

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

Compiled by
Beth Ann Bryant-Richards
Smitha Chandran
Shannon Davis
& Katie Matha





Synopsis

- *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry tells the story of ten-year-old Annemarie Johanssen and her best friend Ellen Rosen during the Nazi occupation of Denmark in 1943. The Rosens and the Johanssens live in Copenhagen, and we learn early in the book about Annemarie's deceased older sister, Lise, who had been engaged to marry Peter when she was tragically killed. When word reaches the Rosens that the Nazis will begin detaining Jews, the Rosens go into hiding with the help of Annemarie's parents and members of the Danish Resistance. Annemarie, her little sister Kristen, and Mrs. Johanssen travel to the coast of Denmark to help the Rosens and other Jews escape to Sweden via the Baltic Sea. Annemarie's Uncle Henrick, a Dutch fisherman, aides in this dramatic escape, as does Peter from the Resistance movement.
- The brilliant and multilayered title chosen by Lowry refers to the Star of David necklace that Ellen wears, a reference to Jewish traditions and culture. "Number the stars" is also a phrase repeated from the Bible in a psalm recited during a critical time in the narrative:

*O praise the Lord.
How good it is to sing psalms to our God!
How pleasant to praise him!
The Lord is rebuilding Jerusalem;
he gathers in the scattered sons of Israel.
It is he who heals the broken in spirit
and binds up their wounds,
he who numbers the stars one by one...*
- Also, Lowry frequently references the number of stars in the sky or the starless night sky. *Number the Stars* brings to mind the six million Jews murdered over the course of the Holocaust.



Synopsis





Themes

- Holocaust
- Coming of Age
- Loss of Innocence
 - through Death
 - due to War
- Sacrifice and Responsibility



Point of View

Third Person Limited

Meet The Author – Lois Lowry



Born in 1937, Lois Lowry professed a love of reading and writing since her childhood, which was spent traveling the world. Her father was an Army dentist, and she says she still loves to travel. Lowry married young, had four children, and did not begin writing until her mid-30s. She currently lives in Boston and Maine, and makes time to enjoy her grandchildren and her dogs. A prolific writer, she has won numerous awards, including two Newbery medals. Check out her blog: <http://loislowry.typepad.com>

Lowry's older sister died when they were children, and early death has been a motif throughout her writing career. Lowry also suffered the loss of her son, who was an Air Force pilot killed in a crash. Lois Lowry writes that her books all deal with essentially the same theme: recognizing the interconnectedness of the human experience. Her books are popular with adults and children alike. Her popular titles include the Anastasia series, *Number the Stars*; *The Giver*, *Messenger*, and *Gathering Blue* (a trilogy); and *Autumn Street*.

Readability Statistics

Chapters	Flesh-Kincaid Readability
1&2	6.03
3&4	5.23
12&13	4.7
15&16	4.1
Lexile Score	670L Approximately 5 th grade level

Any discrepancy is due to heavy dialogue in some passages, while other passages contained expository prose.

Advanced Word Reading

Word List #1	Word List #2	Word List #3
Affixes	/ed/ endings	/ai/ or /vcv/ vowel combinations
Quickly	Adjusted	wait
untied	Pleaded	wailed
elderly	Balanced	Trailed
Plodding	Walked	tail
loudly	Looked	glare
unimportant	Civilized	face
description	Hesitated	pale
uneasy		Tale

Fluency Activities

- **Newscaster**

After reading the chapter, students will work in groups to write a newscast to recap the events of the chapter. They should work to summarize the plot from the chapter. Students can watch a few newscasts to find some newscasters to model. They should take turns reading the newscast they have written together until they can read it expressively and fluently. To take this activity further, groups could divide all the chapters in the chapter book and videotape their newscasts, putting each on a final DVD, demonstrating their commitment to quality

- **Word Wizards**

Choose distinctive words from the chapter and write each in large letters on 4" x 6" index cards. Have students work in pairs to take turns flipping the cards so that their partner can read the words aloud. (Words: sped, coast, creep, morning, dreams, snuggle, sleep, stars, winced, meadow, kneeling, dashed, faltered.)

