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**Study Guide**

for

**Number  
the Stars**

by Lois Lowry



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New York, New York   Columbus, Ohio   Woodland Hills, California   Peoria, Illinois

# Meet Lois Lowry



*I would be a terrible newspaper reporter because I can't write well about huge events . . . As a writer, I find that I can only cover the small and the ordinary—the mittens on a shivering child—and hope that they evoke the larger events.*

—Lois Lowry, in her acceptance speech for the Newbery Medal she received for *Number the Stars*

**L**ois Lowry was born in 1937 in Hawaii. When she was just four years old, she says she knew she wanted to be a writer. Her year-book prediction read “future novelist.” That prediction came true.

Lowry attended Brown University, where she studied writing. She later had four children but never lost sight of her original ambition. She explains that when her children were young “there was a well-worn path between the typewriter and the washing machine.”

Today, Lowry is a successful writer and the winner of Newbery medals for her novels *Number the Stars* and *The Giver*. The Newbery is presented to authors of outstanding books for young people.

Lowry’s novels are sometimes humorous, but they also delve into serious topics such as war and death. She draws from her own

experiences or the experiences of people she knows. She says that all of her books deal with one general theme—“the importance of human connections.”

Lowry’s first novel, *A Summer to Die*, was published in 1977 and was partly autobiographical. It tells the story of a thirteen-year-old girl’s efforts to deal with the death of an older sister. Lowry, whose beloved older sister had died, drew on her own emotions and sense of loss to create her character in this novel.

Lowry wrote *Number the Stars* in 1988. She was inspired by a friend who had grown up in Denmark during World War II, when the country was occupied by Nazi Germany. At that time, Jewish people all over Europe were being arrested and then killed by Germans. In Denmark the Danish people banded together to save their Jewish population. According to Lowry:

*The Danish people were the only entire nation of people in the world who heard the splash and the cry and did not . . . turn away from the disaster.*

Lowry’s novel is based on hours of conversations with her friend and others who experienced the hardships of World War II. She says these conversations helped her to realize “for the first time . . . that historic events and day-to-day life are not separate things.”

In much of her writing, Lowry tries to tell the big story by relating small details. Lowry uses this technique in *Number the Stars*. She tells the large story of life in Denmark during World War II through the everyday lives of two young girls. Lowry says if she has a goal in her writing, it is to focus on:

*the vital need for humans to be aware of their interdependence, not only with each other, but with the world and its environment.*

# Introducing the Novel

*Lowry creates suspense and tension without wavering from the viewpoint of Annemarie, a child who shows the true meaning of courage.*

—Newbery Committee Chair Caroline Ward

Annemarie is the main character in *Number the Stars*, a novel set in Denmark during World War II (1939–1945). In its simplest form, this historical novel is the story of two ten-year-old girls and the hardships they face while their country is occupied by German Nazis. In a much broader sense, it is a story of the entire Danish nation and its people.

Annemarie Johansen lives with her younger sister Kirsti and their parents in an apartment in Copenhagen. Annemarie's best friend Ellen Rosen, who is Jewish, lives with her parents in the same apartment building. As the novel unfolds, both families are learning to adapt to the German soldiers who have taken control of their country. Both Annemarie and Ellen try to ignore the soldiers on the streets as they walk home from school.

In an effort to adjust to the stress brought on by the Germans, Annemarie often loses herself in the fairy tales she creates for her sister. But the danger heightens, and fairy tales can no longer mask the horrible reality, as German soldiers begin arresting Danish Jews.

Lowry's inspiration for *Number the Stars* was her friend Annelise. The two women were friends for many years, and Lowry heard many stories about Annelise's childhood in Denmark. However, it was not until they were on a vacation together in 1988 that her friend shared with her some of the things she had experienced as a child during the war. Annelise remembered being so cold that she had to wear mittens to bed. She even remembered the high, shiny boots of the German soldiers who occupied her homeland.

Lowry makes many references to the soldier's boots in *Number the Stars*. When Lowry submit-

ted her finished manuscript, her editor thought there were too many references to the boots. Lowry might have removed some of those references if, soon afterward, she hadn't met a Dutch woman whose Jewish mother had been killed by the Nazis. The woman, just a toddler at the time of the Holocaust, remembered only one detail about the soldiers who took her mother away—their boots. Lowry told her editor to keep the references. She said she decided that:

*if any reviewer should call attention to the overuse of that image—none ever has—I would simply tell them that those high shiny boots had trampled on several million childhoods and I was sorry I hadn't had several million more pages on which to mention that.*

## THE TIME AND PLACE

*Number the Stars* is set mainly in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1943. It is a time when war is raging through Europe and parts of Asia. German forces, commanded by Adolf Hitler, have invaded the lands around Germany, and Japan is attacking nations in the Pacific. Great Britain, France—and later the United States—join forces to stop the aggression.

