

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Return to Rivne – A Holocaust Story**

This is the story of two cousins who were both very young at the time of the Holocaust. The film has four parts. Use the color-coded Post-Its to take notes that will help you discuss one question.

Circle or highlight the one question that you want to focus on while watching the film.

1. Identify four moments of courage within the film (one from each part), explain the impact of those acts of courage on Shelly, Raya and others, as well as the risks involved.
2. What roles did borders and countries play in the experience of Shelly, Raya, and others in each part?
3. Identify four moments in the film (one from each part) that you think would have been the most difficult for Shelly and Raya to process as little girls. Explain why a child might be able to understand.
4. What did Shelly and Raya lose and gain as a result of their experiences during each section of the film?
5. Identify four moments in the film (one from each part) where the style / film making techniques of the documentary enhanced your understanding of the experiences of Shelly and Raya. Explain how/why.

Part 1: Our Childhood – Yellow	Part 2: When War Came to Rivne – Pink
Part 3: Starting Over – Orange	Part 4: Return to Rivne – Green

## Return to Rivne: A Holocaust Story – Study Guide - modified

### **Prewar Poland**

Shelly and Raya were both born in the city of Rovno, which at that time was in Poland. Now the city is located in the Ukraine and is called "Rivne". Before the war, Rivne had a population of 60,000 – of which, there were approximately 24,000 Jews.

Raya lived in Miatyn (also called My'atyn), which is located about 6km (3.75 miles) southeast of Rivne. It was in Miatyn that the family hid during the war.

### **Poland during WW2**

In 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a pact in which they divided Poland – and much of Eastern Europe – between the two countries. That September, Rivne became part of Soviet Ukraine. Rivne became a center for refugees as many Jews fled to Rivne from the Germans in the west.

On 22 June 1941, Germany violated the German-Soviet Pact and invaded the Soviet Union. Six days later, the Germans occupied Rivne and made it the capital of the Ukrainian region.

### **Rivne Massacre**

In the two months following the German invasion of Rivne, about 3,000 Jews were killed in the city. On 6 November 1941, the German occupiers took 17,500 Jews who had reported for work duty into the Sosenki Forest, located 6km (3.75 miles) from Rivne. Over the course of three days, these Jews were murdered in a mass shooting. Shelly and Raya's family were among the victims.

### **Post-war Eastern Europe**

Rivne was liberated from the Germans by Soviet forces in February 1944. Germany eventually surrendered in May 1945. After the war, the Soviet Union kept the territories it had taken in 1939. Rivne once again became part of Soviet Ukraine, as Poland and the Ukraine were separated under an Allied agreement. Shelly mentions that she returned to Poland because of a decree issued by Stalin in May 1945. Due to the significant change of borders in the Ukraine and Poland, many Poles were transferred west from eastern areas of Poland that had been taken over by the Soviet Union.

Shelly and her parents were later placed in a displaced persons camp. After the war, more than 250,000 European Jews lived in these camps while they awaited safe passage to other countries where they could resettle. These displaced persons were usually unable or unwilling to return to the countries from which they had been expelled during the war.