

NUMBER THE STARS

BY:

LOIS LOWRY

AMANDA BAILEY

Number the Stars  
Lois Lowry  
4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grades  
Amanda Bailey

## **Introduction**

### Summary

This was the first Newbery Award winner by Lois Lowry. For those of you who haven't had the pleasure of reading this very accessible novel within easy reach of fourth or even third grade readers, it's the story of the determination of the people of Denmark to get the Jews to safety while the Nazis were equally determined to annihilate them. Lowry focuses our attention on the Johansen family who has coped with the occupation by the Nazis fairly well. There are the shortages of course and the omnipresent soldiers, but home and school lives are relatively undisturbed.

Then, their friends, the Rosens, are endangered. Mr. and Mrs. Rosen leave their daughter, Ellen, with the Johansens hoping that she can pass as their daughter until safe voyage to Sweden can be arranged for all the Rosens. Ann Marie Johansen is the one who is most threatened by this ordeal and she shows outstanding but believable courage and enterprise in helping her friend.

No matter which of the activities below you select or the equally good ones you come up with yourselves, the important thing is to enjoy the book and Lowry's skill in creating such memorable characters.

"How brave are you, little Annemarie?" Uncle Henrik asks his ten-year-old niece. It is 1943, and to Annemarie Johansen, life in Copenhagen is a complicated mix of ordinary home and school life, food shortages, and the constant presence of Nazi soldiers. Bravery seems a vague virtue—one possessed by dragon-slaying knights in the bedtime stories she tells her younger sister, Kirsti. Too soon, she herself is called upon for courage.

Through Annemarie's eyes, we see the Danish Resistance as they manage to smuggle almost the entire Jewish population, nearly 7000 people, across the sea to

Sweden. In this tale of an entire nation's heroism, Lois Lowry reminds us that there is pride and human decency in the world even during a time of terror and war.”<sup>1</sup>

This book contains great relevance to many social studies topics. It teaches a great deal of history. The author uses fictitious characters to describe real life events of World War II and the Holocaust. The book also deals with geography and can be used as a wonderful springboard for understanding the geographical placement of the Western European countries and their relevance to the war. Students may explore anthropology as the students learn about the Danish culture and the Jewish Culture and traditions.

Economics is also discussed as the book includes the facts about the business, food, and other various supplies that are lost or destroyed because of the German occupation. There is a great deal of political science addressed in the book. The issues of human behavior, forming organizations, forms of government, and many more are all addressed through this wonderful book.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ils.unc.edu/award/19--/n1990.html>

### **Things to Notice and Talk About Before the Book**

Predict what the book might be about by looking at the cover. Think about the title of the book, and predict what it might be about. Have the students look up the Nazis in a reference book and discuss what their goals were in World War II. Ask students to think about the following questions and decide how they would respond to each of them.

Have you ever:

- -Wondered what it would be like to live somewhere else?
- -Been very afraid?
- -Been called upon to be very brave?

### **Activities for the *Number the Stars***

- Place a map of the WWII area in your classroom. As different cities, rivers, and countries are mentioned have students find and mark them on your map. These places will be listed in each chapter as they are mentioned.
  - 1. The students color code a map of Western Europe according to each countries involvement with the war (i.e. German Occupied Countries such as Denmark colored all one color, and Neutral countries such as Sweden are another color)
  - 2. Students will locate on a map of Denmark the cities Copenhagen and Gilleleje and identify them on their maps.
- Have a German dictionary readily available for the students to look up German words as they read.
- Students should be encouraged to keep journal. There are suggestions for a journal assignment for each chapter.

## Chapter 1

*Why are you running? (Pages 1-10)*

### Vocabulary

Contempt  
Copenhagen  
Nazi  
Resistance  
Danish

### Questions

1. Who did the Ellen refer to as the “Giraffe”? Why?
2. When can Kristi have cupcakes again?
3. How long had the soldiers been in Denmark?
4. What is the reason that Annemarie feels contempt for the soldier?
5. Explain why there is no coffee for Annemarie and Ellen’s mothers to drink.
6. List some of the stories that were written about in the illegal newspaper.
7. Why do you think that the newspaper was illegal?
8. The Nazi soldier who stroked Kirsti’s hair and said that she reminded him of his own little girl makes him less villainous than Lois Lowry might have shown him. Why did she do that? What is she saying about soldiers in general?