Adolf Hitler was the leader of the German aggression and was obsessed by the concept of "racial purity." He believed that the German people were members of a master race and destined to take over the world. The German Nazis believed that peoples such as Slavs and those of African descent were members of inferior races. Nazis also believed that Jews were members of the lowest and most dangerous race of all.

Immediately after his rise to power, Hitler embarked on a slow and steady campaign to rid Germany of Jews. In 1935 German Jews lost their citizenship, and marriage between Jews and "citizens of German . . . blood" was forbidden. In 1938 more than 1,000 synagogues were burned, thousands of Jewish businesses were looted, and 30,000 Jews were arrested. Jews began fleeing Germany, but many nations

refused to take them in as refugees. As a result of Germany's expansion, soon not only German Jews but Jews throughout Europe were at risk. It was in Eastern Europe that the Germans began the final and most horrific stage of their anti-Jew campaign. They moved Jews out of their homes and into special sections of the city called ghettos. They established death camps and embarked on a campaign of mass murder.

In early 1942, senior officials of the German government met to devise a "Final Solution" to the "Jewish Question." These men decided that Jews would be transported to concentration camps. There they would either be worked to death or murdered. As a result of this decision, millions of Jews were killed in gas chambers.

In 1940 the country of Denmark, knowing it was too small to defend itself against the large Nazi forces, surrendered to Germany. At the time when *Number the Stars* takes place, there were about 8,000 Jews living in Denmark. Most were the descendants of Jews who had immigrated to Denmark hundreds of years earlier from Spain, Portugal, Germany, and Russia. There were also about 1,500 Jewish refugees who had fled to Denmark in the early 1930s.

In Denmark laws protected Jews from anti-Semitism. This tradition went back to 1690, when a Danish police chief was fired for suggesting that Denmark should imitate other European countries and establish a ghetto where Jews would be forced to live. In 1814 the Danish Parliament passed a bill making racial or religious discrimination a crime.

When the Germans first occupied Denmark in 1940, the former German ambassador to Denmark warned his superiors back in Berlin that it would be dangerous to limit the civil rights of Danish Jews in any way. Later, a Gestapo colonel visited Denmark and complained that the Danes' tolerant attitude toward Jews was beginning to influence the German soldiers stationed in Denmark. He feared that if a crackdown against Jews was ordered, some of these soldiers might not be willing to enforce it.

In 1943 when the Danish people heard that the Germans had decided to arrest their Jewish citizens, they banded together to form the Danish Resistance. Members of the resistance helped nearly 7,000 people—almost the entire population of Danish Jews—cross the sea to freedom in Sweden.

### Did You Know?

Jews were not the only victims of Adolf Hitler's desire to create a master race. The Nazis also killed

- Gypsies
- elderly people
- mentally handicapped and physically challenged adults, children, and babies

- people with epilepsy
- people with a history of mental illness
- people too ill to work
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- people of Slavic nationality, including Russian prisoners of war

# Before You Read

## *Number the Stars* Chapters 1–5

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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Would you ever be willing to risk your life for another person? Under what circumstances might you take this risk?

#### Journal Writing

While few people will ever be called to risk their lives for a friend or neighbor, many of us run into situations that require courage to stand up for someone else. Try to remember such a situation in your own life and in your journal describe what happened.

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how and why the members of the Johansen family take a risk for friends.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Did You Know?

Throughout their long history, followers of the Jewish faith have faced prejudice and persecution. The Romans banned Jews from the holy city of Jerusalem during the days of the Roman Empire. A thousand years later, Crusaders massacred German Jews. In 1492 the Jewish population was driven from Spain. By the end of the nineteenth century, most of the world's Jews lived in Russia and Poland. A substantial number also lived in Germany, and about one million had emigrated to the United States.

In the late 1870s, some people began to think of Jews as belonging to a different “race,” and some writers and politicians of the time began to criticize Jews for their religious beliefs. Adolf Hitler's ideas about German “racial purity” were an extension of myths about race. He used these myths to generate hatred toward the Jews.

