**Vocabulary Guide for *The Devil’s Arithmetic***

**Chapter 1**

**Arithmetic:** math

**Passover:** Jewish holiday that commemorates when God killed the firstborn child in every house in Egypt, but “passed over” Jewish homes. Nothing made with yeast is eaten during Passover.

**Seder:** a special ceremonial dinner during Passover.

**Yiddish:** a language once spoken by many Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. It’s a combination of several different languages including Hebrew and German.

**Unleavened bread:** bread that has been made without yeast, so it is flat.

**Haggadah:** the story told during Passover about when the Jews left Egypt. (Exodus)

**Chapter 2**

**Malach-ha mavis:** angel of death, bad or evil ruler

**Distorted:** twisted

**Guttural:** harsh and rough sounding like it came from deep in someone’s throat

**Saga:** long story

**Compensation:** Payment for something

**Yahrzeit:** anniversary of the death of a family member. The loved one is remembered by lighting a lamp or candle and saying a special prayer.

**Chapter 3**

**Droned:** talking in a boring tone of voice that doesn’t change

**Exodus:** when the Israelites left Egypt, but can refer to anytime a large number of people leave an area.

**Plague:** a terrible disease that spreads quickly, very contagious

**Locusts:** grasshoppers-like bugs that come in swarms and destroy crops.

**Yarmulke:** a skullcap worn by Jewish boys and men during religious activities.

**Mortified**: extremely embarrassed

**Matzoh:** flat bread eaten during Passover

**Kosher:** following Jewish laws about what a person can and cannot eat or how to prepare food.

**Rabbi:** a Jewish religious leader

**Fraud:** fake

**Chapter 4**

**Illusion:** a deception or tick; a misleading image

**Contagious:** spreading quickly

**Wry:** humorous in a dry or sarcastic way

**Conspiratorial:** showing that you share secret knowledge with someone

**Shtetl:** small town

**Simultaneously:** at the same time

**Solemn:** serious

**Chapter 5**

**Groom:** a man about getting married

**Schnorrers:** a beggar; someone who takes advantage of other people’s generosity

**Yeshiva bocher:** young student

**Furious:** very angry

**Chapter 6**

**Distinguish**: to see the differences between things

**Bar Mitzvah:** coming of age ceremony; when a boy becomes an adult.

**Shmatte:** a rag; anything shabby; junk

**Shul:** a Jewish “church” or place of worship; another word for synagogue

**Cossack:** someone who is of Eastern Slavic descent (think Southern Russia, Ukraine)

**Goyish:** a way of referring to someone or something that is not Jewish (can be insulting)

**Mishigaas:** craziness, nonsense

**Sabbath**: a day of rest and religious worship (this is Saturday for Jews)

**Yeshivah:** a school for higher level learning about Jewish religious texts.

**Torah:** the Jewish Bible. (Can also just refer to the Five Books of [Moses](http://www.jewfaq.org/defs/moses.htm): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy)

**Chapter 7**

**Vigor:** energy and enthusiasm

**Compression:** the act of making something smaller

**Attentive:** playing close attention, watching or listening carefully

**Arrested:** stopped (it does not mean “brought to jail” in this context)

**Klezmer:** a type of music

**Leisurely:** slow and relaxed

**Shadchan, marriage broker:** a matchmaker, someone who arranges marriages

**Badchan:** Jewish comedian who entertained guests and weddings

**Chapter 8**

**Dominant:** the most powerful and in control.

**Synagogue:** a Jewish temple or “church”

**Gaping:** wide open

**lucid**

**dour: very serious**

**Chapter 9**

**Confer:** to talk something over with other people

**Hastily:** very quickly

**Undistinguishable:** not able to see differences (undistinguishable sentences would all sound the same)

**Rapid:** fast

**Lilith**: a character in Jewish mythology. She was said to be the first wife of Adam and a female demon.

**Chariots:** a vehicle with two wheels pulled by horses.

**Tante:** aunt

**Decreed**: to proclaim or command; to give an official order

**Duration:** the time something lasts, how long something happens for

**Assent:** agreement

**Billeted:** assigned lodging for military personnel

**Desecrate:** to insult or damage something special or holy

**Crematoria**: a place where bodies are burned

**Chapter 10**

**Protruding**: sticking out

**Satchel:** a bag

**Persistent:** not giving up or letting go; continuing a long time

**Labored**: (adjective) difficult, takes a lot of effort; (verb) worked

**Stationary:** not moving

**Perspiration:** sweat

**Spontaneously**: happening without planning or thinking about it

**Slaughtered:** killed

**Lime:** a white substance that would have been thrown on top of dead bodies to help them decompose faster and to cover up the smell.