### Activities

- Journal entry on how you think our lives would change if we had soldiers in our country like they were in Denmark? List reasons, effects, how you would feel, how it would change the way we went about our daily routine... What things would we have to give up and not have, why?
- Map activities
  - Denmark
  - Copenhagen
  - Osterbrogade

## **Chapter 2**

*Who is the Man Who Rides Past? (Pages 11-17)*

### Vocabulary

Hans Christian Anderson

Amalienborg

Christian X

Kattegat

### Questions

1. Where is Amalienborg?
2. What was the name of King Christian's horse?
3. Why was Annemarie "special forever"?
4. What might be some reasons that Annemarie's parents did not look in Lise's trunk?
5. What did the boy mean when he said, "All of Denmark is his bodyguard"?
6. Give some reasons why Annemarie felt that the whole world had changed except for the fairy tales.
7. Why do you think that Peter looked so much older to Annemarie?  
(What happened in the last year to make him appear older? What could be Peter be involved in to make him worry? Why is he not much fun anymore?)

### Activities

- **Journal Entry** The second journal assignment is to make a Venn Diagram of Annemarie and Kirsti. The students should draw two circles and have them overlap in the middle. They will have one circle represent Annemarie and the other represent Kirsti. They should write all the things Annemarie and Kirsti have in common in the overlapping circle, and each of the unique characteristics in their own circles. After reflecting on what each person is like, students will write how these unique traits may help or hurt them throughout the story and why. They will also choose which of the two characters they like best and why.
- **Map activities**
  - Amalienborg
  - Norway

- Holland
  - Belgium
  - France
  - Sweden
  - North Sea
- Have students pick one of the countries mentioned and use the encyclopedia, Internet, or another source to find out during what years that the Germans during WWII occupied particular country. If someone picks Sweden have him or her find out why Sweden was not occupied by the Germans.
  - Using magazine pictures have students find items that they might find in Lise's trunk. Have them make a trunk out of construction paper and put items in it.

### **Chapter 3**

*Where is Mrs. Hirsch? (Pages 18-26)*

#### Vocabulary

Dawdled  
Rationed  
Kroner  
Swastika  
Curfew

#### Questions

1. How come there was no fuel in Copenhagen?
2. What time did the citizens of Copenhagen have to be in their houses?
3. How come Annemarie was glad that she was an ordinary person?
4. Why would there be a pained look on Mrs. Johansens face when Annemarie talked about the time when Kristi slept between Mr. and Mrs. Johansen?
5. What might the reason be that Mrs. Johansen is worried where Mrs. Hirsch is?
6. Why were the Johansen's worried about their friends the Rosens?
7. How come Annemarie thought that the Danes were going to have to be body guards for the Jewish people?

#### Activities

- Journal entry on why they think that the Germans were so full of hatred towards the Jewish people. Are the Jews any different than us? What made them the race that Hitler wanted to exterminate? Does this go on in our society today?

## **Chapter 4**

*It will be a long night. (Pages 27-38)*

### Vocabulary

Gone with the Wind  
Tivoli Gardens  
Synagogue  
Rabbi

### Questions

1. Why did the paper dolls that the girls played with have old-fashioned clothes and hairstyles?
2. What was the problem with the shoes?
3. How would black ink help solve Kristi's problem?
4. How come Kristi thought that there had been fireworks on her birthday?
5. What was actually happening?
6. What was Ellen's family celebrating soon?
7. Why was it so special to have chicken?
8. Why did the Nazis want the list of Jews from the Rabbi?
9. If soldiers do come looking for the Rosens at the Johansen's what might give Ellen away? Why?