#### Rosh Hashana

Rosh Hashana is the Jewish New Year. It occurs on the first day of the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, which is based on lunar months. The seventh month of the moon calendar usually falls in September. Rosh Hashana, which means “Head of the Year” in Hebrew, is one of the holiest days of the Jewish year. It commemorates the creation of the world and is a time for quietly reflecting on one's actions during the previous year and for repenting of one's sins. On Rosh Hashana, an ancient musical instrument called a *shofar* is played. The shofar is a ram's horn. When it is blown, it creates a high-pitched blast. The notes of the shofar call Jews to experience a spiritual reawakening.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**contempt** [kən tempt'] *n.* feeling of scorn toward a person or thing

**exasperated** [ig zas'pə rāt'əd] *adj.* extremely annoyed

**imperious** [im pēr'ē əs] *adj.* bossy or bullying in an arrogant way

**intricate** [in'tri kit] *adj.* very detailed

**sabotage** [sab'ə təzh'] *n.* destruction of property or interference with activities as a part of an effort against an enemy

# Active Reading

## *Number the Stars* Chapters 1–5

Two families are introduced in this section of the book—the Rosens and the Johansens. As you read Chapters 1 through 5, you will see how close the two families are. On the diagram below, list actions, facts, and events that illustrate their closeness and friendship.

The Rosens	Annemarie and Ellen are friends and schoolmates.	The Johansens

# Responding

## *Number the Stars* Chapters 1–5

### Personal Response

Were you surprised when the Johansens agreed to take in Ellen? Why?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. How does Annemarie behave around the German soldiers? How does Kirsti? Why might the sisters behave so differently?

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2. Contrast the fantasy world of the fairy tale Annemarie tells Kirsti with the reality of the world the girls know. Why might Kirsti be especially in need of hearing fairy tales? Why might fairy tales be comforting to Annemarie?

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3. Whom does Ellen pretend to be when the soldiers come to the Johansens? Why?

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# Responding

## Number the Stars Chapters 1–5

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. Lowry presents events through the eyes of Annemarie. How does Annemarie’s incomplete understanding of events help create suspense? Give an example from the novel.

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5. How might the Johansens answer the **Focus Question** on page 12? How does this answer compare with yours?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Writing a Dialogue

Some of the actions in the story occur “behind the scenes,” when Annemarie is not present. Fill in the blanks by imagining what the Johansens might have said to each other when they decided to help the Rosens. What dangers might they have foreseen? Why did they decide to help despite the dangers?

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

Although Lise Johansen has been dead for several years when this story begins, she is still important to the novel. In your literature group, discuss what you learn about Lise’s life, her personality, and her death. Refer to specific information in the book. Then discuss the impact that her death has had on her family. What signs are there that the Johansens have not come to terms with Lise’s death? What clues are there at the end of this section that the family’s wounds may be starting to heal? Support your conclusions with evidence from Chapters 1 through 5.

##### Internet Connection

Annemarie has fond memories of Tivoli Gardens, the amusement park in the center of Copenhagen. Look up Tivoli Gardens on the Internet to answer the following questions: When was Tivoli Gardens created? How big is it? What were its special features when it was designed? What is Tivoli Gardens like today? Take notes, and present your findings in an oral report to your class.

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*Save your work for your portfolio.*

# Before You Read

## Number the Stars Chapters 6–11

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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Do you think of yourself as a brave person? Why or why not? What is your definition of bravery?

#### Define It

Think of different kinds of bravery. Define them and give an example for each. (Examples: physical bravery—getting a shot at the doctor’s; performance bravery—performing in public)

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Annemarie’s Uncle Henrik defines bravery.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Did You Know?

Many of the world’s religions share beliefs about the importance of treating other people well. One of these shared beliefs is the golden rule. In the collection of Jewish teaching called the Talmud, this rule is stated as “The things you hate should not be done to others.” Christianity’s Book of Luke in the New Testament states, “Do to others what you would wish them to do to you.” Islam teaches, “You are not a real Muslim until you want for other people what you want for yourself.” The Hindu Mahabharata states, “Do nothing to others that would cause you pain if they did it to you.”

