

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## QB VII

by  
Leon Uris

### Book Information

Leon Uris, QB VII  
Quiz Number: 8670  
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Interest Level: UG

This bestselling novel of courtroom clash between a famous writer and a doctor who claims to have been libeled.

**Topics:** Behavior, Lying; Careers, Doctor; Careers, Writer; Community Life, Justice/Legal Issues; History, Holocaust; Popular Groupings, College Bound

### Main Characters

Abraham Cady a Jewish-American best-selling author and writer of *The Holocaust*

Adam Kelno a Polish nationalist surgeon accused of heinous war crimes while in Jadwiga Concentration Camp during World War II

Angela (Brown) Kelno Adam Kelno's wife

David Shawcross Abraham Cady's editor/publisher

Dr. Mark Tesslar a contemporary of Dr. Kelno, both in medical school and Jadwiga

Pieter Van Damm a world class violinist and victim of Nazi sterilization experiments

Robert Highsmith Adam Kelno's legal counsel

Samantha (Linstead) Cady Abraham's wife

Terrence Campbell a young man who grows up in Sarawak and looks up to Adam Kelno as a father figure and medical mentor

Thomas Bannister Abraham Cady's legal counsel

### Vocabulary

**eunuch** a male whose testicles have been removed

**fungo** a type of baseball practice in which the batter throws a ball up and swings at it

**nonplused** a condition in which a person is confused, dismayed, or embarrassed

**prima facie** obvious at first sight; self-evident

**queues** lines formed in which people wait their turn

**truncheon** a stick or club used by police

### Synopsis

The story begins as Adam Kelno makes his way into Italy. He had been a Polish prisoner/surgeon in Jadwiga Concentration Camp during the war. When the camp was freed he had made his way to Warsaw, but was accused of collaboration with the Nazis by the Communist doctors. A commission clears him in Italy and the matter is dropped. Kelno begins work as a surgeon in a Polish camp hospital in England where he meets Angela Brown, a nurse, and marries her. Kelno comes home one day to find the Polish government has issued a warrant for his arrest for his war crimes. He is sent to Brixton prison in England where he stays for two years. Kelno blames Dr. Mark Tesslar for a conspiracy against him. Kelno claims that Tesslar and he have had problems since their student days together in Poland. Kelno is soon released when a Jew who claims to have been castrated by Kelno can not identify him in an inspection line-up.

Kelno now moves to a place of virtual obscurity, Sarawak, Borneo, with Angela and his young son, Stephan. He works with the Ulu tribe, eventually establishing a rapport with them. He conducts respected experiments on malnutrition and is knighted for his efforts. After fifteen years Kelno returns to England. Stephan has now been accepted at Harvard, and Terrence Campbell, a young man who grew up in the jungle and for whom Kelno was a medical mentor, will be studying in England. Kelno continues to avoid the limelight and sets up practice as a National Health Doctor in Southwark, a working class neighborhood. Shortly afterward Terrence Campbell shows Kelno *The Holocaust* by Abraham Cady. In the book, the author alleges that Kelno performed fifteen thousand surgeries without anesthetic while he was a prisoner/surgeon in Jadwiga. Terrence believes the claims to be false and encourages Kelno to fight them.

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The story now switches to Abraham Cady. He grew up in Norfolk, the son of a baker. He was close to his older brother, Ben, who was a gifted athlete and who became a fighter pilot after high school. Abe mourned Ben's untimely death, and it was the story about their relationship that caught the eye of British editor, David Shawcross, who then worked with Abraham to ready his story for publication. The association developed into more of a father-son relationship. With the political changes occurring in Europe, Abe joined the Canadian Air Force and became a fighter pilot. He was injured by an explosion when he was forced to make an emergency landing. Abe lost his sight in one eye and suffered severe burns to his hands. While recuperating, he met Samantha Linstead, whom he later married. They had two children, Ben and Vanessa.

Abe was restless during his twenty-plus-year marriage. He felt he wrote in spite of Samantha, who complained of his habits and her loneliness. He was tied to the responsibilities and expenses of living in a manor, and the lure of Hollywood began to take its toll on Abe's writing. Shawcross admonished him for selling out and offered to support him while he wrote the book that he always wished to write. Abe divorced Samantha and was to gather research for his book, *The Holocaust*. It was very well received. Abe returned from a short respite to find libel proceedings were launched against the book's publishing house.

The action now shifts to Britain where Abraham checks his sources. He has the support of the Jewish community in his battle. Abe learns that the world famous violinist, Pieter Van Damm, is a eunuch, castrated by Kelno at Jadwiga. Other atrocities come to light and Cady decides to fight the libel charges. Each side builds its case. Adam Kelno selects Robert Highsmith as his counsel, the same man who defended him while he was in Brixton prison. Abraham Cady retains Thomas Bannister, a highly regarded counsel who thought Kelno was guilty of something in the Brixton days. Cady's one stipulation is that they do not allow Van Damm to

testify.

