schvester Selma begins working as head nurse in the hospital. She slowly introduces changes in hygiene and patient care.

→ Prompt: Read to find out about how Schvester Selma begins working and her relationships with the patients and staff.

Guided Questions

1. Study the photograph on page 32. What does this show about Schvester Selma's work and its importance?
2. Selma thought to herself, *I will bear the conditions here... And I will create a wonderful hospital.* What does this indicate about her personality?
3. List some of the innovations and new demands that Schvester Selma made on her nurses, and explain the reasons behind them.
4. What have you learned about Schvester Selma's personality in this chapter? What new information can you add to your description?
5. Compare and contrast Dudu's opinions of Schvester Selma at the beginning and end of the chapter. How and why did her feelings change?
6.  **Creative writing:** Write an announcement created by Schvester Selma to be placed in the hospital, instructing nurses on the new policies in place.

CHAPTER 5 — THE INCOMPARABLE DR. WALLACH

SYNOPSIS Despite the difficulties involved in her work, Schvester Selma learns to respect Dr. Wallach and his work.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how Schvester Selma feels about her work in the hospital.

Guided Questions



1. Explain the title of this chapter. In what way was Dr. Wallach incomparable?
2. Although Schvester Selma and Dr. Wallach were very different, they shared some characteristics. In what ways were they similar?
3. In what ways was Dr. Wallach “a big man”?
4. Why was Dr. Wallach a bit disappointed that Selma agreed for him to go to the bris?

CHAPTER 6 — BABIES

SYNOPSIS Schvester Selma takes care of mothers in the maternity ward and ends up fostering orphaned children and raising them in the hospital, together with Dr. Wallach.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Schvester Selma cares for new mothers and babies at the hospital.

Guided Questions



1. Describe Schvester Selma's conflicting feelings about the maternity ward.
2. "Hamburg seemed very far away. Very clean — and very, very far away." What is meant by this statement? In what ways did Germany seem particularly far away at this point in time?
3.  **Document-based question:** Refer to the photographs of Schvester Selma and her "children" on page 66. What can you infer about her personality from these pictures?
4.  **Creative writing:** Write a diary entry for Schvester Selma, reflecting her thoughts about staying and taking care of the orphaned child.

CHAPTER 7 — A NEW MASTER

SYNOPSIS The Great War rages in Jerusalem, and the hospital comes under attack. The Turkish army finally surrenders to the British.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how the hospital fares during the Great War.

Guided Questions


1. In what ways did the citizens of Jerusalem suffer during the Great War?
2. Explain why Dr. Wallach buried the boxes of new bandages.
3. Why were Dr. Wallach and Schvester Selma particularly frightened when the British soldiers arrived at the hospital?
4. Describe the Turkish surrender to the British, and explain why it was conducted at the hospital.
5. The chapter concludes with the words, “Enough of history: there was nursing to be done.” Explain what is meant by this sentence.
-  6. **Focus on History:** Who was General Allenby? What is he doing in the photograph on page 64?
-  7. **Creative writing:** Write a telegram from Schvester Selma to her family back home, informing them of the Turkish surrender.

CHAPTER 8 — RETURN TO GERMANY

SYNOPSIS Schvester Selma returns to Germany for a three-month break and finds that things are not all as she left them.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Schvester Selma takes a trip back home to Germany — and how she feels when she's there.

Guided Questions


1. Before reading the chapter, consider the title. Why do you think Schvester Selma returned briefly to Germany? What might she have felt when she was in her homeland? Why?
2. Describe two instances where someone stood up to Dr. Wallach and his reactions to each of those people. What do these suggest about his character?
3. Selma referred to Dr. Wallach as her "eccentric doctor." What is meant by this phrase?
4. Compare and contrast Selma's memories of hospitals in Germany to her experiences in Jerusalem. How did these affect her feelings about returning home?
5. What looked different to Selma when she returned to Germany?
6. The text says, "Yes. Hamburg had changed since Selma had left it. But, she realized, so had she." In what ways had Selma changed in the years of her absence?
-  7. **Document-based question:** Refer to the photographs of Schvester Selma on page 75. What details do you notice in the pictures?

CHAPTER 9 — NURSING

SYNOPSIS As the years go on, Schvester Selma cares for many sick people, including the wounded of the Chevron Massacre.

➔ **Prompt:** Read to find out more about Schvester Selma’s hospital duties.