#### The Resistance

Most of Denmark’s Jews were saved because of prompt and sometimes very imaginative action by ordinary citizens. For example, when Jorgen Knudsen heard that the Germans were starting to round up Jews for deportation, the Danish ambulance driver looked through telephone directories for individuals whose family names were “Jewish-sounding.” He drove his ambulance to the home of one family after another, warning the family to escape. A few of the people he contacted were frantic because they couldn’t think of any place to seek refuge. Knudsen drove these individuals to a hospital where one of the physicians was active in the Resistance. The doctor disguised these new arrivals as hospital patients. A week later, hundreds of Jewish refugees were still hiding in this hospital when news came that the Gestapo planned a search of the facility. Hospital officials pretended that a funeral was being held in the hospital chapel. A procession of about twenty taxis came to take the “mourners” away.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**deftly** [deft’ly] *adv.* in a quick and skillful way

**distorted** [dis tōrt’əd] *adj.* twisted out of shape

**protrude** [prō trōōd’] *v.* to stick out

**ruefully** [rōō’fəl ly] *adv.* in a regretful or mournful way

**tentatively** [ten’tə tiv ly] *adv.* with uncertainty

# Active Reading

## *Number the Stars* Chapters 6–11

In this section of the novel, characters often speak in secret code or say the opposite of what they mean to prevent the Nazi soldiers from uncovering their plans. As you read, keep track of times when characters disguise what they really mean. Fill out the chart below, telling who the person is, what he or she says, and what he or she really means.

Name of Character	What the Character Says	What the Character Really Means
Papa	Is the weather good for fishing?	Is it a good time for helping refugees escape?

# Responding

## *Number the Stars Chapters 6–11*

### Personal Response

According to the personal definition of bravery that you came up with in the **Focus Activity** on page 16, do you think the Johansens are brave?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. What lie does Uncle Henrik tell Annemarie?

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2. How do Annemarie's experiences in this section force her to grow up in a way that Ellen is not yet forced to?

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3. Why is Mrs. Johansen's response to the German soldiers so clever?

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# Responding

## *Number the Stars* Chapters 6–11

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. Why does Lowry include Annemarie’s thoughts about how the Jews are standing straight despite their loss of all obvious sources of pride?

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5. Who are some of the refugees who have fled political or social tyranny and come to the United States in recent decades?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Opinion Piece

In this section, Annemarie is faced with an ethical dilemma. Ethics are a set of values or principles by which people live. They help to define good and bad behavior. On one hand, Annemarie knows that lying is not ethical. On the other hand, she and her family must lie to protect the lives of others. In some cases, especially in time of war, people are faced with these types of ethical dilemmas. Write an opinion piece that justifies Annemarie’s and her family’s actions during the war. Support your opinion with examples from the novel.

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

Lowry uses the natural world as a metaphor for life and her characters’ situation. One of the major symbols is that of stars in the night sky. Other symbols include flowers, animals, and meadows. In your group, discuss what the various descriptions of the natural world suggest about the characters’ moods, about their situation, and about the meaning of life. Then evaluate the effectiveness of these symbols.

##### Art Connection

Imagine that you are an artist commissioned to create a cover for *Number the Stars*. Think about the major elements of the novel—the plot, the characters, the theme, the setting, and the symbols. Think of ways to draw these elements together in a single, unified design. Then create your cover.



*Save your work for your portfolio.*

# Before You Read

## *Number the Stars Chapters 12–17*

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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How do you prepare yourself when you have something difficult to face or to accomplish? Do you think about something else or give yourself advice?

#### **Make a List**

Make a list of some tactics you have used in the past to prepare for and deal with difficult situations.

#### **Setting a Purpose**

Read to find out how Annemarie copes with an important and frightening mission.

### BACKGROUND

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#### **Did You Know?**

In 1953 the Israeli Parliament created Yad Vashem, a memorial to the Holocaust and a center for Holocaust-related research. The center was authorized to honor Gentiles (non-Jews) who had risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. To be considered, a person must have helped to save the life of at least one Jew from Nazi persecution and taken action in spite of danger or difficulty. As of mid-1997, Yad Vashem had recognized over 13,000 such individuals. Each received a medal inscribed with the words, “Whoever saves a single life, saves the entire world.”

#### **Sweden as a Refuge**

Sweden was neutral during World War II: It did not take sides with either Germany or Germany’s enemies. Throughout the 1930s, Sweden issued very few entry permits to Jewish refugees. However, in 1943 Sweden could see that the tide of the war was turning against Germany. Germany was retreating in North Africa and in Stalingrad, Russia. It seemed just a matter of time before Germany was defeated. Therefore, the Swedish government dared to offer official sanctuary to Danish Jews even though this action would infuriate Germany.