### Activities

- Imagine what Kristi's green fish shoes looked like and draw them.
- Journal entry: Research the Jewish Sabbath. What special traditions did they have? Why did the Jews celebrate the New Year at a different time?
- The children in the novel talk about Tivoli Gardens and how they used to see fireworks from there every night. Find photographs and descriptions of it and other landmarks in Denmark and make them into a videotaped travelogue such as the travel channel might show

## **Chapter 5**

*Who is the dark-haired one? (Pages 39-49)*

### Vocabulary

Star of David

Blackout Curtains

### Questions

1. What was the only time Ellen had been in a Lutheran Church?
2. Is Ellen's attitude correct that it would be better to be alive somewhere else than to be dead?
3. How did Lise die?
4. Do you think that Annemarie knows the whole story regarding Lise's death?
5. How come the night feels different to Annemarie and Ellen?
6. Do you think that Mr. Johansen's promise that nothing would happen was a good promise to make? Why?
7. Why did Ellen need to get her necklace off?
8. Why did Mr. Johansen tear the pictures out of the album instead of just showing the album to the soldiers?
9. What did the soldier do to the picture when he was done looking at it?

### Activities

- Journal entry on whether it was okay for the Johansen's and Ellen to lie to save the Rosen's? What does the Bible say? What should they have done? Would it be very hard? How would you handle the situation? Find a Bible passage that supports your answer.
- Research and find out what the Star of David looked like. Draw a picture. What did it mean to the Jews? Is it scriptural to use it as they do? Support your answer with Bible passages.
- Pretend that you are the soldier that came to the Johansen's house how would you have felt? What would you have done if you had seen Ellen? Would you believe that she was their other daughter? What would you have done?

## Chapter 6

*Is the weather good for fishing? (Pages 50-60)*

### Vocabulary

Deer Park  
Kronburg Castle  
Chrysanthemums

### Questions

1. Why did Ellen think that she should go to school?
2. What were the reasons that Mr. Johansen should stay and let the girls go by themselves?
3. List some of the reasons Annemarie was confused about how Mr. Johansen was talking on the phone?
4. Explain why you think that Mr. Johansen was acting funny on the phone.
5. What did Uncle Henrik do for a living?
6. What were Mrs. Johansen and Annemarie afraid of Kristi telling the soldier?
7. Why did Mrs. Johansen name her dog Trofast?
8. What was Kristi dreaming of?
9. What was Annemarie going to tell her Uncle?

### Activities

- The journal assignment will be as you read where Mr. Johansen speaks on the phone to Uncle Henrik in code. Have the students write down the code words and what they mean. For example, the code word Cigarettes is Jewish people that are coming to Henrik, 1 carton of cigarettes = Ellen "Is the weather good for fishing?" = Is it clear to get some people on your boat and help them escape to Sweden? They will also need to explain in the journal why codes were used during the war.
- Map activities
  - Klampenborg
  - Gilleleje
  - Hellsingør

## **Chapter 7**

### *The house by the sea (60-66)*

#### Vocabulary

Appliqued  
Scandinavian

#### Questions

1. What did Annemarie mean when she thought that she didn't often get a chance to look at her Uncle Henrik's house with fresh eyes?
2. What was Ellen's mother afraid of? Why?
3. How come Annemarie and Ellen were trying to see across the water?
4. Why is it dangerous to explain who Ellen is?
5. What did Mrs. Johansen tease her brother about?
6. Where do you think Annemarie hid Ellen's necklace?
7. What was the difference between this visit to Gillelje and all of Annemarie's prior visits?

#### Activities

- Journal activity is to write about something that brings back memories for you. Like the fresh sea air brought back memories for Mrs. Johansen. What is it that brings back those memories? Why does it? What are the memories? Are they good memories?
- Find out which sea Ellen and Annemarie were wading in. Use the clues in the chapter to find the name of the correct sea.

## **Chapter 8**

*There has been a death (Pages 65-73)*

### Questions

1. Why did Annemarie laugh at the name Kristi picked for the tiny kitten?
2. Why did Mrs. Johansen not laugh at Annemarie's joke?
3. What was so exciting about breakfast? Why?
4. Why did Mrs. Johansen say that Henrik needed a wife?
5. What was Henrik telling Mrs. Johansen in code?
6. List the reasons that Annemarie thought it was strange to have a funeral?

