

Number the Stars

Thematic Unit for Sixth Grade

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Number the Stars by Lois Lowry is a gripping, 1990 Newberry medalist novel of historical fiction that describes the evacuation of Jews from German-controlled Denmark. The story is narrated by ten-year-old Annemarie Johansen who is faced with the knowledge that the Nazis are beginning to relocate the Jews in her home city of Copenhagen. While Annemarie is not Jewish, she has a friend, named Ellen Rosen, that is. The story describes a secret mission that the Johansens embark on to help the Ellen escape to neighboring Sweden for safety. The story is a mesmerizing tale of both triumph and loss, as well as friendship and bravery. It is a great tool to use in order to teach children events of the Holocaust, acceptance, and the importance to stand up for what they believe.

Related Books

- Adler, D. A. (2002). *A hero and the Holocaust: The story of Janusz and his children*. New York: Holiday House.
- Allan, R. (1995). *Danish: A comprehensive grammar*. New York: Routledge.
- Borden, L. W. (2006). *Across the blue Pacific: A World War II story*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Britton, T. L. (2003). *Denmark*. New York: Checkerboard Books.
- Capua, S. D. (2003). *The Tuskegee Airmen: African-American pilots of World War II*. Mankato, MN: Child's World.
- Colman, P. (1998). *Rosie the riveter: Women working on the home front in World War II*. New York: Crown Books for Young Readers.
- Deedy, C. A. (2000). *The yellow star: The legend of King Christian X of Denmark*. Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers.
- Frank, A. (1993). *The diary of a young girl*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hausfater, R. (2006). *The little boy star: An allegory of the Holocaust*. Berkeley, CA: Milk and Cookie Press.
- Kuhn, B. (1999). *Angels of mercy: The army nurses of World War II*. New York: Aladdin.
- Kwek, K. (2003). *Welcome to Denmark*. Strongsville, OH: Gareth Stevens Publishing.
- Levi, P. (1995). *Survival in Auschwitz*. New York: Scribner.
- Levine, E. (2002). *Darkness over Denmark: The Danish resistance and the rescue of the Jews*. New York: Holiday House.
- Nicholson, D. M. (2005). *Remember World War II: Kids who survive tell their stories*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Children's Books.
- Perl, L. (1996). *Four perfect pebbles*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
- Ward, H. H. (1988). *My friend's beliefs: A young reader's guide to world religions*. New York: Walker Books for Young Readers.
- Yolan, J. (1990). *The devil's arithmetic*. New York: Puffin.
- Zullo, A. (2005). *Survivors: True stories of children in the Holocaust*. Danbury, CT: Scholastic.

Introduction and Summary of *Number the Stars*

Use slide show pictures (of people, places, and events) to help introduce story:

After World War I, Germany had been devastated. Everyone wondered how the country could rebuild after such a terrible loss, not only the loss of the victory they could have had in the war, but also the loss of money, people, troops, supplies, food, and buildings. One man had stepped in to take charge. He promised that he could rebuild Germany into a successful and powerful country. Without any other source of hope, the people elected Adolph Hitler as their savior who (as dictator) would bring Germany out of its misery. Hitler did just that. He greatly increased the amount of money, troops, supplies, and food, and rebuilt the towns and roads. It looked like Germany would have its success after all. The Germans now trusted Hitler and thought he could do no wrong.

What they did not know was that Hitler had taken advantage of the people's distress and fooled them all. He was not looking out for all German residents like he had originally promised. He was only looking out for himself and his kind. Hitler was a man that hated (truly hated) people who spoke, looked, walked, acted, and thought differently than him. He hated these people so much, that he brainwashed hundreds of thousands of Germans into killing these people. Hitler did not set his boundaries at the borderlines of Germany, however. He set out to conquer the world. In his mind, he was going to rid the world of Jews, Blacks, Gypsies, and the handicapped. In the process, millions of people of all ages were brutally killed because of the way they looked or the things that they believed.

Over the next couple of weeks, we will be reading the novel, *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry. It is a novel of historical fiction that depicts what it was like to be a Jew living in German-controlled Denmark. The story is about a young girl named Annemarie and her family who try to smuggle her best friend Ellen (who is a Jew) from Denmark to non-German-controlled Sweden. The story, while fictional, is a great representation of life during WWII. My goal over these next few weeks is to place you inside the story so that you feel as though you had lived through WWII and the Holocaust. That way, you can see just how lucky you are to have so many freedoms as a citizen of the United States.