Because the two countries are separated only by a narrow strait, many Jews could be quickly transported from Denmark to Sweden. When faced with the problem of how to move thousands of refugees to Sweden, Resistance leaders immediately started contacting the captains of many of the fishing boats that worked the waters off the nation’s eastern coast. Many captains accepted the dangerous assignment. In the early days of the operation, fees ranged from about \$150 to \$1,500 per person. Resistance workers got involved to make sure that none of the captains made an unfair profit from the refugees’ desperation. They bargained with the sailors and brought the price down to as low as \$65 per person.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**brusque** [brusk] *adj.* rough or abrupt in speech

**devastating** [dev’əs tāt’ing] *adj.* overwhelmingly terrible

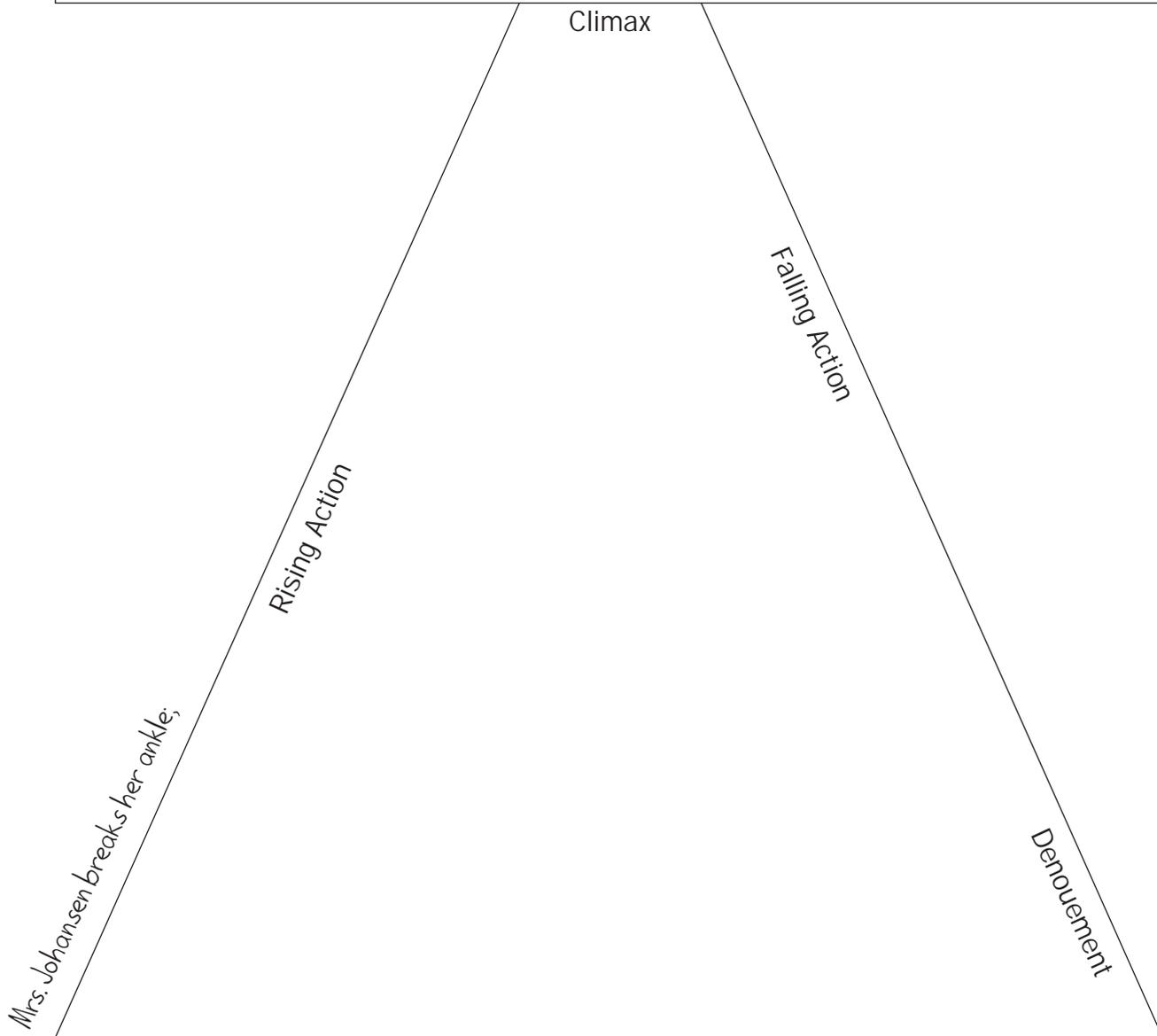
**quaver** [kwā’ver] *v.* to tremble (said of a voice)

