

Allie Early

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Model High School

Word Count: 477

“Have you ever wondered what a life was worth? That morning, my brother’s was worth a pocket watch.” This quote summarizes the terror and abominable treatment Lina’s family, along with thousands of others, went through during Stalin’s reign. In this novel, Sepetys captures human emotion in a vivid array of sadness, despair, and hope. Obviously, I have never been in a situation as horrid as Lina’s. However, considering evidence from my life’s experiences, I feel that I would be able to have hope in her situation.

There is one experience of having to stay hopeful in the face of darkness that stands out in my mind. One day my grandfather was rushed to the hospital in an ambulance. They immediately began open heart surgery. As my family and I waited for the news if we would ever see him again, I felt trapped. I was a prisoner of circumstance. Through the night, I worried that I may never again hear my Granddad’s laugh. Even when the nurse told us that there was little chance of him recovering, I had hope and truly believed that I would later hear him laugh at one of his own cheesy jokes. Six years after this, he is still a true comedian. In this situation, I felt like a prisoner because nothing I could do would help him. The Lithuanians could not do anything in their situation either. I chose this experience to support my prediction of being able to keep my hope because even though the situation seemed bleak, like Lina’s had, I kept faith that everything would be alright.

Family plays a huge part in this book, just as family is a big part of my life. Listening to my parents and grandparents tell stories of how life was “back in the day” is a great joy. When I read *Between Shades of Grey*, I kept asking myself what it

would be like to lose everything. A memory popped in to my head of a picture in my grandmother's old photo album. I located the picture of a house burned to the ground. My grandmother was only seven when a candle caught flame in her living room. She found the memory painful to tell me because she remembered how devastating that time was for her. She coped with the loss by continuing to live with joy and knowing that no matter how little you have, you still have life. Her hope inspires me to this day and would continue to encourage me in any situation.

Every day is a gift. When we receive packaged gifts ,there is an uncertainty of what is under the wrapping. Not knowing what is in the package is not a cause to lose motivation, but to continue to unwrap what the gift, or day, has for us.