We Are the Children of the Holocaust

By Rudi Raab

We are the children of the Holocaust.

We are both Germans and Jews.

We are the children of the victims.

We are the children of the oppressors.

We started out on opposite sides, but the memory of the Holocaust will join us forever.

We shall never let the victims be forgotten,

For if we do, we will forget that the perpetrator can be in all of us.

Raab, R. (1992). *We are the children of the Holocaust*. Retrieved November 6, 2007, from <http://remember.org/ideas/weare.html>

Holocaust

By Barbara Sonek

We played, we laughed, we were loved.

We were ripped from the arms of our parents and thrown into the fire.

We were nothing more than children.

We had a future.

We were going to be lawyers, rabbis, wives, teachers, mothers.

We had dreams, then we had no hope.

We were taken away in the dead of night like cattle in cars, no air to breathe.

Smothering, crying, starving, dying.

Separated from the world to be no more.

From the ashes, hear our plea.

This atrocity to mankind can not happen again.

Remember us, for we were the children whose dreams and lives were stolen away.

Sonek, B. (2007). *Holocaust*. Retrieved November 6, 2007, from <http://www.auschwitz.dk/id6.htm>

Daniel

By Laura Crist

And the child held her hand
A child tiny for almost eight,
Deep blue eyes that dominated his face,
When he explained new events to her.
That funny doggy, that pretty rock.
And the freckles on his cheeks,
No one saw a sunrise more perfect, to her.
She so vividly smells the fragrance of
His hair, his ears, his breath in the morning.
She vividly hears that little heartbeat
That was hers always hers.
And the laughter,
That raspy little laugh,
When he caught her in a conundrum.
All this,
But this is merely the surface,
As she watches her little God sheared,
And stripped,
For the gas chamber.



The Little Boy with His Hands Up

By Yala Korwin

Your open palms raised in the air
Like two white doves
Frame your meager face,
Your face contorted with fear,
Grown old with knowledge beyond your years.
Not yet ten. Eight? Seven?
Not yet compelled to mark
With a blue star on white badge
Your Jewishness.

No need to brand the very young.
They will meekly follow their mothers.

You are standing apart
Against the flock of women and their brood
With blank, resigned stares.
All the torments of this harassed crowd
Are written on your face.
In your dark eyes--a vision of horror.
You have seen Death already
On the ghetto streets, haven't you?
Do you recognize it in the emblems
Of the SS-man facing you with his camera?

Like a lost lamb you are standing
Apart and forlorn beholding your own fate.

Where is your mother, little boy?
Is she the woman glancing over her shoulder
At the gunmen at the bunker's entrance?

Is it she who lovingly, though in haste,
Buttoned your coat, straightened your cap,
Pulled up your socks?
Is it her dreams of you, her dreams
Of a future Einstein, a Spinoza,
Another Heine or Halévy
They will murder soon?
Or are you orphaned already?
But even if you still have a mother,
She won't be allowed to comfort you
In her arms.

Her tired arms loaded with useless bundles
Must remain up in submission.

Alone you will march
Among other lonely wretches
Toward your martyrdom.

Your image will remain with us
And grow and grow
To immense proportions,
To haunt the callous world,
To accuse it, with ever stronger voice,
In the name of the million youngsters
Who lie, pitiful rag-dolls,
Their eyes forever closed.

Korwin, Y. (1987). *To Tell the Story - Poems Of the Holocaust*. New York: Holocaust Publications.

Related Poems

The Holocaust

By Brenda Kodesh

In a cold and silent world, weeping people wait,

Hoping and praying to not face this solemn fate.

But even though they were quiet, as quiet as they could be,

They were still found in the dark ghettos, the whole Jewish family.

The cries from the little ones so confused and so afraid,

Were ignored by the wretched Nazis, who caused heartbreak in that day.

They led them on a tearful trail toward to dreaded Auschwitz place.

And treated them like guinea pigs, testing them face to face.

Not a care in the world did the Nazi leaders possess,

Toward the unfair treatment to which placed the Jews in distress.

