

number the stars by lois lowry

number the stars by lois lowry is a critically acclaimed historical novel that captures the courage and resilience of individuals during World War II. This book, authored by Lois Lowry, explores the harrowing experiences of a young Danish girl named Annemarie Johansen as she helps her Jewish friend escape Nazi persecution. Rich in historical detail and emotional depth, *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry is widely regarded as an essential read for young adults and educators alike. The novel combines themes of bravery, friendship, and sacrifice while providing insight into the Danish Resistance during the German occupation. This article delves into the background, themes, characters, and impact of this remarkable novel, offering a comprehensive understanding of its significance. Below is a detailed overview of what will be covered in this article.

- Background and Historical Context
- Plot Summary of Number the Stars by Lois Lowry
- Main Characters and Character Analysis
- Themes and Literary Significance
- Reception and Awards
- Educational Use and Impact

Background and Historical Context

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry is set during World War II, specifically focusing on the Nazi occupation of Denmark from 1940 to 1945. This historical backdrop plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative and the characters' experiences.

The Nazi Occupation of Denmark

The German forces invaded Denmark in April 1940, quickly establishing control. Despite the occupation, Denmark maintained a relatively cooperative government until 1943, when increased resistance efforts emerged. The story of *Number the Stars* is deeply rooted in this period, highlighting the courageous efforts of Danish citizens to protect their Jewish population.

The Danish Resistance

The Danish Resistance movement was instrumental in saving thousands of Jewish lives by facilitating their escape to neutral Sweden. Lois Lowry's novel brings attention to this

lesser-known aspect of World War II history, emphasizing the bravery and solidarity of ordinary people during perilous times.

Plot Summary of *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry

The narrative centers on Annemarie Johansen, a ten-year-old Danish girl whose life is turned upside down by the war and the Nazi occupation. The plot follows her journey as she aids her Jewish friend Ellen Rosen and Ellen's family in escaping to safety.

Introduction to Annemarie and Ellen

Annemarie and Ellen are childhood friends living in Copenhagen. When the Nazis intensify their persecution of Jews, Ellen's family seeks refuge with the Johansens. Annemarie's courage is tested as she becomes involved in the dangerous mission to protect her friend.

Escape to Sweden

Central to the plot is the escape operation, where Danish citizens risk their lives to ferry Jewish families across the sea to neutral Sweden. The tension and suspense build as Annemarie must navigate through checkpoints and Nazi patrols to ensure Ellen's safe passage.

Climax and Resolution

The story culminates in a daring and emotional escape, highlighting themes of sacrifice and bravery. Annemarie's actions embody the spirit of resistance and hope amid adversity, concluding the novel on a note of courage and resilience.

Main Characters and Character Analysis

Understanding the key characters in *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry is essential to appreciating the novel's depth and emotional impact.

Annemarie Johansen

Annemarie is the protagonist whose perspective guides readers through the narrative. Her growth from innocence to bravery reflects the transformative power of war and the importance of standing up against injustice.

Ellen Rosen

Ellen represents the persecuted Jewish population in Denmark. Her friendship with Annemarie underscores themes of loyalty and empathy. Ellen's character illustrates the human cost of war and the urgent need for compassion.

Supporting Characters

Other pivotal characters include Annemarie's family members, especially her mother and Uncle Henrik, who play crucial roles in the resistance efforts. Each character contributes to the portrayal of Danish society's collective courage.

- Mrs. Johansen – nurturing and resourceful, supports the resistance
- Uncle Henrik – a fisherman involved in smuggling Jews to Sweden
- Peter Neilsen – a member of the Danish Resistance and Ellen's uncle

Themes and Literary Significance

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry is rich with themes that resonate with readers of all ages, making it a powerful literary work.

Bravery and Resistance

The novel emphasizes courage in the face of oppression. Through Annemarie's actions and the collective efforts of the Danish Resistance, readers witness how ordinary people can make extraordinary differences.

Friendship and Loyalty

The bond between Annemarie and Ellen highlights the importance of loyalty amidst adversity. Their friendship transcends fear and danger, illustrating the human capacity for empathy and solidarity.

The Impact of War on Children

Lois Lowry sensitively portrays the effect of war on young minds, showing how children adapt and respond to extraordinary circumstances. This theme contributes to the novel's emotional depth and educational value.

Historical Education

The novel serves as an accessible introduction to World War II history, particularly the Holocaust and resistance movements. It combines storytelling with factual elements, enhancing readers' understanding of this critical period.

Reception and Awards

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry has received widespread acclaim from critics, educators, and readers since its publication.

Critical Acclaim

Reviewers have praised the novel for its compelling narrative, historical accuracy, and emotional resonance. Lois Lowry's ability to convey complex themes to a young audience has been particularly noted.

Awards and Honors

The book earned the prestigious Newbery Medal in 1990, recognizing it as an outstanding contribution to American literature for children. This accolade underscores the novel's enduring significance and literary merit.

Educational Use and Impact

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry is widely incorporated into school curricula and educational programs across the United States and beyond.

Teaching Historical Context

Educators use the book to introduce students to World War II history, the Holocaust, and the concept of resistance. Its accessible language and engaging story make it an effective teaching tool.

Promoting Discussions on Morality and Courage

The novel prompts meaningful conversations about ethics, bravery, and standing up against injustice. It encourages students to reflect on human rights and the importance of compassion in difficult times.

Supplementary Educational Activities

Teachers often pair the novel with activities such as:

- Historical research projects on the Danish Resistance
- Creative writing assignments exploring character perspectives
- Discussions on the impact of war on families and communities

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'Number the Stars' by Lois Lowry?

'Number the Stars' primarily explores themes of bravery, friendship, and the impact of war, focusing on the courage of ordinary people during the Nazi occupation of Denmark in World War II.

Who are the main characters in 'Number the Stars'?

The main characters are Annemarie Johansen, a young Danish girl; her best friend Ellen Rosen, a Jewish girl; and Annemarie's family, who help protect Ellen from the Nazis.

How does 'Number the Stars' portray the historical context of World War II?

The novel provides a child's perspective on the Nazi occupation of Denmark, highlighting the resistance efforts, the danger faced by Jewish families, and the acts of kindness and bravery by Danish citizens.

What is the significance of the title 'Number the Stars'?

The title comes from a Bible verse (Psalm 147:4) and symbolizes hope, faith, and the countless lives affected by the war, emphasizing the importance of remembering those who suffered and the bravery shown.

Why is 'Number the Stars' recommended for young readers?

'Number the Stars' is recommended for young readers because it introduces complex historical events in an accessible and sensitive way, promoting empathy, understanding of courage, and the value of standing up against injustice.

Additional Resources

1. *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

Set in Nazi Germany, this novel follows a young girl named Liesel who finds solace in stealing books and sharing them with others during the horrors of World War II. Narrated by Death, the story explores themes of friendship, courage, and the power of words in the face of oppression. Like **Number the Stars**, it highlights the human spirit during the Holocaust.

2. *Sarah's Key* by Tatiana de Rosnay

This historical novel intertwines the story of a young Jewish girl named Sarah, who is arrested during the Vel' d'Hiv Roundup in occupied France, with that of an American journalist uncovering her story decades later. It explores the impact of the Holocaust on families and the importance of remembering history. The book shares the same French setting and historical context as **Number the Stars**.

3. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank

The real-life diary of Anne Frank, a Jewish girl hiding with her family in Amsterdam during the Nazi occupation. Her writings offer a poignant and personal perspective on the fear, hope, and struggles faced by those persecuted during the Holocaust. This classic diary complements the themes of bravery and resilience found in **Number the Stars**.

4. *The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen

This novel tells the story of a modern Jewish girl who is transported back in time to experience the Holocaust firsthand. Through her journey, she gains a deeper understanding of her heritage and the horrors faced by her ancestors. The book's focus on historical remembrance is similar to the themes in **Number the Stars**.

5. *Resistance* by Jennifer A. Nielsen

Set during World War II, this story follows a young Jewish boy named Chaim who becomes involved with the French Resistance to fight against the Nazis. It highlights themes of bravery, sacrifice, and the fight for freedom. Like **Number the Stars**, it emphasizes the courage of ordinary people during extraordinary times.

6. *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* by Judith Kerr

This semi-autobiographical novel depicts the life of a young Jewish girl who escapes Nazi Germany with her family. It explores the challenges of displacement, identity, and adapting to new environments during wartime. The book offers a child's perspective on the impact of the Holocaust, complementing **Number the Stars**.

7. *The Upstairs Room* by Johanna Reiss

A memoir about a Jewish girl hiding with her family in a secret attic room in the Netherlands during the Nazi occupation. The story portrays the fear, hope, and resilience experienced in hiding from persecution. Its themes of survival and courage resonate closely with those in **Number the Stars**.

8. *Milkweed* by Jerry Spinelli

This novel follows a young orphan boy living in Warsaw during the Nazi invasion. Through his eyes, readers witness the hardships faced by Jews and the courage required to survive. The book's perspective on the Holocaust and innocence lost parallels the tone of **Number the Stars**.

9. *Number the Stars* (Study Guide Edition) by Lois Lowry

This edition includes comprehensive analysis and discussion questions designed to deepen understanding of the novel's themes, characters, and historical context. It is a useful companion for readers who want to explore the story more critically. The guide enhances appreciation of the original work's message about bravery and friendship during the Holocaust.

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