**Between Shades of Gray**

**By:** Ruta Sepetys

**Publisher:** Philomel

**Copyright:** 2011

**Genre:** Historical fiction

**Setting:** Lithuania/ Russia 1940s-1955

**SUMMARY:** When Lina, Jonas, and their mother are taken away from their home in Lithuania by soldiers in the middle of the night, they don’t know what is ahead of them. Lina narrates this story of their experiences as they’re sent to work camps and later to Siberia by Russian soldiers. Lina’s mother works to keep the three together and to encourage them each step of the way. In the U.S., we are familiar with stories of the Holocaust of the Jewish people by Nazi Germany. But the story of Stalin’s abuse of Eastern Europeans and Russians and murder of an estimated 20 million people is less known. These atrocities occurred at the same time as the Holocaust and continued for another ten years. Yet this isn’t taught in our history classes. This is an important book and a story that needs to be told.

**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:** Ruta Sepetys was born and raised in Michigan and now lives in Tennessee. Read more about her at: http://rutasepetys.com/about/

**Other books written by the author:** *Out of the Easy* is her only other title.

**SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:** Berlin Boxing Club, Torn Thread, The Cage, Night, Diary of Anne Frank, Upon the Head of a Goat, My Family for the War, Surviving the angel of death : the story of a Mengele twin in Auschwitz, All Rivers Run to the Sea

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** (If question is related to a specific chapter, chapter is in parenthesis following question)

1. Discuss your thoughts on sharing when resources are scarce. How was Mother rewarded for sharing at the work camp?

2. How did drawing help Lina throughout this time?

3. Lina asks, “is it harder to die, or harder to be the one who survived”? What do you think?
A discussion guide is provided for this book at:

LITERARY LINKS or ACTIVITIES:

Language Arts (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):
Write a paragraph on the interactions between Elena, Lina’s mother, and the guard Nikolai Kretzsky and how their relationship influenced Lina during the deportation and afterwards.

7.RI.3 Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

Mathematics (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):

Science (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):
The authors asks in her end notes that readers please research the Baltic states during WWII until their reinstatement in 1991 as independent states. See what you can discover about this region during that time period.

6-8.RH.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
6-8.RH.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate

Social Studies (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):
6-8.WH.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
a. Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
d. Establish and maintain a formal style.
e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
Other (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):
Find a image of Munch’s Scream painting and several analysis’ of his work. How does it’s theme relate to Lina’s life during the deportation.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge
6-8.WT.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
6-8.WT.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
6-8.WT.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Challenging Words (pronunciation, spelling, defining) (include chapter and/or page #):
sheikh (p7)
infuriates (p19)
sibilant (p36)
nefarious (p50)
disheveled (p94)
hubbub (p122)
cacophonies (p157)
effervescent (p. 183)
androgynous (p. 261)
repatriated (p.289)

Battle of the Book Questions available through the link on the Young Hoosier Book Award webpage.