

Dear Reader,

*Between Shades of Gray* was the first novel written by Ruta Sepetys. It is young adult literature in the historical fiction genre.

*Between Shades of Gray* followed the story of Lina Vitkas and her family through their deportation and exile in Siberia. This was a well-written, heart-wrenching story about a dark piece of history. While not a pleasant topic, stories like this need to be told. Those who lived through the horrors should never be forgotten.

On June 14, 1941, Lina and hundreds of thousands like her were marked as criminals,

snatched from their homes, loaded into box cars, and spirited away to the desolate regions of Siberia. Why? Many of them were targeted because of their education, status, and political views. Entire families were removed solely on the actions of the fathers.

Lina and her family didn't know anyone with whom they'd been imprisoned, but they soon came to know all of them very well. Confined to such tiny quarters for so long under some of the worst conditions I can imagine, they got to be quite close to their fellow prisoners. Some of them were warm, genuinely nice people, while others were angry, cynical, and rude.

The author, Ruta Sepetys, is of Lithuanian descent. Her father escaped Lithuania as a child with his family. When researching for this book, a file about her family was found. What an amazing find! The file included pictures and a letter written by her grandfather with background information about the family. The file contained details about the fact that extended family members had been sent to Siberia (Darragh; Sepetys, Family).

For this project, I chose to focus on the realities of Siberia and how so many came to be exiled there. This was of particular interest to me because two great-great aunts were sent to Siberia and lived out their lives there. I grew up hearing about the exile

of German-Russians and others from the perspective of these two women's siblings who had escaped to the United States. They had no idea what had happened to the sisters for many years. Finally, in the 1980s, the youngest sister was able to locate the long-lost sisters. It was a great triumph for the remaining family. Unfortunately, many died without knowing the outcome.

One cannot look at this without examining the actions of Joseph Stalin. Many of the pieces in this multi-genre project focus on Stalin and his attitudes and behaviors.

I hope you read *Between Shades of Gray* and enjoy it as much as I did. Once you have read it, if

you would like to, you may post  
your impressions on my online  
forum.

Sincerely,

Teresa Miltion