- **Poetry Slam**

Working with the words from the second activity above, students should each write a poem using words that rhyme. Students will revise their poems and then practice reading them aloud with a focus on fluency, prosody, and inflection. Designate a day for a poetry slam in the classroom so that each student can show off his or her reading fluency

Vocabulary List

Civilized

Rucksack

Rationed

Swastika

Squinted

Discolored

Exasperated

Insolently

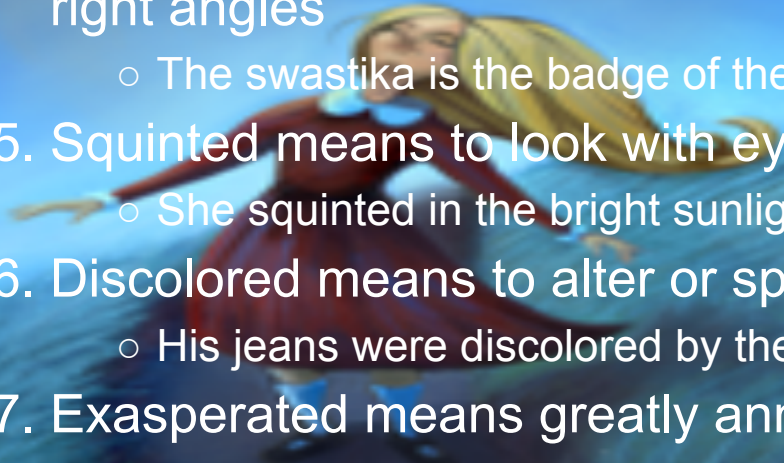


Vocabulary List

Definitions



1. Civilized means to bring into an advanced stage of social development
 - The civilized world must fight ignorance
2. Rucksack means a backpack
 - Tom carried a rucksack for his hike of the Grand Canyon
3. Ration means restricted to a fixed amount
 - During the war the government imposed rationing of gasoline
4. Swastika is a symbol formed by a cross with the ends of the arms bent at right angles
 - The swastika is the badge of the Nazi party in Germany
5. Squinted means to look with eyes partially closed
 - She squinted in the bright sunlight
6. Discolored means to alter or spoil the color of an object
 - His jeans were discolored by the strong bleach
7. Exasperated means greatly annoyed or irritated
 - The mother was exasperated by her son's disobedience
8. Insolently means rude or disrespectful
 - Tom insolently told his mother that he did not have time to clean his room



? Bloom's Taxonomy Questions

- Knowledge

- Who are the main characters of the book?
- Where and when does the story take place?
- What injury did Annemarie's mother suffer at the beginning of Chapter 13?
- Where did all the Jewish people go to hide from the militia?

- Understanding

- Describe the setting
- Describe what happened when the girls were stopped by the soldiers at the beginning of the book
- Summarize what happens in Chapters 13 and 14. (Alternative: Distinguish between the Jewish and non-Jewish characters. How are they alike? How are they different?)
- Describe how Annemarie behaved when the soldiers stopped her?

- Application

- Relate to a time when you felt like Kirsti as she asked Annemarie to join in on the game.
- Have you ever been a situation like Annemarie and Ellen with the soldier, where you were scared or frightened? Please explain.
- Illustrate the path of the Nazi Regime through Europe.
- Trace the route the Bescos took to escape the Germans in Denmark. What other

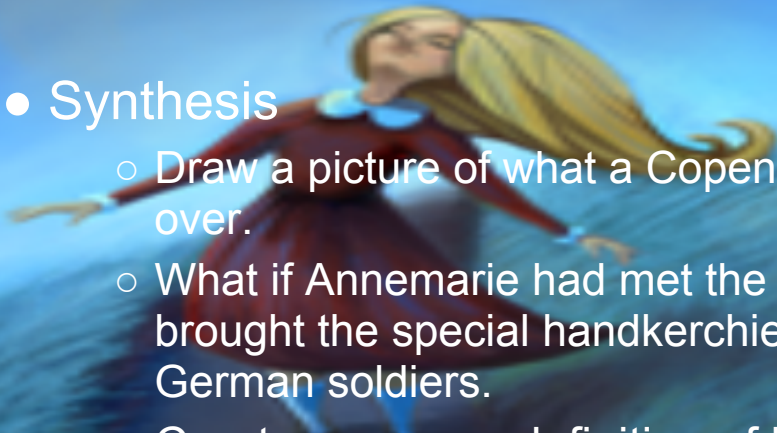
Bloom's Taxonomy Questions



- Analysis

- Give three differences between your childhood and the lives of Annemarie, Ellen, and Kirsti.
- When Annemarie's mother is talking about what to tell the doctor she tells Annemarie, "I'll have a cup of tea and then we'll call the doctor. I'll tell him that I fell on the stairs. You'll have to help me wash away the grass and twigs" (p. 103). Explain why Annemarie's mother wants to wash away the grass and twigs.
- Analyze what would have happened to the Jewish people on the boat if the Germans had found them.

