

number the stars study guide

Number the Stars Study Guide is an essential resource for students and educators alike, aimed at enhancing the understanding of Lois Lowry's acclaimed novel. This guide offers a comprehensive analysis of the book's themes, characters, historical context, and important symbols, making it an invaluable tool for classrooms and individual study. "Number the Stars" is a powerful narrative that provides insights into the harrowing experiences during World War II, particularly focusing on the Danish resistance against Nazi occupation.

Overview of the Novel

Summary of the Plot

"Number the Stars" is set in Copenhagen, Denmark, during the Nazi occupation in 1943. The story follows the life of ten-year-old Annemarie Johansen, who, along with her family, becomes involved in the Danish resistance movement. As the Nazis intensify their efforts to round up Jews, Annemarie's best friend, Ellen Rosen, who is Jewish, comes to live with the Johansen family to escape the danger. The plot thickens as Annemarie and her family take extraordinary risks to protect Ellen and help her escape to safety.

Themes

1. **Courage and Heroism:** The novel emphasizes the bravery of ordinary people who stand against oppression. Annemarie's journey from innocence to bravery is a central theme.
2. **Friendship and Loyalty:** The bond between Annemarie and Ellen showcases the importance of friendship during difficult times. Their loyalty to one another is tested throughout the story.
3. **The Impact of War:** Lowry effectively illustrates how war affects lives, relationships, and communities, highlighting the loss and fear that comes with such tumultuous times.
4. **Identity and Faith:** The story explores what it means to have faith in oneself and in others, especially in the face of adversity.

Character Analysis

Main Characters

1. **Annemarie Johansen:** The protagonist, a brave and determined young girl who grows into her role as a protector. Her character arc is significant as she learns to confront fear and take action.
2. **Ellen Rosen:** Annemarie's Jewish best friend who represents the innocence of childhood amidst the horrors of war. Her journey illustrates the plight of Jewish people during this period.
3. **Mr. and Mrs. Johansen:** Annemarie's parents who embody the spirit of resistance. They teach

Annemarie about bravery and sacrifice.

4. Peter Neilsen: A family friend and resistance fighter who plays a critical role in the fight against the Nazis. His bravery and commitment to the cause are pivotal to the story.

5. The German Soldiers: Representing the oppressive regime, they are portrayed as a constant threat but also serve to highlight the contrasting bravery of the Danish people.

Character Development

- Annemarie transforms from an innocent child to a courageous young girl who learns about the complexities of courage and sacrifice.
- Ellen's character, while less developed, profoundly impacts Annemarie's understanding of loyalty and the harsh realities of discrimination.
- The supportive roles of Mr. and Mrs. Johansen showcase parental figures who guide Annemarie through fear and uncertainty.

Historical Context

World War II and the Holocaust

Understanding the historical background of "Number the Stars" is crucial for appreciating the narrative. The novel is set against the backdrop of World War II, a time when Europe was under the threat of Nazi Germany. Key points include:

- Nazi Occupation of Denmark: Denmark was occupied by Nazi forces from 1940 to 1945. The Danish people's response varied, but many, like the Johansen family, chose to resist.
- The Danish Resistance: Many Danes participated in efforts to protect Jews by helping them escape to neutral Sweden. This theme of resistance is central to the narrative.
- The Holocaust: The systematic persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazis. The personal stories of individuals like Ellen illustrate the real dangers faced by Jews during this time.

Symbols and Motifs

Key Symbols

1. The Star of David: Represents Ellen's Jewish identity, which becomes a source of danger and a symbol of her faith and heritage.
2. The Handkerchief: Used by Annemarie's mother to hide the Jewish people; it symbolizes the safety and the sacrifices made by the Johansen family.
3. The Rosens' Apartment: Represents the security and normalcy of life before the war, which is

disrupted by the Nazi occupation.

Motifs

- **Courage:** Repeatedly addressed through the actions of characters who resist the Nazis, showcasing that courage can take many forms.
- **Childhood Innocence:** Annemarie's perspective as a child provides a unique lens to view the horrors of war, contrasting her innocence with the grim reality around her.

Discussion Questions

To facilitate deeper understanding and critical thinking, here are some discussion questions based on the novel:

1. What does Annemarie learn about bravery and sacrifice throughout the story?
2. How does the author use Annemarie's perspective to address the themes of war and friendship?
3. In what ways do the Johansen family embody the spirit of resistance?
4. Discuss the significance of the title "Number the Stars." What does it symbolize in relation to the story?
5. How does the historical context influence the characters' decisions and actions?

Conclusion

The Number the Stars Study Guide serves as a comprehensive tool for exploring the rich narrative crafted by Lois Lowry. This novel not only tells a story of friendship and courage but also reflects on the resilience of the human spirit during one of history's darkest times. By engaging with this study guide, readers can gain a deeper appreciation of the themes, characters, and historical significance of "Number the Stars," fostering a greater understanding of both literature and the real-world implications of the events depicted. Through thoughtful analysis and discussion, students and educators can explore the powerful messages inherent in Lowry's poignant storytelling, making it a timeless piece worthy of study.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main themes explored in 'Number the Stars'?

The main themes include bravery, the importance of family, the impact of war on daily life, and the loss of innocence.

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

The primary characters include Annemarie Johansen, her best friend Ellen Rosen, and Annemarie's family members, particularly her sister Kirsti and her parents.

What historical events are depicted in 'Number the Stars'?

The story is set during World War II and depicts the German occupation of Denmark and the efforts of Danish citizens to protect Jewish families.

How does Annemarie's character develop throughout the story?

Annemarie evolves from a naive girl into a courageous young woman who understands the complexities of bravery and sacrifice in the face of danger.

What role does the concept of friendship play in 'Number the Stars'?

Friendship is central to the narrative, exemplified by the bond between Annemarie and Ellen, which highlights loyalty and the sacrifices made to protect loved ones.

How does the author, Lois Lowry, use symbolism in 'Number the Stars'?

Lowry uses symbols such as the Star of David and the handkerchief to represent Jewish identity and the courage of those who resist oppression.

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

The title refers to a biblical quote about counting the stars, symbolizing hope and the resilience of the human spirit in times of darkness.

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