**taut** [tôt] *adj.* tightly stretched

# Active Reading

## *Number the Stars* Chapters 12-17

The climax, or point of highest tension, of *Number the Stars* occurs in the third section. As you read, note the events that are part of the rising action (the events leading up to the climax), the climax, the falling action, and the denouement or resolution.



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# Responding

## *Number the Stars* Chapters 12–17

### Personal Response

Did you find this part of the book exciting? Why or why not?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. Why did Mama send Annemarie with the packet for Uncle Henrik instead of taking it herself?

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2. How does Annemarie use what her uncle has taught her and her observations of Kirsti's earlier behavior to deal with the German soldiers?

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3. When Henrik returns from taking the Rosens to Sweden, how does he show that he now regards Annemarie as an equal?

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# Responding

## Number the Stars Chapters 12–17

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

4. Why might Lowry have included so many references to people stumbling, tripping, and falling? Why are these references important to the plot? How do they contribute to the story's mood and message?

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5. Some people, like Annemarie, are good at understanding how other people think and feel and then using this information to deal with them effectively. How might someone like Annemarie apply this skill to a career?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Letter of Recommendation

Imagine that Annemarie Johansen is a real person and that you want to recommend her for an honor. Write a letter to Israeli authorities explaining why Annemarie deserves a medal for bravery. Describe her achievements in detail. Make sure you use the correct style for a formal letter.

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

In the first section of this book, Annemarie clings to fairy tales as the one thing that hasn't changed in her world. After her distressing encounter with German soldiers in Copenhagen, she comforts herself and her sister with a happy tale about a king and queen with a beautiful daughter. In Chapter 14 Annemarie is running through the woods at night by herself. She thinks about a different sort of fairy tale, "Little Red Riding Hood." In your group, discuss how and why Annemarie's feelings about fairy tales have changed. Then work together to retell *Number the Stars* as a fairy tale. Eliminate the realistic, historical details of the setting, transform the Nazis into dragons or ogres, and use fantasy to solve the problem. Keep Annemarie as the heroine of your story and Ellen as the friend she helps. Then discuss the ways in which both realistic novels such as *Number the Stars* and fairy tales can be used to teach similar lessons about life, danger, love, and bravery.



Save your work for your portfolio.



# October 45

Jean-Louis Besson

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What are some of the comforts of everyday life that you take for granted? Which ones do you think you would miss the most if you had to live during a time of war and many resources were in short supply?

### Background

Illustrator Jean-Louis Besson was born in France in 1932. When Besson was just seven years old, his country was invaded by Germany, and for the next six years he trained his eye on the fascinating, disturbing, and sometimes humorous conditions around him. In *October 45: Childhood Memories of the War*, Besson shows daily life in occupied France through the eyes of a child.

## Responding to the Reading

1. What are some of the ways in which the French people managed to overcome the challenges of living with diminished resources?

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2. How can you tell that Besson's family did not sympathize with the Germans and their beliefs?

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3. **Making Connections** How are the everyday problems faced by the characters in this selection similar to those faced by the characters in *Number the Stars*?

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## Learning for Life

If you suddenly had to make do with fewer financial resources, how could you continue to meet your needs for food, clothing, and entertainment? Make a list of specific changes you could make in your lifestyle and spending habits. You might even try to put these ideas into practice for a brief period and keep a diary of your experiences.

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# Night of Fire at Berlin Railroad Station

Harold Gordon

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Have you ever wanted to seek revenge in response to someone else's actions? What did you think about doing? What did you actually do? Do you think you made the right decision?

### Background

While a prisoner of the Nazis, Polish Jew Harold Gordon vowed to seek revenge for himself and his family. After the war, however, Gordon's plan for revenge took a different turn. He immigrated to the United States, married, had a family, and built a business. Instead of giving into bitterness and hostility, Gordon decided to write a book. He wrote *The Last Sunrise* for three reasons—to memorialize his family, to help others who had been abused let go of anger, and to donate part of the profits to charity. Gordon frequently speaks at churches and synagogues. He and his wife, Joyce, are cofounders of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

## Responding to the Reading

1. The Allies were the countries who fought against Nazi Germany. Why does Harold Gordon say, "We didn't care so much about dying at the hands of the Allies"?

