

# 8

## Lesson Eight

### FOCUS: The Plot Unfolds

The author artfully builds a plot structure to create expectations, increase suspense, and inform character development. The timing of events from beginning to middle to end can make a book predictable or riveting. A plot, propelled by a crisis, will reach a climax, and close with a resolution (sometimes called *dénouement*). Foreshadowing and flashbacks allow the author to defy time while telling the story. A successful author will keep a reader entranced by clever pacing built within the tale, sometimes confounding a simple plot by telling stories within stories.

The events that took place in the Warsaw ghetto and the extermination camp shape the way Rosa views herself and others. Convinced that Persky has violated her trust by taking her underpants, Rosa calls him a thief. The next morning she finds them inside a towel. Immediately afterward, she goes downstairs to talk to the receptionist about having her phone reconnected. The long-awaited package from Stella is there but, rather than excitement, Rosa initially feels indifferent when she sees the colorless cloth laying in the box. During a phone call to Stella, Magda comes alive in Rosa's imagination just long enough for Rosa to write her the story of the woman with the lettuce. Magda slips away when the phone rings. The receptionist announces that Persky is downstairs waiting for Rosa.



### Discussion Activities

Ask your students to identify several major turning points in the book. Discuss these turning points with the class. Ask your class to consider what we learn about Rosa at each of these moments. Do they feel Rosa changes during the course of the book? If so, in what ways does she change? If not, what prevents a transformation? What, if any, signs of hope occur in the book's last passages?

Map a timeline that depicts the dramatic build-up in the book. Do your students feel that Magda's death in the first story causes the rest of the book to be anticlimactic? Why or why not?



### Writing Exercise

Outline a sequel to *The Shawl*. Write a few paragraphs of the sequel's opening scene. What happens after Persky comes up to Rosa's room? Do they continue their friendship? Does Rosa ever reconcile with Stella?



### Homework

Ask your students to identify three major themes in the book.