**Bissel**: a little bit

**Gossip**: conversation about unimportant subjects or other people's personal lives

**Unmerciful**: not kind of forgiving

**Chapter 11**

**Feeble:** weak

**Barracks**: a large building used to house groups of people

**Proclaiming**: announcing

**Arbeit macht frei:** Work will make you free

**Zugani:** newcomers

**Reluctant**: not willing or not wanting to do something

**Schnell:** German for “fast”

**Mikvah**: a ritual bath taken for cleansing or purification on certain occasions

**Brutal**: extremely violent or cruel

**Achtung**: a German word used to get people's attention

**Prominent:** easy to see or notice; sticking out

**Discernable**: able to be seen, notice or recognized

**Shorn**: cut off (past tense of shear)

**Chapter 12**

**Shmattes**: an old, ragged piece of clothing

**Peculiar**: strange

**Hazier**: more unclear, unfocused or confused

**Garish:** very bright or colorful in an ugly way

**Affirmation**: a statement that something is true; support and approval

**Rote:** memorized through repetition

**Emerging**: coming out

**Dissipating**: to gradually disappear

**Corpses**: dead bodies

**Chapter 13**

**Bellowing:** shouting

**Reserve:** something kept back or saved

**Arbitrary**: not done for a particular plan or for a particular reason

**Elusive**: difficult to capture or find

**Preamble**: an introduction

**Raucous**: noisy and disorderly, a little violent

**Bass:** a low-pitched sound

**Mesmerize:** hypnotize; to completely absorb your attention

**Chapter 14**

**Enforce**: to make sure that something happens or is done

**Recreation**: something you do for fun

**Sonderkommando**: a prisoner assigned to collect belongings and dispose of the bodies of other prisoners who had died or been killed

**Pilpul**: study of the Talmud which is an important piece of Jewish literature

**Musselmen**: a concentration camp prisoner suffering from extreme starvation

**Ointments**: a think substance you put on sore or injured skin

**Valise**: a small bag

**Commandant**: a high-ranking military officer

**Sanctuary**: a place of safety; a holy place (old vocab word!)

**Cholera**: a serious disease

**Ramblings:** talk or writing that goes on for a long time and is confusing

**Chapter 15**

**Blokova**: a non-Jewish prisoner put in charge of other prisoners

**Precious:** valuable

**Cauldrons**: a huge pot of vat use for boiling

**Penetrating**: piercing; a penetrating voice or sound is very loud

**Pervasive**: all over; spreading throughout

**Contorted**: twisted

**Possessions**: things that belong to someone

**Repetitive**: repeated

**Infrequent**: not happening very often

**Burnished**: rubbed smooth and bright

**Ominous**: threatening and forbidding in a scary way.

**Lean**: skinny; little or no fat

**Drek**: dirt, trash

**Kaddish**: a Jewish prayer

**Sonorous**: a deep, rich, pleasant sound

**Chapter 16**

**Routine:** the usual way of doing things

**Revolted**: fought back; refused to accept

**Variations**: different versions; different types

**Riot**: when a group of violently protest

**Relentless:** never seems to stop or let up.

**Immeasurable:** something so large or extreme that it cannot be measured.

**Endure**: to last for a long time; to put with some kind of suffering

**Chapter 17**

**Portents:** warnings about the future

**Bribe**: to give money or presents so someone will do what you want.

**Staccato:** a series of short, sharp sounds

**Perimeter**: the outer edge of an enclosed area.

**Muffle:** to make a sound harder to hear

**Chapter 18**

**Defiant**: boldly resisting authority; refusing to obey a person or rule (old vocab word!)

**Mocking**: making fun of

**Parody**: imitating someone or something in a funny way

**Sorrow:** sadness

**Conscious**: aware; alert and awake

**Tender**: gentle and kind

**Frail**: weak; easily broken

**Mourning:** expressing sadness when someone dies

**Irony:** a form of humor that has to do with the opposite of what you expect happening or saying the opposite of what you mean

**Clarity:** the ability to see or understand (When you see something with clarity, you see it clearly and understand it.)

**Superimpose**: to put one image or picture on top of another so they can both be seen at once

**Hesitate**: to pause before doing something

**Dismiss**: to refuse to accept something as true or important; to officially allow someone to leave

**Liebchen**: sweetheart or dear

**Babushka**: a woman’s headscarf. It is usually folded into a triangle and tied under the chin.

**Kerchief:** a piece of cloth you wear around your head or neck (in this case is refers to the babushka)

**Epilogue**

**Partisans**: people who support a specific person, group of cause. It can also refer to people who secretly fight against an enemy who has taken control of their country. (old vocab word!)

**Rations**: the amount of food provided for people when they do not have enough (it can also just refer to the amount of food given to soldiers)

**Dedicated**: (old vocab word!) given entirely to specific person, activity or cause

**Remnants:** leftover pieces