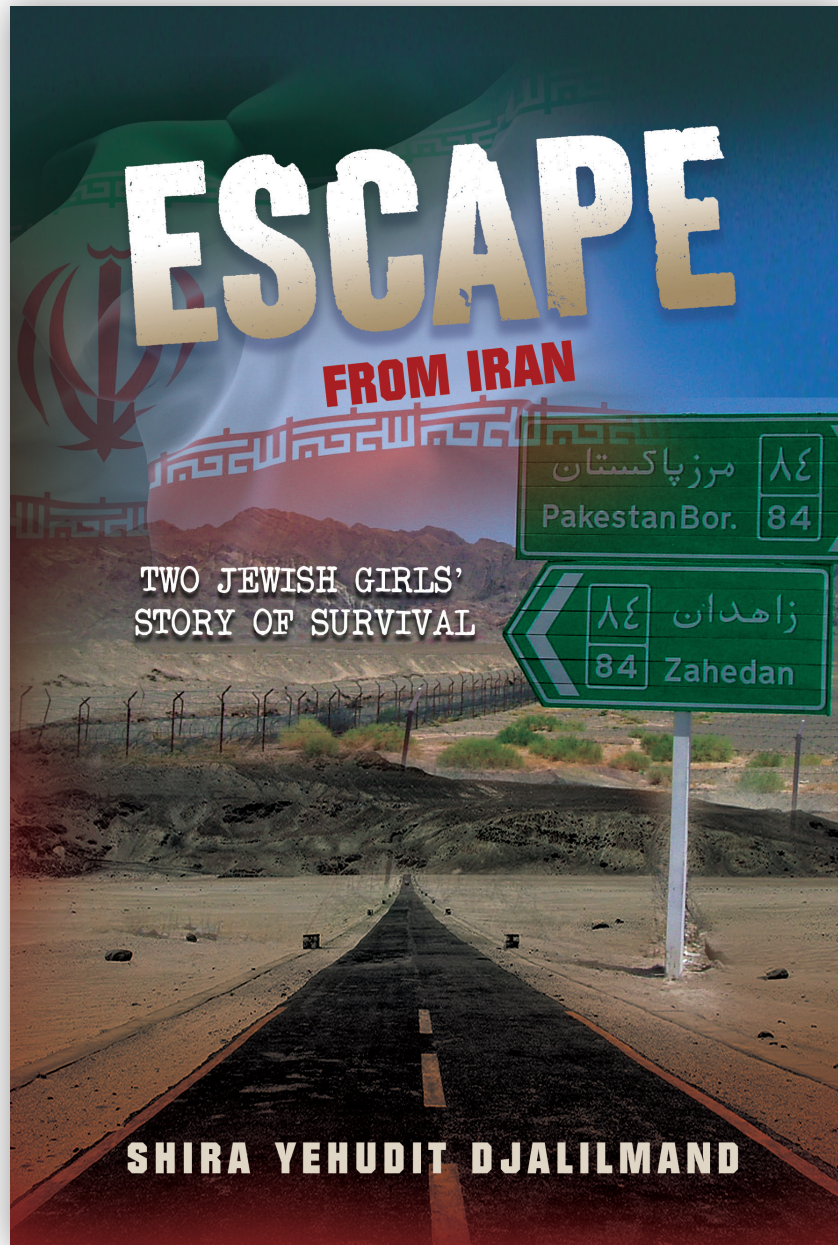


Educator's Guide



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FOR THE TEACHER

This guide consists of lessons to assist you in using *Escape from Iran: Two Jewish Girls' Story of Survival* 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 people featured in this book.

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 Twin sisters Pari and Maheen escaped Iran of the 1980s for Israel. Their escape was fraught with challenges and fear, intertwined with many twists of Divine Providence along the way.