Guided Questions


1. What were some of Schvester Selma’s unique jobs at the hospital?
2. Compare and contrast the description of nursing care at the hospital in the 1920s to the care there was when Selma first arrived.
3. Describe what made the isolation ward a particularly difficult place to work.
4.  **Creative writing:** Write a newspaper article describing the events of the Chevron Massacre as they related to the Shaare Zedek hospital.

CHAPTER 10 — THE NURSE BECOMES A TEACHER

SYNOPSIS Schvester Selma becomes a teacher of nurses and instructs the next generation.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how Schvester Selma begins to train nurses in the nursing school she establishes.

Guided Questions

1. Explain Schvester Selma's example of tea with sugar. What point was she trying to make?
2. Study the poem written by Schvester Selma on page 87. What ideas does it convey? What is meant by "duty was joy"?
3. Describe the typical day of a nursing student.
4. Explain why Schvester Selma encouraged Miriam to attend her friend's wedding even though it meant missing nursing duty.
5.  **Creative writing:** Write a diary entry for Esther, the nursing student who had to give up her half-day of vacation.

CHAPTER 11 — TRAGEDY

SYNOPSIS At Shaare Zedek, they take care of the wounded during the Israeli War of Independence. One of those killed is Bolissa, Selma's foster child.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Schvester Selma and her nurses care for the wounded in the Israeli War of Independence.

Guided Questions


1. Before reading the chapter, build background on the Israeli War of Independence. Who was fighting at this time and why?
2. Reread the first few pages of the chapter and describe the relationship between Bolissa and her foster mother.
3. Compare and contrast the experience at Shaare Zedek during this war with the experience in the hospital during World War I.
4. Describe Schvester Selma's reaction to Bolissa's death. What does this suggest about her personality?

CHAPTER 12 — WAR, AGAIN

SYNOPSIS Shaare Zedek hospital is hard-hit during the Israeli War of Independence.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out more about the effects of the Israeli War of Independence on the work being done at Shaare Zedek Hospital.

Guided Questions

1. Why did Schvester Selma take her yearly vacation so soon after Bolissa's death?
2. Explain why Schvester Selma was stuck in Nahariya and the efforts she took to get back to Jerusalem.
3. "But Schvester Selma wasn't going to let some Arabs on a hill keep her from her beloved hospital." What does this show about her character?
4. The text says, "One of Schvester Selma's beliefs was that if you try hard enough, things work out." Bring evidence from her life that this was an important idea to her.
5. Describe the conditions on the convoy ride back to Jerusalem.
6. Contrast conditions at the hospital during the war with those in the rest of Jerusalem.
7. What was the "saddest day of the entire war"? Explain.
8.  **Document-based question:** Examine the photograph of the convoy on page 102. What details do you notice in the picture? How did the convoys work, and why were they the safest way to reach Jerusalem?

CHAPTER 13 — ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS

SYNOPSIS Schvester Selma continues working at the hospital until she is very old.

→ Prompt: Read to find out about Schvester Selma's work at the hospital as an older woman.

Guided Questions

1. Describe the diamond ring given to Schvester Selma. Where did it come from, and what did it symbolize?
2. Explain the quotation at the end of the book, "*All the way to heaven, she thought.*"

Supplementary Activities

Use one or more of the following activities to conclude the book.

Creative Writing

Newspaper: Design the front page of a Jerusalem newspaper published on the day Schvester Selma arrived at Shaare Zedek.

Instructions: Write a set of instructions to the nurses of Shaare Zedek, explaining the demands they would need to meet in the early days of the hospital.

Recommendation: Write a recommendation as to why this book should be read or not.

Timeline: Select seven to ten major events from the story and plot them on an emotional timeline of Schvester Selma's life.

Paragraph: Which character in the story would you prefer to spend a day with, Schvester Selma or Dr. Wallach? Why? Write a paragraph explaining whom you would spend the day with, why, what you would do together, and what questions you would ask.

Focus on Character

Review the photographs throughout the book. What additional information do they provide about Schvester Selma's personality?

Focus on Title

Create two new titles for this book that would give readers a good idea of what the story is about.

Who Was Schvester Selma?

Facts

Year of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Year of Death: _____



Schvester Selma

Her major accomplishment was:

Some of her outstanding character traits were:

Biography Sketch

Physical Description

Actions

Character's Name

Her Thoughts and Feelings

What Others Say and Think about Her