- Synthesis

- Draw a picture of what a Copenhagen street would look like once the Nazis took over.
 - What if Annemarie had met the soldiers with their sniffer dogs and she had not brought the special handkerchief? Rewrite the scene between Annemarie and the German soldiers.
 - Create your own definition of bravery
- 

Bloom's Taxonomy Questions?

- Evaluation

- Put yourself in Ellen's family's shoes. Compare what they did to what you would have done.
- Decide how you would act if you had to decide whether or not to help a friend in a life-or-death situation, as many people faced during the Holocaust? Demonstrate your position by writing a letter to your friend explaining how you made your judgment call.
- Is Annemarie a hero? Explain your answer.



Extension Activities



1. Number the Stars Newspaper

Students will create their own newspaper in pairs. The newspaper will need to include:

- 2 paragraphs
- 3 illustrations
- 1 advertisement

Provide each student a list of topics that they may use in their newspapers. Each part of the assignment must correspond with a different topic from the list. Students will have time to complete this assignment in class. Provide construction paper, markers, crayons, scissors, and glue. If students would like, they can find pictures at home and bring them in to add to their newspapers

2. Research the Nazi Regime/World War II

Assign students a small research project. They will be required to research the Nazi Regime and World War II. They will need to include the following:

- How many deaths were there?
- What was the Final Solution?
- When did the war take place and where?
- What is the Star of David? Why is it significant?

Spend time teaching students how to properly research on the computer and in the library. Give students class time to complete research. Students should write a one-page paper and create a

Extension Activities

1. What happened when they met again?

Students will rewrite the ending of the book or another chapter. Students should write about when Annemarie and Ellen meet after the war. This assignment will require students to use their imagination and come up with a proper ending. Read students an ending written by the teacher. When students have completed this project, they can share their new ending with the class.

1. How long did they travel?

Provide students with a map of where the girls traveled. In small groups, students will calculate how far the girls traveled together and how far Ellen traveled with her family. Spend some time going over where the start and end markers should go. Students must report their findings to a giant graph on the board. Once everyone has put up their data, make a connection as to how far it is to their general location. For example, Ellen's travels is equal to you walking around the school track x amount of times.

1. Science Stars

Our science unit will be about stars. We will discuss what stars are, what they are made of, where they are located, and why they are important. As a class, we will take a field trip to the Alder Planetarium. On the day that we discuss why the stars are important, we will make a connection to the book. Ask students "Why is the book titled *Number the Stars*? We will spend some time discussing this question in detail before we go on the field trip so students can relate what they experience at the planetarium to the story.



Extension Activities

1. Model CNN

Students will work in groups to create a television news story about some plot points in *Number the Stars*. Let students watch a couple of news stories from CNN or other network news shows. Each group should have an anchorperson to introduce the story and one or two roving reporters to report from Copenhagen or Uncle Henrik's house. The story can even be about what happened after the war when the Rosen family and the Johansen family were reunited. Give students time in class to present their new stories, or record them with a video camera.

1. Poetry Corner

Students will write poems inspired by the story or other stories of the Holocaust. They can write free verse, haiku, or rhyming couplets. Make a classroom book of poetry for display.

1. Field Trip

Arrange a field trip to the Holocaust Museum in Skokie, Illinois. Ask students to write in their journals about the field trip when they return to school.



Extension Activities

1. Arts Connection

Students will create original artwork inspired by the story or other stories of the Holocaust. A collage project would work well for this activity. Students can draw pictures or symbols for their collage or cut pictures out of newspapers or magazines.

1. Technology Connection: Photo Essay

Students can create a photo essay inspired by Number the Stars. Have students perform an Internet search for images related to the book and the time in history. Students can use computer technology to create a photo essay. If time permits, students can add music to their photo essays. Have the photo essays set up for parents to view during Parent-Teacher conferences or Parent Nights.



For Further Reading