### Activities

- Journal activity on what you think the funeral is for? Annemarie was suspicious of someone actually dying. Think carefully and come up with your own scenario of what is really going on.
- Number the Stars talks about Germans prejudice's and unfair treatment of the Jewish people and the Danish people as well. List as many of these prejudices or unfair treatments as you can. On the second column, list any unfair treatments or prejudices that you observe in your daily lives

## Chapter 9

*Why are you lying? (Pages 74-81)*

### Vocabulary

Splintery

Frothy

Udder

Hearse

### Questions

1. Why did Henrik ask Annemarie how brave she was?
2. What is the reason Annemarie did not know the truth? Do you think it is a good reason? Why?
3. Why did Henrik ask Annemarie to forgive him?
4. Explain this statement "they looked at each other for a long time and said nothing. In that moment, with that look, they became equals." (Page 79)
5. List the differences between the funeral Annemarie is at now and the funeral for her sister.
6. Why did Ellen squeal when she went outside?
7. Explain why you think that Peter is at Henrik's house for the funeral?

### Activities

- Journal writing on what you think is happening. Include different characters. Explain why you think Henrik and Mrs. Johansen are lying to Annemarie. What is the funeral for? Who are all the people there? Why do Ellen's parents come? Why does Henrik want to go to his boat?
- Pick a character from the story and tell how this person plays an important part in the development of the story. Why did Lois Lowry use this character?

## Chapter 10

*Let us open the casket (Pages 82-87)*

### Vocabulary

Recurring  
Condescending  
Typhus

### Questions

1. Why did Annemarie feel so far away from Ellen?
2. Who came late that evening?
3. What did Mrs. Johansen say was the reason that there were so many people at the house?
4. Why did Mrs. Johansen suggest opening the coffin?
5. Did Mrs. Johansen really want the soldiers to open the coffin?
6. Why do you think that Peter reached for his side?
7. Why did Mrs. Johansen shake her head at Annemarie?
8. What did Annemarie compare the sky too? Why?
9. What is it time for?

### Activities

- Find out, which Psalm Peter read to the group. Why did he read that particular psalm? Find one more Psalm that applies to what happened.
- Chapter 10's title is "Let Us Open the Casket". The chapter ends in a cliffhanger. What do you think is in the casket and why do you think that? Why do you think the book is titled, *Number the Stars*?

## **Chapter 11**

*Will we see you again soon, Peter? (Pages 88-94)*

### Vocabulary

Protruding

Godspeed

### Questions

1. What was in the coffin?
2. Why did the people need warm clothes?
3. What did Mrs. Johansen give for the baby to stay warm with?
4. What did Peter do to the baby? Why?
5. What did Peter give to Mr. Rosen?
6. What is Mrs. Johansen's first name?
7. Why do you think Peter called Mrs. Johansen by her first name?
8. What were some of the reasons that Annemarie felt that the Rosen's had not left everything behind?

### Activities

- Journal activity on what the word *pride* means to you. What did it mean to Annemarie? How is Annemarie's definition of pride different than yours? What does God say about pride?
- Give each child a postcard and send it to Papa in Copenhagen. Using the descriptions in the book, draw the countryside, the farm of Uncle Henrik, the seashore, or a fishing boat. Write a message to Papa telling him of the trip to Uncle Henrik's. Remember that the Nazis might intercept the mail, so you will need to write anything about Ellen in code.

## **Chapter 12**

*Where was Mama? (Pages 96-100)*

### Questions

1. Who tripped outside on the stairs?
2. What did Ellen say to Annemarie as she left?
3. What did Annemarie do as she sat in the chair?
4. What time did Annemarie think her mother would be home?
5. Why did Annemarie smile when she was looking for her mother?
6. What did Annemarie see outside on the path?

### Activities

- Journal activity on what you would be thinking if you were Annemarie sitting up all alone, knowing that your Mother is in danger? How would you feel? What would you do? How would you comfort yourself? Would you have fallen asleep?

