

You will need to carefully read the selection below and complete various activities using the essay as your basis.

Using the highlight function on your computer, you will need to mark the essay below. It will be necessary for you to read the essay several times to fully understand the essay and complete the markings in such a way that demonstrates a close reading of the essay. You will need to use the following chart to correctly mark the essay.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Highlight Color | Item to be identified | Use an X to indicate you have accomplished this task. Use NA if this task did not apply to this essay. |
| PINK | Mark the main idea of the essay. |  |
| AQUA | Mark key examples/ support for the main idea/ theme of the essay. |  |
| GREEN | Mark statements that you agree with . |  |
| YELLOW | Mark statements that are new to you or make you think in a new way. |  |
| RED | Mark statements in the essay that you disagree with. |  |
| GRAY | Mark terms/ concepts that you found difficult to understand. |  |

The time I began reading and marking this assignment was:

I felt that I was in a place where I should not be, as if I had entered hallowed grounds without invitation. Sweet, musty, medicinal incense hung on the air. The smell of unfamiliar age made me antsy. I wanted out of there.

My host sister, Briget, explained to her grandmother that I was the American exchange student come to stay for the summer. We may have been poor, but I was raised proper, so, to be polite, I smiled and extended my hand to the humpbacked old woman.

Her rheumy blue eyes cleared and at once sparkled like cornflowers after a spring rain. She grabbed my hands so suddenly, I jumped, my skin prickling. She did not let me go. Her glittering eyes filled with tears that spilled over into the deep furrows in her cheeks. Over and over again she murmured the same thing: “The Americans. The Americans.”

I was stunned to silence. I could only wonder in horror, “What had I done wrong?”

Briget fussed at her grandmother, but the old woman shook her head like a child fighting sleep. Eyes closed, she laid her wet, wrinkled cheeks against the backs of my hands, chanting in a warbled whisper, “The Americans. The Americans.”

Embarrassed, Briget ripped my hands from the old woman’s desperate grip and ushered me from the room, apologizing for her grandmother. I had never in my short life witnessed such a pure emotional outpouring. I could not imagine what would make this old woman behave in such a way to a complete stranger.

Red cheeked, Briget belched a nervous laugh. She told me that her grandmother’s entire village in Czechoslovakia was liquidated by the Nazi’s. The healthy men of the village were taken first, trucked away on trains to do the Reich’s dirty work.

The women, children and elderly were force marched to a concentration camp in Poland, where she spent her formative years clinging to a tenuous thread of life for six years. For two months, the Nazis herded them like cattle. Airplanes dropped bombs on either side of the marching dead, corralling them towards the last place on Earth most of them would ever see.

Mesmerized, I watched Briget motion with her fists like they were bombs falling through the air. Her grandmother’s mother passed all of her scant food rations down to her little daughter and soon became ill. She collapsed on the march. At gunpoint, Briget’s grandmother was forced to leave her mother in a crumpled heap in the dirt.

She had been seven years old.

It was the Americans who liberated her concentration camp.

On my last day, Briget led me again into the darkened room, to say goodbye. Old Mrs. Pilzmittenburg offered me a shy wave and a confused smile. After months of sharing the upstairs together, she had already forgotten who I was.

But she would never forget who The Americans were.

This I believe–neither should we.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Your response should be self-contained. When someone reads your responses, they should be able to tell which question you are responding to.  In marking the essay you should be clear in what idea and item you are reacting to. The markings should indicate a close and personal reading of the essay. Excessive markings or lack of markings may indicate a failure to have closely read and comprehended the essay. |  |
| Based on your reading and marking of the essay identify the main idea of the essay as well as support including direct quotations and evidence from the essay. Your response should be limited to no more than one (1) well written and adequately edited paragraph. |  |
| Using at least two (2) of the writing prompts below and in no more than three (3) well written and adequately edited paragraphs create a response to the essay:   * The part (s) of the essay I agreed with were * The part (s) of the essay I disagreed with were * This essay reminded me of/ made me think of * This essay made me think in a new way * This essay was similar to another essay |  |
| What question (s) would you like to ask the author of this essay? Explain your reasoning for wanting to have the answer to this question. |  |
| Having now read this essay I… |  |
| **Presenters Only:** You will need to have three (3) questions that you would like to present to your classmates during your seminar. |  |

The time I completed reading and marking this assignment was: