

Number The Stars By Lois Lowry

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry is a compelling historical novel that has captivated readers since its publication in 1989. Set during World War II, this poignant story offers a heartfelt glimpse into the bravery, resilience, and friendship of young children living in Nazi-occupied Denmark. Lois Lowry masterfully weaves historical facts with engaging storytelling, making it an essential read for students, educators, and anyone interested in stories of courage and hope amidst adversity.

Overview of *Number the Stars*

Number the Stars is a historical fiction novel aimed at middle-grade readers, but its themes resonate across age groups. The book follows the life of ten-year-old Annemarie Johansen as she navigates the dangers and moral dilemmas posed by the Nazi invasion of Denmark during the early 1940s. Set primarily in Copenhagen, the story chronicles the secret efforts of the Danish resistance to help Jewish families escape Nazi persecution. Through Annemarie's eyes, readers learn about the historical context of the Holocaust, the bravery of ordinary citizens, and the power of friendship and family.

Key Themes in *Number the Stars*

Understanding the core themes of the novel enhances appreciation and provides valuable insights into its messages. Some of the prominent themes include:

1. Courage and Heroism

- Ordinary people performing extraordinary acts. - The importance of standing up against injustice. - Annemarie's growth from innocence to bravery.

2. Friendship and Loyalty

- The bond between Annemarie and her Jewish friend, Ellen. - The importance of trust and sacrifice in friendships. - Family loyalty in times of crisis.

3. Resistance and Hope

- The clandestine efforts to save Jewish families. - The resilience of the human spirit. - Small acts making a significant difference.

4. The Impact of War on Children

- How children perceive and are affected by conflict. - The loss of innocence and the development of moral understanding.

Characters in *Number the Stars*

A well-crafted cast of characters brings depth to the story. Key characters include:

1. **Annemarie Johansen:** The protagonist, a brave and compassionate girl who learns about courage and sacrifice.
2. **Ellen Rosen:** Annemarie's Jewish best friend, whose safety becomes a central concern.
3. **Mrs. Johansen:** Annemarie's mother, who is involved in secret resistance activities.
4. **Mr. Johansen:** Annemarie's father, who helps orchestrate the escape plans.
5. **Peter Nielsen:** A member of the resistance and a close family friend.
6. **Hitler and Nazi Soldiers:** The antagonists representing oppression and danger.

The Historical Context of *Number the Stars*

Understanding the historical background enriches the reading experience. The novel is set during the Nazi occupation of Denmark, which lasted from 1940 to 1945. Denmark's resistance to Nazi policies, especially in aiding Jewish citizens, is a significant aspect of the story.

Denmark During WWII

- Denmark was invaded by Nazi Germany in April 1940. - The Danish resistance movement engaged in various acts of sabotage and aid. - Approximately 7,200 Danish Jews were rescued and evacuated to safety in Sweden, a heroic effort depicted in the novel.

The Rescue of Danish Jews

- Organized by Danish citizens and resistance groups. - Involved smuggling Jewish families out of Denmark to neutral Sweden. - Saved most of Denmark's Jewish population from deportation and extermination.

Lois Lowry's Writing Style and Literary Devices

Lois Lowry employs a straightforward yet evocative writing style suitable for young readers. Her use of simple language combined with powerful imagery helps convey complex themes effectively.

Narrative Perspective

- The story is told from Annemarie's point of view, providing an intimate look at her thoughts and feelings. - First-person narration fosters empathy and understanding.

Use of Symbolism

- The Star of David, symbolizing Jewish identity and faith. - The color red, representing danger and bravery. - The act of "numbering the stars," implying hope and remembrance.

Historical Accuracy and Authenticity

- Lowry's meticulous research ensures factual accuracy. - She incorporates authentic details about wartime Denmark, resistance activities, and Jewish traditions.

Educational Value and Lessons from *Number the Stars*

This novel is not only a captivating story but also a valuable educational tool. It introduces young readers to complex historical events and moral questions.

Learning about the Holocaust

- Presents historical facts in an accessible manner. - Encourages discussion about human rights, tolerance, and the consequences of prejudice.

Promoting Moral Courage

- Inspires readers to stand up for what is right. - Demonstrates that even small actions can have significant impacts.

Discussion Questions for Readers

1. What does Annemarie learn about bravery throughout the story?
2. How do the characters demonstrate loyalty to their friends and family?
3. What are some ways the novel shows hope during dark times?
4. How can readers apply the lessons of this story to their own lives?

Adaptations and Legacy of *Number the Stars*

Since its publication, *Number the Stars* has been adapted into various formats, including:

1. Stage plays and school productions
2. Audio books and read-alongs
3. Educational curricula and discussion guides

The novel has received numerous awards, such as the Newbery Medal in 1990, recognizing its significance in children's literature.

Why Read *Number the Stars* Today?

In a world still grappling with issues of discrimination, prejudice, and conflict, *Number the Stars* remains a relevant and powerful story. It teaches invaluable lessons about compassion, bravery, and the importance of standing against injustice. Reading this novel can:

- Foster empathy in young readers.
- Provide historical awareness.
- Inspire acts of kindness and courage.

Conclusion

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry is more than just a historical novel; it is a testament to the human spirit's resilience in the face of adversity. Through the compelling narrative of Annemarie and her community, readers learn about the importance of bravery, loyalty, and hope. Its enduring relevance makes it a must-read for anyone interested in history, moral courage, and stories of ordinary people making extraordinary sacrifices. Whether for educational purposes or personal growth, this book continues to inspire generations and remind us of the profound impact of kindness and courage during times of crisis.

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry is a poignant and compelling historical novel that explores themes of courage, friendship, and resistance during one of the darkest periods of history—the Holocaust. Published in 1989, this book has become a staple in middle-grade literature, capturing the hearts and minds of readers with its powerful storytelling and nuanced characters. In this comprehensive guide, we will delve into the story's plot, themes, historical context, character analysis, and its significance as a piece of young adult literature.

Introduction to *Number the Stars*

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry is set in Denmark during World War II, a time when the Nazi occupation threatened the lives and freedoms of Danish Jews and their neighbors. The novel follows ten-year-old Annemarie Johansen as she navigates her world, witnessing the dangers posed by the occupying forces and her family's daring efforts to help their Jewish friends escape persecution. Through Annemarie's perspective, Lowry offers a child's-eye view of heroism and sacrifice, emphasizing that acts of bravery can come from unexpected places.

Plot Summary

The Setting and Initial Situation

The story begins in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1943. The Johansens are a typical Danish family who enjoy simple pleasures—playing with friends, attending church, and sharing meals. The peace is shattered when the Nazi soldiers march into their town, enforcing strict laws and carrying out arrests of Jews.

The Rising Action

Annemarie's best friend, Ellen Rosen, is Jewish. When the Nazis come to arrest the Rosen family, Annemarie's family devises a plan to help Ellen escape. They hide Ellen in their home, and Annemarie must learn to face her fears and help her friend.

Climax and Resolution

As the danger intensifies, Annemarie undertakes a perilous journey to deliver a crucial item—a hand-knit Jacob's ladder—symbolizing hope and protection. This act of bravery ultimately helps save Ellen and her family from deportation. The novel concludes with a sense of cautious optimism, acknowledging the ongoing risks but also the strength of hope and resilience.

Key Themes and Messages

Courage in the Face of Danger

One of the most prominent themes in *Number the Stars* is bravery. Annemarie's growth from a scared girl to someone willing to risk her safety underscores that heroism is often about small, brave acts. The novel shows that courage isn't the absence of fear but the willingness to act despite it.

Friendship and Loyalty

The deep bond between Annemarie and Ellen highlights the importance of friendship across differences. The story emphasizes that loyalty and compassion can overcome prejudice and hatred.

Resistance and Sacrifice

Lowry illustrates that resistance doesn't always mean fighting armies; sometimes, it involves risking one's life to protect others. The Johansens' decision to hide Ellen and their efforts to smuggle her out are acts of quiet resistance that make a big difference.

The Power of Hope

Throughout the novel, hope acts as a guiding force. The symbolic Jacob's ladder represents hope, faith, and the belief that good can prevail even in the darkest times.

Historical Context

Denmark During World War II

Understanding the historical background enriches the reading experience. Denmark's occupation by Nazi Germany began in 1940 and lasted until 1945. Unlike in many countries, the Danish resistance was notably effective in helping Jews escape to safety in Sweden.

The Rescue of Danish Jews

Between 1943 and 1945, approximately 7,200 of Denmark's 7,800 Jews were smuggled out of the country. This extraordinary effort is a central inspiration for Lowry's novel, highlighting collective courage and moral conviction.

The Symbolism in the Novel

Lowry's inclusion of symbols, such as the Jacob's ladder, connects the story to broader themes of faith and hope. The ladder, a biblical symbol, signifies spiritual ascent, guidance, and divine protection.

Character Analysis

Annemarie Johansen

As the protagonist, Annemarie embodies innocence maturing into courage. Her journey from naivety to understanding the gravity of her actions reflects the novel's message that even children can make significant differences.

Ellen Rosen

Ellen represents innocence and the human face of persecution. Her friendship with Annemarie underscores themes of acceptance and loyalty.

Mama Johansen

Annemarie's mother is a pillar of strength and wisdom, guiding her daughter through dangerous circumstances and exemplifying quiet heroism.

Mr. and Mrs. Johansen

Annemarie's parents demonstrate moral courage and resourcefulness, making difficult decisions to protect their loved ones.

Peter and Uncle Henrik

Characters like Peter and Uncle Henrik symbolize resistance and hope. Uncle Henrik, a fisherman, plays a crucial role in helping smuggle Jews to safety.

Literary Devices and Style

Use of Simplicity and Clarity

Lowry employs straightforward language suitable for middle-grade readers, making complex themes accessible without losing depth.

Symbolism

The Jacob's ladder is a central symbol representing hope, faith, and divine intervention.

Perspective

Narrated from Annemarie's point of view, the novel offers an intimate look into a child's understanding of war and morality.

Significance and Impact

Educational Value

Number the Stars serves as an effective educational tool, introducing young readers to the Holocaust’s history with sensitivity and honesty.

Promoting Empathy and Moral Reflection

By humanizing the victims and portraying acts of bravery, the novel encourages empathy and moral reflection among readers.

Awards and Recognition

The book received numerous accolades, including the Newbery Medal in 1990, recognizing its literary excellence and importance in children’s literature.

Conclusion

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry is more than just a historical novel; it’s a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the extraordinary acts of ordinary people. Through its compelling characters, evocative storytelling, and powerful themes, it invites readers of all ages to reflect on the importance of courage, friendship, and hope. As a cornerstone of young adult literature, it continues to inspire new generations to remember history’s lessons and recognize the heroism that can exist in every act of kindness and bravery.

Final Thoughts

If you haven’t yet read Number the Stars, it’s highly recommended for anyone interested in history, human rights, or stories of courage. Teachers and parents can use the novel as a springboard for discussions about morality, resistance, and the importance of standing up for what is right. Its enduring relevance makes it a vital addition to any collection focused on fostering empathy and understanding in young readers.

Questions & Answers About number the stars by lois lowry

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1	What is the main theme of 'Number the Stars' by Lois Lowry?	The main theme of 'Number the Stars' is bravery and friendship, particularly focusing on how ordinary people can perform extraordinary acts of courage during difficult times like the Holocaust.
2	Who are the main characters in 'Number the Stars'?	The main characters include Annemarie Johansen, her family, and their Jewish friend Ellen Rosen, as well as Nazi soldiers and other members of the Danish resistance.

3	How does Lois Lowry depict the Danish resistance in 'Number the Stars'?	Lois Lowry portrays the Danish resistance as brave and resourceful, highlighting their efforts to help Jews escape Nazi persecution, especially through the act of smuggling Jews out of Denmark.
4	What is the significance of the title 'Number the Stars'?	The title symbolizes hope and remembrance, referencing the stars that symbolize the Jewish people and emphasizing the importance of counting and valuing every life during times of crisis.
5	Is 'Number the Stars' based on real historical events?	Yes, the novel is based on actual events during World War II, specifically the rescue of Danish Jews by their neighbors and the resistance movement that helped them escape Nazi persecution.
6	What age group is 'Number the Stars' suitable for?	The book is suitable for middle-grade readers, typically ages 8 to 12, due to its themes of courage, friendship, and historical significance presented in an accessible way.
7	How does Lois Lowry use symbolism in 'Number the Stars'?	Lowry uses symbols like the Star of David to represent Jewish identity and the importance of hope and resilience in difficult times.
8	What lessons can readers learn from 'Number the Stars'?	Readers can learn about bravery, the importance of standing up against injustice, the power of friendship, and the value of compassion during times of adversity.

Number the Stars, Lois Lowry, Holocaust, WWII, historical fiction, young adult, bravery, friendship, resistance, Denmark