

TITLE: Once

AUTHOR: Morris Gleitzman

INTEREST AGE: 9-13 Years

BOOKBAND: Dark Blue and Black (G+T)

OUR REVIEW: Thoughtful & moving read with an engaging main character.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

“Once I stayed awake all night waiting for Mom and Dad to arrive.” (Chapter 2)

What memories and physical evidence does Felix have of his parents?

What beliefs does Felix have of his parents?

What beliefs does Felix hold about what happened?

“Once I walked all night and all the next day except for a short sleep in a forest and all night again and then I was home.” (Chapter 5)

Contrast Felix’s dreams with reality of what he discovers when he makes it home.

Describe the range of emotions that Felix experiences.

“Once I spent about 6 hours telling stories to Zelda, to keep her spirits up, to keep my spirits up, to keep our legs moving as we trudge through the rain towards the city.” (Chapter 8)

Why does Felix go from 6 hours of storytelling to the point where he suddenly hasn’t got any more stories?

Describe the emotional and physical effects that such a journey has on Felix and Zelda. How do they manage to survive?

“Once a dentist stopped me from asking a Nazi officer about my parents and I was really mad at him.” (Chapter 12)

Why did Barney stop Felix from asking about his parents?

Why do he and Felix decide that Zelda needs to know the truth?

Describe the range of reactions that the children are showing as a result of the traumas each have suffered.

“Once I loved stories and now I hate them.” (Chapter 14)

Describe Felix’s state of mind at the start of this chapter.

The importance of books is emphasised in this chapter. Felix’s favourite gets him into terrible danger but other books “save” him. What do books symbolise and mean for Felix?

“Once the Nazis found our cellar. They dragged us all out and made us walk through the ghetto while they pointed guns at us.” (Chapter 15)

Barney and Zelda wouldn’t go. Why not? How many reasons can you think of?

What is important to Felix as they head towards the railway station? What is important to the others as they are tossed aboard the train?

“Once I went on my first train journey, but I wouldn’t call it exciting. I’d call it painful and miserable.” (Chapter 16)

Once again a book becomes a saviour of sorts. Explain how.

What is the significance of the fact that Felix is willing to use his notebook?

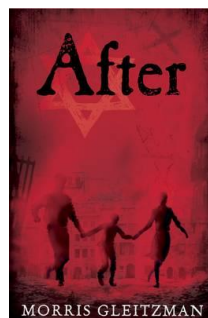
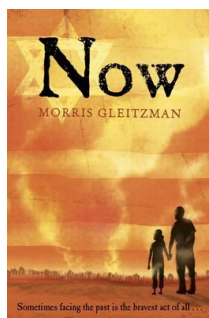
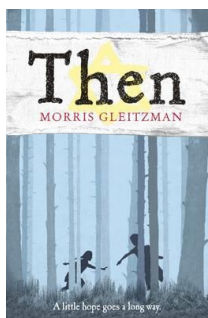
What choice and possible outcomes does the hole in the carriage create for the people inside?

“Once I lay in a field somewhere in Poland, not sure if I am dead or alive.” (Chapter 17)

Felix feels fortunate. How do you know this? Why do you think he feels this way?

Knowing Felix as you do by the end of the novel, make a prediction of how you think his story might continue to unfold or end.

Once is the first title in a series. The other books are:



Other books by Morris Gleitzman include...