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 picture on the cover. Ask them what they think this book will be about. Have they read any other books in this series? What clues can they gather about the book from the phrase "Story of Survival"? What clues can they gather from the photograph on the cover?
2. **Building Background:** This book tells the story of two sisters who escaped Iran in the 1980s. Discuss with students their personal connections to the Persian community today — do they know anyone who escaped from Iran and now lives in the United States? Have they ever heard their story?
3. **Building Background:** The Jews of Tehran were Sephardic. What does this mean? What customs might students expect to see in the book? How might Hebrew words be pronounced throughout the story?
4. **Genre Focus:** *Escape from Iran: Two Jewish Girls' Story of Survival* is a true story. Students can read the disclaimer on the copyright page and discuss: Why are some conversations and minor episodes changed in the book?
5. **Geography:** Have students study the map on the inside front spread of the book to acquaint themselves with the route the girls traveled on their escape journey. Have them refer to it while they read the book, and let them trace the sisters' route as it develops.
6. **Predict:** Why might the girls have taken the long, circuitous route to Israel instead of a more direct route through Iraq and Syria?
7. **Current Events:** Discuss the current political climate in Iran as well as recent political events in the region to build background knowledge for the book.

PROLOGUE


1. What are some questions you now have about the girls' escape from Syria? Note these questions and leave space to record their answers as you read the rest of the book.
2. The text says: "No goodbyes, no hugs or kisses. No nothing. It was too dangerous." What might this mean? Why was it too dangerous to give hugs or kisses?

CHAPTER 1 — THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

SYNOPSIS Life in Tehran for the Hakimian family is pleasant, and Shabbat meals are enjoyed with extended family.

→ Prompt: Read to find out what life is like for children growing up in Tehran, Iran, in the 1970s.

Guided Questions


1. Keep track of the Hakimian family by creating a family tree with important information about each family member based on what you have read in this chapter.
2. Compare and contrast the Hakimian family with other Jewish families in Iran at this time.
3. Compare and contrast the Hakimian family's way of life with your family's. What customs seem similar? Which ones seem very different?
4. Consider the title of this chapter, "The Calm before the Storm." What does this mean? Can you predict what "storm" might have been on its way?
5. Describe Pari's feelings as a young child growing up in Tehran. Bring details from the text to support your ideas.
-  6. **Document-based question:** Study the photograph on page 13 of a Tehran street. What specific details do you notice?

CHAPTER 2 — WINDS OF CHANGE

SYNOPSIS The peaceful life for Jews in Iran changes as Ayatollah Khomeini gains support. When the Shah is killed, Jews worry about what will be in the future.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how life changes for Pari and her family.

Guided Questions


1. Consider the event at the beginning of this chapter. How did life in Tehran change over the five years between chapters 1 and 2?
2. Explain why life became more difficult for the Jews of Iran. How did the increased support for Ayatollah Khomeini affect the Jews?
3. What did Rabbi Zardazeh announce in the synagogue on Shabbat? Predict what might happen next.
4. Describe the Hakimians' conflicting feelings about leaving Iran.
5.  **Creative writing:** Design a newspaper cover for January 17, 1979. Include the major events of the day and your predictions of what might happen next for the Jews of Tehran.

CHAPTER 3 — THE REVOLUTION

SYNOPSIS The streets of Tehran fill with riots, and Ayatollah Khomeini takes control. Radical Muslim rule is imposed on all citizens.

→ Prompt: Read to find out who wins the Revolution and how that affects Pari and her family.

Guided Questions


1. Describe life in Iran during the riots.
2. What was one way life immediately changed once Ayatollah Khomeini took over?
3. What is a hijab, and who had to wear it?
4.  **Creative writing:** Write a diary entry for Mrs. Hakimian on the day she bought the hijabs. What might she have been thinking and feeling?

CHAPTER 4 — DIFFICULT DECISIONS

SYNOPSIS The Hakimian family has to decide whether to attempt escape or stay in Iran. The married children decide to stay, and the twins, Pari and Maheen, decide to escape.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out the family's decisions as conditions for the Jews of Tehran continue to worsen.

