***Breaking Stalin’s Nose*** by Eugene Yelchin, A Newbery Honor book

**Lesson 6 (chapters 16-21)**

Sasha is left to deal with the aftermath of breaking the nose off the Stalin’s bust in his school’s hallway. He runs to the bathroom, where his former friend Vovka claims to have seen what happened and threatens to turn him in for vandalizing. Following the vandalism, the school is put on lockdown and the two students are then called back to their classroom. Nina Petrovna encourages the students to write a list of suspicious children, so that the authorities will know who to investigate for the damaged statue.

The principal calls the whole school into the cafeteria, where NKVD officers ask the vandalizer to confess and give him/herself up. Finkelstein confesses, despite being innocent of the crime. Sasha realizes that Finkelstein only gave himself up to go to Lubyanka prison, where he hopes to reunite with his parents, who were arrested several months earlier.

**Vocabulary**

Lubyanka - a Soviet prison in Moscow.

\*\*The NKVD or Secret Police interrogated suspected traitors and enemies. Officers often used torture to get prisoners to confess to their crimes, regardless of whether they actually committed them.

Patronymic **-** a name derived from the name of a father or ancestor, typically by the addition of a prefix or suffix.

\*\*Russians do not call their teachers “Mrs. /Mr. *Last Name*.” Instead, they use their first and middle name, or patronymic, to show respect. For example: Nina Petrovna (“Petrovna” refers to Nina’s father Peter).

**Fun Facts on Education in the Soviet Union**

* During Tsarist Russia, only 24% percent of the population knew how to read. Many Soviet leaders sought to correct this, and the most successful campaign to combat illiteracy was called Likbez. Many students were then enrolled in special literacy schools. By 1938, the literacy rate rose to 89.7 percent.
* Every school in the country taught the same curriculum, so if students moved from one city to another they would not fall behind.
* Elementary schools had grades 3-6, secondary had 6-8, and high school had 8-10.
* Every year the Soviet government hosted “Student Olympiads,” where students from across the country would come together to compete on topics from linguistics to math.
* Physical education (PE) was required for every student regardless of grade. Even university students had to take classes in PE to obtain their degrees.

**Check it out:** Here is a link about how Russian schools differ from schools in other countries. <https://www.rbth.com/lifestyle/328199-russian-schools-differ-from-american>

**Discussion Questions:** Print out the following handout for students or discuss as a group.

**Compare:**After Finkelstein confesses, he is taken to one of Russia’s harshest prisons - the Lubyanka. Is this an appropriate punishment for vandalizing school property? Compare his punishment to one you might receive in America for breaking something at school.

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**Patronymics:** Russians form patronymics from their father’s name. If you are a boy, then take your father’s first name and add “-ovitch” to the end of it. If you are a girl, take your father’s first name and add “-ovna /-evna” to the end of it. For example: your father’s name is Ivan, then your patronym is Ivanovitch / Ivanovna.

What is your patronym?

What is your teacher’s? Your best friend’s?