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2. Why did watching his father being beaten take away Gordon's hope? Do you think he remained without hope? Give evidence for your answer.

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3. **Making Connections** In what way do the events and circumstances in this reading from *The Last Sunrise* relate to *Number the Stars*? Explain.

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## Internet Research

Use the Web to do research on the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Find out about the architecture, exhibits, history, and mission of the museum.

# Civilized Denmark

Garrison Keillor

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Have you ever thought that the people of a certain city, region, or country share personality traits and viewpoints? How do people's lifestyles and attitudes give a certain flavor to the place where they live?

### Background

Humorist Garrison Keillor is the host of the radio show *A Prairie Home Companion* and the author of several books. In this article he describes a trip through Denmark, a country he has long loved and admired.

## Responding to the Reading

1. Does Keillor's article make you want to visit Denmark? Why or why not?

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2. How would you sum up the "Danish character"?

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3. Name an aspect of Danish life in each of the following categories that contrasts with life in the United States: educational system, social welfare system, and personal habits and attitudes.

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4. **Making Connections** In what way does the Denmark of the 1990s described by Garrison Keillor resemble the Denmark of the 1940s described by Lois Lowry?

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## Performing

Think of a group of people you know well. They might be people who live in your neighborhood or a core group of students with whom you've traveled through the school system. Think about the lifestyle and attitudes that these people share. Then write and perform a humorous monologue describing the "personality" of this group.

# We Will Be the World

Sasha Whyte

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What do you know about the conflict and ethnic tension in the former Yugoslavia? How do you think the wars have affected young people?

### Background

Yugoslavia was a nation made up of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. People who lived in Yugoslavia belonged to a number of different religious and ethnic groups (including Croats and Serbs, Muslims and Christians) with a long history of intolerance and war. In 1991 Croatia and Slovenia declared independence. A year later, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia voted for independence, too, but ethnic Serbs tried to establish control of their own independent regions within Bosnia. A bloody war erupted, and many innocent people lost their lives simply because someone thought they belonged to the “wrong” religious or ethnic group. Some leaders fanned hatred as a way of gaining political power. In 1995 Sasha Whyte, a high school sophomore, visited Bosnia and reported on her experience.

## Responding to the Reading

1. Before her trip to Bosnia, what was Sasha Whyte’s attitude toward politics in the rest of the world? Do you share this attitude? Do you think it is typical of American students?

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2. According to Sasha Whyte, how do the children of Bosnia differ from the picture adults have of them?

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3. **Making Connections** After the war, how does the mood of the children of the former Yugoslavia differ from Annemarie’s mood after the war? What are some possible reasons for the difference?

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## Internet Connection

Look up Bosnia on the Internet to see what is happening in that region today. Try to locate at least five separate sources of information. Summarize your findings.

# Petey and Yotsee and Mario, July 14, 1956

Henry Roth

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What kinds of foods, celebrations, and customs are part of your cultural heritage?

### Background

In 1908 Jewish writer Henry Roth and his family immigrated to the United States. They left Austria-Hungary because Jews there were seen as outsiders and had few opportunities. Roth grew up in the cultural melting pot of New York City. At home his family spoke Yiddish, a dialect spoken by many Eastern European Jews. At school and everywhere else young Henry spoke English and tried hard to fit in. This short story explores one person's mixed feelings about his cultural heritage.

## Responding to the Reading

1. Why doesn't Fat want his mother to bake a cake for the boys who saved him from drowning?

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2. What explanation does Mario give for the reason they saved Fat? What did he mean by this?

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3. **Making Connections** In this story, Fat thinks he is different from his friends because of the kinds of food his family eats. What cultural differences did Ellen and Annemarie have in *Number the Stars*?

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## Sharing Recipes

In your groups, research the many different kinds of ethnic foods that are served in the United States. Each group member should pick a region of the United States and choose three dishes—a main dish, a side dish, and a dessert—traditionally served in that region. For example, potato latkas are a Jewish side dish often served in the Northeast. Jambalaya is a Cajun main dish served in the Southeast. On sheets of 8½ x 11 paper, write the recipe and a brief description of the cultural background of the dish. You may illustrate your recipes in any way you wish. Combine all of your recipes into a class cookbook.