



## COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

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### ***Soviet Daughter: A Graphic Revolution* by Julia Alekseyeva**

Grades: 9-12

#### Common Core Standards:

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6

Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

### Materials:

*Soviet Daughter: A Graphic Revolution* by Julia Alekseyeva

### Themes:

The graphic novel gives students an opportunity to discuss themes such as life in the Soviet Union, identity, family, and memory, using both the written text and images. Possible discussions could include political activism both in the Soviet Union and the U.S., an individual's involvement within the body politic, anti-Semitism, Jewish identity, and the influence of family relationships and memories.

### Objective:

The objective of teaching *Soviet Daughter* is to give students an understanding of life in pre-revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union through the eyes of a young Jewish woman and how her story and memories shapes the life of her great-granddaughter, who lives in the United States. By reading and analyzing a graphic novel, students can examine how information is conveyed via the text and images and how a character or viewpoint is portrayed.

### Procedure:

Before reading the book, provide some historical context about life in pre-revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union. Possible discussion topics could include the purges during Josef Stalin's rule (when an atmosphere of paranoia led to mass arrests and executions of even those who considered themselves loyal to the Communist Party; suggested text - Noah Berlatsky's *Stalin's Great Purge*), the Soviet Union's involvement in World War II (suggested text - Nicholas V. Riasonovsky and Mark D. Steinberg's *A History of Russia*), and Jewish life and anti-Semitism in pre-revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union (suggested texts - Steven J. Zipperstein's *Imagining Russian Jewry: Memory, History, Identity* and John Doyle Klier and Shlomo Lambroza's *Pogrom: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*).

### Discussion Questions Following Reading:

*Request that students use examples and evidence from the text.*

1. What do you think Julia means when she says that "Family is an odd thing. The people we are closest to are not whom we'd expect"?
2. Why does she feel that her great-grandmother Lola is the only one who understood her?

3. What parallels do you see between Julia's life and Lola's?
4. How have politics and political activism shaped Julia's and Lola's lives?
5. What was Julia and her family's life like as refugees and immigrants to the U.S.?
6. How do Julia and Lola describe their Jewish identity? How have discrimination and anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and the U.S. shaped that identity?
7. Why does Julia insert her reflections about her life as interludes to Lola's story?
8. Why do you think Julia Alekseyeva chose to tell her story and Lola's story as a graphic novel? How do you think the images influence your understanding of their stories?

### Activities

- Have students create a timeline for Lola and Julia, and make comparisons or note any differences between their lives.
- Ask students to pick a family member or friend to interview. Tell a part of their life story (for example, immigration, scene from family history, travel) as a page in a graphic novel.

### Teacher Resources:

- *Teaching Strategies for Graphic Novels* (<https://www.buffalolib.org/sites/default/files/get-graphic/Teachers/TeachingStrategiesforGraphicNovels.pdf>)
- *A Guide to Using Graphic Novels with Children and Teens* (<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teaching-content/guide-using-graphic-novels-children-and-teens/>)
- Nicholas V. Riasonovsky and Mark D. Steinberg, *A History of Russia* (9<sup>th</sup> edition), Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Robert Weinberg and Laurie Bernstein, *Revolutionary Russia: A History in Documents*, Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Allan Todd and Sandy Waller, *History for the IB Diploma: Origins and Development of Authoritarian and Single Party States*, Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Noah Berlatsky, *Stalin's Great Purge* (from the *Perspectives on Modern World History Series*), Greenhaven Publishing, 2012.
- Steven J. Zipperstein, *Imagining Russian Jewry: Memory, History, Identity*, University of Washington Press, 2013.
- John Doyle Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, *Pogrom: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.