And all these tears and terror led up to this fatal loss,

Of all the millions of innocent Jews killed in the Holocaust.

Related Internet Sites

- Grace Productions. (n.d.). *Children of the Holocaust*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from <http://www.graceproducts.com/fmnc/main.htm>
- Jacobs, A. (n.d.). *Then and now*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from <http://remember.org/then-and-now/index.html>
- Jacobs, A. (n.d.). *Virtual tour of Auschwitz*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from <http://www.remember.org/auschwitz/aus.php?id=1>
- Menszer, J. (2007). *Holocaust survivors*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from www.holocaustsurvivors.org
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (2007). *The final solution*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from <http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/fsol.htm>
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (2007). *Jews in Germany*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from <http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/jger33.htm>
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (2007). *Nazi camps*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from <http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/ncamp.htm>
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (2007). *Nazi rule*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from <http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/nrule.htm>
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (2007). *Remembrance, reflection, response*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from <http://r3program.ushmm.org/intro.php>
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (2007). *The rescue of the Jews*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/focus/danish/>
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (2007). *Rescue and resistance*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from <http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/rescue.htm>
- Vashem, Y. (2004). *The Auschwitz album*. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from http://www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/10-13.html

Using the Word Wall

- To practice reading, pronouncing, spelling, and saying the definitions of the words on the word wall, the students can play a *Jeopardy!* game (in groups). Before the class plays the game, the teacher can quickly create a *Jeopardy!* board by writing five categories across the top of the chalkboard. Five point values will be placed underneath each category. Team A will choose the first category and point value. The teacher will read the question that corresponds with that category and point value. If the group gets the answer correct, they receive that many points. If they get it wrong, they lose that many points. The questions to the game could say: “This word means...”, “This word is spelled using the following letters...”, or “This word rhymes with...”. The students would reply with, “What is....” in order to answer the question just as in *Jeopardy!*. After a group gives their answer, the teacher will move to the next team. They will select a category, and try to answer the question. This will continue for all 25 questions. The team with the most points wins.
- The students can also use the word wall to write a story. The students can write any story that they want to as long as it incorporates every word on the word wall. Make sure to explain to the students that they must use the words correctly (meaning that they must think about the definition as they write).
- Another way to use the word wall is to play “I am”. Each student will be handed a card that says, “I am (word wall word). I am looking for the word that means (definition of another word wall word).” One student will read his/her card aloud. All of the students will check their cards to see if they have the corresponding word. The student that has the word that matches the definition read, will read his/her story. This will continue until everyone reads their card and the students return to the first word read. Therefore, all of the students need to pay attention throughout the whole game in case their word is read. After each student has a chance to contribute to the game, the students can switch words and play another round.

Word Wall

A.

Adolph Hitler
anti-Semitism
Auschwitz

B.

C.

Christian X
concentration camp
conundrum
crematorium

D.

dictator

E.

extermination camp

F.

G.

gas chamber
genocide
ghetto

H.

Holocaust

I.

J.

Jews

K.

L.

labor camp

M.

N.

Nazi

O.

P.

prejudice

Q.

R.

ration
resistance fighters

S.

Schindler
Star of David
swastika
synagogue

T.

Third Reich
trousseau

U.

V.

W.

X.

Y.

Z.

Note

The events of World War II and the Holocaust can be very traumatic to younger children. I chose to plan this unit for a sixth grade classroom because I believe that they can begin to understand the significance of the concepts being taught. In my research, many other sixth grade classrooms have enjoyed learning about the Holocaust through even more controversial activities than what I have planned. Trying to remain more conservative on the issue, I have made sure to pick pieces of literature that are appropriate for younger children. These books are written so that they depict the events of the Holocaust and World War II without being too graphic. I also tried to incorporate activities that allow the students to see how Jews might have felt during the Holocaust without them being too disturbing. I understand that teaching about the Holocaust is a very touchy subject, but I believe it is something that students can and should learn. The age at which the topic is taught fully depends on the maturity level of the students. Some children might not be able to handle the following activities in this thematic unit. However, the activities are just suggestions and can therefore be adapted as needed for each group of students so that they can all enjoy Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*.

Related Projects

You Have to Read This!