Guided Questions



1. Use details in this chapter to add to the family tree you created in chapter 1.
2. Explain how Jews managed to leave Iran illegally. What is a smuggler, and how did smugglers help the Jews?
3. Explain why each of the three couples in the Hakimian family decided not to escape Iran.
4. Describe Maheen's conflicting feelings about leaving Iran, and contrast those with Pari's feelings.
5.  **Document-based question:** Study the photograph and caption on page 29. Why might demonstrators have been storming the American Embassy? What details do you notice in the picture?

CHAPTER 5 — SECRETIVE PREPARATIONS

SYNOPSIS Maheen and Pari save money, arrange for a smuggler, and prepare to escape.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how Maheen and Pari prepare to escape Iran.

Guided Questions


1. How did the twins save up money for their “escape fund”?
2. Explain why Mr. Hakimian withdrew money from the bank slowly instead of all at once.
3. What were some of the ways the smugglers kept their identities a secret?
4. Describe Pari’s character. Bring details from the text to support your ideas.
-  5. **Document-based question:** Study the map on the bottom of page 34. What were the options for escaping Iran? How were they similar, and how were they different?
-  6. **Document-based question:** Study the photograph of the synagogue on page 37. How is it similar to and different from your synagogue today?

CHAPTER 6 — TIME TO GO

SYNOPSIS The Hakimians finally receive the smuggler's phone call with instructions. Pari and Maheen, together with their parents, fly to Zahedan, where they meet up with the smuggler at a café.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how the twins finally receive their awaited phone call and leave Tehran.

Guided Questions

1. Reread the instructions given to Mr. Hakimian on the phone, and explain what each part of the code meant.
2. "But there were plenty of armed guards patrolling the airport." Why might the Zahedan Airport have been filled with guards?
3. What did Pari mean when she said that it might be harder for Maman to stay than for the girls to leave? Why might that be so?
4. When the Hakimians arrived at the café in Zahedan, it was quiet. Why might this have been good, and why might it have been bad?
5.  **Creative writing:** Write a letter that Maman might have written to the girls to take with them, hidden in their pockets, as they escaped Iran.

CHAPTER 7 — HIDING OUT

SYNOPSIS The twins leave the café and spend the rest of the day hiding with other refugees until the smugglers lead them to the base of the mountains on the Iran-Pakistan border.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how the twins are led from the café to the next stops on their escape journey.

Guided Questions



1. Explain the two reasons why smugglers often used Café Dariush as a meeting point.
2. Describe how the sisters may have felt when the kind woman advised them to rest and drink.
3. Why was it important for the smugglers to take good care of all their charges?
4. List the stages in the route the girls took from their home in Tehran to the foot of the mountains.
5. Study a map and explain the importance of the mountains as a part of the escape route from Iran.

CHAPTER 8 — OVER THE MOUNTAINS

SYNOPSIS The group of refugees follows the smugglers through the mountains.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how the refugees cross the mountains.

Guided Questions


1. Why did the smugglers choose this exact time to cross the mountains?
2. Why was it crucial for the refugees to keep moving, even when they were so tired?
-  3. **Document-based question:** Study the photograph of the mountains on page 60. What details do you notice in the picture? How does this fit in with the story in this chapter?
-  4. **Creative writing:** Based on details in this chapter, write a list of instructions to Jews who are planning to leave Iran. What should they know? What should they be careful of?

CHAPTER 9 — INTO THE FIRING LINE

SYNOPSIS The refugees rest briefly in a shepherd's hut in the mountains. They then load into a truck to cross the border.

→ Prompt: Read to find out how the refugees continue on their way to the border.

Guided Questions


1. Consider the title of this chapter, "Into the Firing Line." What does this mean? Can you predict what "the firing line" might be?
2. Explain why the smuggler laughed when he heard the girls saying that the hard part of their journey was over.
3. Describe the steps taken by the refugees to make sure no one knew who they really were.
4.  **Document-based question:** Study the photograph on page 63. What details do you notice in the picture?

CHAPTER 10 — NOT SAFE YET

SYNOPSIS The refugees cross the Iran-Pakistan border and travel by minivan to Karachi.