The trial begins with a jury present. Kelno describes himself as a surgeon who observed proper sterile, anesthetic, and surgical techniques, performed no unnecessary surgeries, and feared death if he did not listen to his Nazi superiors. He claims he helped to save many lives by switching names on death certificates. He asserts the surgical record would clear him of wrongdoing if it were found. Thomas Bannister brings forth witnesses who claim they were brutally handled, improperly anesthetized, quickly sterilized, and suffered infections and pain afterward. Though they never saw him operate, due to his face being covered by a surgical mask, they claim their surgeon was Dr. Kelno. Other witnesses included brave doctors who refused the Nazi demands to collaborate in the experiments on the Jews, yet were not punished or killed. They helped to nurse many of Kelno's victims after the surgery. Dr. Tesslar, the only physician who witnessed Dr. Kelno's surgeries, died before he could take the stand. Cady still will not allow Pieter Van Damm to testify, for fear of the publicity. In a last minute turn of events, Shimson Aroni, a well-known Nazi hunter, finds the man who kept the medical records at Jadwiga, Egon Sobotnik. Egon defects to Britain and testifies to the atrocities Kelno committed, but the jury deliberates and votes in favor of Adam Kelno with a monetary award of one halfpenny. Terrence Campbell leaves Kelno's house, disillusioned and betrayed. Cady wonders if he would have acted differently given the circumstances in Jadwiga. Bannister assures him he would have.

### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

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### Initial Understanding

Angela shows great loyalty to Adam Kelno throughout their marriage. Describe this loyalty. What feelings do you think she experiences after the trial?

*Angela begins to recognize when Adam is going into a deep depression and gets him away from his work. She lives with and is sympathetic to his recurring nightmares. She admires Adam for his skill in surgery. She probably feels, however, a sense of betrayal after the trial. She witnesses for the first time Adam's hatred and brutality when he beats Terrence. Her sense of trust probably erodes after listening to the listings in the medical record.*

### Literary Analysis

What does Leon Uris seem to feel would help Jewish people gain respect in the world?

*Through his character development, we can perceive that he feels athleticism and military strength will bring Jews notice and respect. Ben, Abe's brother, is a gifted athlete and a fighter pilot. Both Abe and his son, Ben, become fighter pilots, too. Abe's condition of association with Einstein University is for them to develop a first-class football team. He also says that the Jews received recognition in their defense of Israel.*

### Inferential Comprehension

How does Abraham Cady show that he has compassion for Adam Kelno?

*He realizes that under adverse conditions people act in less than honorable ways. Not everyone is able to endure hardships nobly. He discusses these feelings with Thomas Bannister and Lady Wydman. Cady is able to admit he may not have acted differently from Kelno. He does not gloat in his victory, but remains introspective.*

### Constructing Meaning

In Jadwiga Concentration Camp, Dr. Tesslar, Dr. Viskova, and Dr. Parmentier put their lives on the line in order to do the right thing. They refuse to go along with Nazi requests and instead help the Jewish victims of Nazi experiments. After reading about this, how might you apply these same principles by helping someone in your school or neighborhood who is being persecuted?

*The students may be more apt to confront a bully. Many bullies back down, as they are not used to having their demands refused. Students may also find that once the person being harassed has an ally, the bullying decreases or stops.*

### Teachable Skills

**Understanding Literary Features** Uris's books are often considered epics in proportion. What defines an epic? Does *QB VII* fit this description? Choose an epic by another author. *Dr. Zhivago* or *Gone with the Wind* are examples. Compare and contrast *QB VII* to the epic you chose. Look at all the parameters of a novel, including character development, setting in time and place, theme, and so on.

**Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors** The Holocaust was a horror beyond the grasp of human understanding. It consisted of the attempted systematic destruction of an entire group of people. Ethnic cleansing, the term that is used today, still takes place around the world. Find where ethnic cleansing is taking place today, and report on the historical and political background of the area. How does society view this area of the world? Are the victims' pleas or atrocities being ignored? Do you see any correlations between those the international community chooses to help and those they ignore?

**Recognizing Cause and Effect** Recent psychological research has supported a link between childhood traumas and abuse and later adult behavior. Adam Kelno is abused as a child and, as an adult, becomes an abuser himself

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toward the Jews and also toward Terrence Campbell. What links have been established between child and adult behavior? What relationships have been found in the areas of alcoholism, physical abuse, sexual predation, depression, etc. Have studies indicated a genetic or environmental component at work, or both?

**Recognizing Details** Uris spent considerable time describing the legal system of the British courts. Research the judicial system of another country. It may be interesting to investigate the system from the country of your ancestors. Are there any parallels to the British system that can be found? How might this case have been handled in the country you researched?