## **Chapter 13**

*Run! As fast as you can! (Pages 101-105)*

### Vocabulary

Drunkard

Proper

### Questions

1. What happened to Mrs. Johansen?
2. What did Mrs. Johansen and Annemarie find on the steps?
3. How do you know that this packet is important?
4. How was Annemarie supposed to act if a soldier stopped her?
5. What do you think is in the packet?

### Activities

- Journal activity: Write a story where Annemarie saves the day. All of Annemarie's family are heroes. Pretend your family had to do this. Give each person a part or role in the action and describe it.
- Make a map -- what if the Rosens had to 'go it alone'? You make a map of the path for them.

## **Chapter 14**

*On the dark path (Pages 106-112)*

### Vocabulary

Churning

Ingeborg

Tantalize

### Questions

1. What story did Annemarie think off while she was going through the woods?
2. Why did Mrs. Johansen and Henrik have to guide the Jews through the woods?
3. How come Annemarie wanted sunlight and bird song in her story?
4. What was the name of Henrik's boat?
5. What told Annemarie that she was getting close?
6. What did Annemarie see when she rounded the corner?

### Activities

- Journal writing: Just like Annemarie builds up to a climax in her Little Red Riding story, how does Lois Lowry build climax in Annemarie's journey?

## **Chapter 15**

*My Dog smells meat! (Pages 113-119)*

### Vocabulary

Exasperated

### Questions

1. What did Annemarie tell herself as she sees the soldiers?
2. Why would it help for Annemarie to act like Kristi?
3. Why did Annemarie tell the soldier that she had no meat?
4. What was in the package?
5. What was Annemarie suppose to tell her Uncle?
6. Why do you think Henrik was relieved to see Annemarie and the basket?
7. What did Henrik say about the bread?

### Activities

- Journal writing on what was in the package? What is the significance or importance of the kerchief?

## **Chapter 16**

*I will tell you just a little. (Pages 120-127)*

### Vocabulary

Warily

### Questions

1. What did Annemarie have to do for the first time?
2. What was Kristi complaining about?
3. Why was Henrik going to tell Annemarie about what had happened?
4. What did many of the fishermen do?
5. What were some of the reasons Annemarie thought she should have realized that Peter was in the resistance?
6. Why was the baby drugged?
7. Why did the fishermen pile dead fish on top of the hiding places?
8. Why did the soldiers use dogs?
9. What did the handkerchief do?
10. Why was the handkerchief important?

### Activities

- Journal writing: "That's all that brave means-not thinking about the dangers, just thinking about what you must do." Write about a time in your life when you had to be brave.
- Compare and Contrast the Jews to the Underground Railroad. (Which doubly connects because of the Drinking Gourd, or Big Dipper, being the guiding light for the escaping slaves and the symbol for the freedom they were seeking.)

## Chapter 17

*All this long time (Pages 128-132)*

### Questions

1. When did the war end?
2. What were some of the different things that were done when the war ended?
3. What happened to Peter?
4. What was the real reason Lise had died?
5. Where had Annemarie hidden Ellen's necklace?
6. What was Annemarie going to do with the necklace until Ellen came home?

### Activities

- Journal activity: Moving from the book to the reality of its subject, we have all the horrors of war for territory, especially as it concerned the Holocaust. The Danish Resistance did manage to smuggle almost its entire Jewish population to safety, nearly 7000 people. Research into how and why they did it when so many other countries under the Nazi scourge did not
- Find pictures of the statue in Rotterdam, Netherlands, which the Dutch people erected after the war to represent the horrors visited on that city and country. What statue or monument would you have designed?

**Follow up activities to *Number the Stars***

- What did you think of the book as a whole? Was it everything that you expected or something different?
  
- The characters and action in *Number the Stars* can be used to create poetry.
  - Line 1-one noun
  - Line 2-two adjectives describing subject
  - Line 3-three participles, ending in "ing", telling about subject #1
  - Line 4-four nouns (first 2 relating to subject #1, and the second 2 relating to subject #2)
  - Line 5-Three participles, telling about subject #2
  - Line 6-Two adjectives describing subject #2
  - Line 7-One noun (subject #2)