➔ **Prompt:** Read to find out what happens as soon as the refugees cross the border.

Guided Questions


1. Explain what the shots were at the end of the previous chapter and why the refugees were unprotected.
2. What was the role of the shepherd in the escape plan?
3. Why did many Jewish refugees from Iran head to Quetta before Karachi?
4. How did the van of refugees make it through the fourteen-hour ride to Karachi without getting caught?
5.  **Creative writing:** Write a diary entry for Maheen or Pari, describing the ride to Karachi.

CHAPTER 11 — REFUGEES IN KARACHI

SYNOPSIS The refugees are left in Karachi and settle into a hotel to plan for their future.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out what happens when the refugees are finally in Karachi, Pakistan.

Guided Questions

1. Describe the city of Karachi. In what ways was it similar to Tehran?
2. Explain this sentence: "The Jews hadn't really trusted the smugglers, but they felt strangely alone without them."
3. Who was Mrs. Rachamim, and why were the refugees told to look for her?
4.  **Creative writing:** Design a welcome sign for the hotel lobby in Karachi, welcoming the refugees to the hotel. Then write a list of instructions for the next steps they will need to take.

CHAPTER 12 — BOUND BY BUREAUCRACY

SYNOPSIS The refugees wait to receive exit visas, which will enable them to leave Pakistan.

→ Prompt: Read to find out about life for the refugees in the hotel.

Guided Questions


1. Explain the meaning of this chapter's title. What is bureaucracy, and how might it have bound the refugees?
2. Why might the refugees have been warned not to walk alone in the streets of Karachi?
3. Explain Mr. Uri Cohen's role in helping Jewish refugees from Iran.
4. Why did Nissim stare suspiciously at the two Dutch Jews when he first met them?
5. How did the families back in Iran know that the refugees had arrived safely in Karachi?
6. How might the refugees have felt as the Jewish holidays arrived with no change in their situation?

CHAPTER 13 — EN ROUTE

SYNOPSIS The refugees receive their visas and fly to Amsterdam. There, they part ways, some heading to the United States and some to Israel.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how the refugees finally leave Pakistan and where they stop along the way.

Guided Questions

1. Explain why it took so long for the refugees to receive all the necessary paperwork.
2. As the refugees waited for their documents to be checked at the airport, "everyone held their breath." Why?
3. Explain why the refugees were unable to leave the Amsterdam airport.
4. Although the girls had planned to sleep in the airport lounge, they found that "suddenly everyone wanted to talk." Why?
5.  **Creative writing:** Write a thank-you note from Pari and Maheen to the two older women after they separated at the airport.

CHAPTER 14 — LIFE IN ISRAEL

SYNOPSIS The girls settle down to life in Israel with their uncle. They find jobs and eventually marry.

→ Prompt: Read to find out about the girls' lives once they arrive in Israel.

Guided Questions

1. Why did Pari and Maheen feel a little lost when they first arrived in Israel?
2. Describe how the girls may have felt when they met their uncle at the airport.

EPILOGUE

1. Return to the family tree you began earlier in the book. Add facts and information based on what you've read in this section.
2. Why is it almost impossible for Persian Jews who live in Israel to visit their family in Iran?
3. Even though life in Iran is difficult, why do many Jews still live there?
4. If Jews are officially protected under the Iranian Constitution, what are they afraid of?
5. In what way is Pari different from many Iranian Jews? Why is she unafraid to tell her story?

SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

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

Life Lessons

Read the author's note at the back of the book. What lessons can we gain from reading Pari and Maheen's story?

Creative Writing

- Interview a Persian Jew. Ask them to tell you their family's escape story.
- Write a speech that Pari may have delivered on the tenth anniversary of her escape. Reflect on the lessons she learned from her escape story and the message she'd want her children to take from that.

Divine Providence

Throughout the story of the sisters' escape, there were many instances of Divine Providence. Find at least three instances where events were set into motion just perfectly, or where the right person was in the right place at just the right time. Describe each of these cases and how they helped to save Pari and Maheen.