In order to incorporate art and music into the unit, the students could create an ad or jingle for one of the related books. In the first couple weeks of the unit, each student would select one of his/her favorite stories from the selection of related books. Then, the students would create an ad or jingle in order to persuade the rest of the class to read that particular story. Each student would share his/her ad or jingle with the rest of the class. This would allow other students to hear what the stories are about and will encourage them to investigate the story for themselves.

In Memory of...

Social studies can be integrated in the unit through the activity called, "In Memory of...". In this activity, the students select a child of the Holocaust to research (from <http://www.graceproducts.com/fmnc/main.htm>). Each student would write a paper that describes the life of his/her child that is researched. The students would share their papers (along with a picture of their child) with the rest of the class. These reports will, then, be presented on a bulletin board in the class with the title "In Memory of...".

How Would it Feel?

Social studies can also be added to the unit because of the "How Would it Feel?" activity. The success of this activity definitely depends on the maturity level of the students. At the beginning of the day, the class would be split in half. One half of the students would be the police (Nazis). These students wear yellow armbands. The other students would be the citizens (Jews). They wear blue armbands. For the first half of the day, the citizens are not allowed to smile or talk. If any of these students are caught smiling, laughing, or talking by a member of the police, they will be given a red armband by that police officer. The students should try to have the least amount of red armbands possible. Then, the students will switch roles in the afternoon.

At the end of the day, the students will discuss how it felt when they could not smile or talk just because one person said they could not. They will discuss how it felt when they had to watch their every move so that they would not get caught. The students can also discuss if they felt as though they had to hide from the police to keep from wearing the red bands. Ask the students how they think they would feel if they had to be the citizen day in and day out.

Explain to the students that this might have been what it felt like to be a Jew living in Europe during World War II. These Jews could not do anything without being watched. They could not live regular lives like they used to, simply because one man did not like them.

How Far?

The students can use a map of Europe to find the distances between Denmark and other countries occupied by the Nazi party. They can use various tools and systems of measurement to measure the distances. Based on the distance between the countries, the students can also try to calculate how long it might have taken Ellen to travel from Denmark to Sweden if the boat traveled a certain speed.

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Grade Level: 6

Reading-Number the Stars

Academic Standards: Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening Standard – 1.1.8 – G. Demonstrate after reading understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text, including public documents.

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening Standard – 1.2.8 – A. Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas. *Draw inferences based on a variety of information sources.

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening Standard – 1.3.8 – B. Analyze the use of literary elements by an author including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone, and style.

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening Standard – 1.6.8 – B. Listen to selections of literature (fiction and/or nonfiction).

Objectives:

- The students will define the words: anti-Semitism, dictator, Nazi, and Star of David.
- The students will describe how they would feel if they were living in Denmark during WWII as a Jew and a non-Jew.
- The students will locate and label important WWII countries on a map.
- The students will create and explain a Venn diagram to compare Annemarie and Ellen.

Cross Curricular Integration: Social studies

Materials: *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry, map of Europe, crayons/colored pencils, Venn diagram (for each student)

Vocabulary: Anti-Semitism, dictator, Nazi, Star of David

Instructional Procedures:

- Anticipatory Set: To introduce the lesson, show the students the slide show of pictures from World War II as the Introduction of the Text (found at the beginning of this packet) is told.
 - Hand every student a map of Europe and have them locate, color, and label the countries as followed: Denmark-yellow, Sweden-red, Germany-blue, Norway-green, France-orange, Holland-purple, Belgium-pink. They also should locate and label the North and Baltic Seas.
 - As the students work on their maps, describe Denmark during WWII using the following facts:
 - 16, 639 square miles
 - Economy based on farming and fishing
 - Constitutional monarchy: Christian X was king
 - April 9, 1940 Germany overran Denmark which surrendered provided there was no discrimination against Jews

- Population: 4.5 million; Number of Jews: 8,000 (most lived in Copenhagen, the setting of the story)
 - Germans tried to poison Danish minds by producing anti-Semitic (hatred towards Jews) newspapers, films, and pamphlets.
 - A resistance movement engaged in sabotage against Nazi (German) soldiers.
 - Germans became angry with resistance, and therefore, in 1942, required all Jews to wear a yellow star (Star of David) on their clothes, but the government refused to cooperate.
 - In August 1942, Germany declared martial law and took direct control of the Danish government.
 - Mass arrests of Danish Jews began in October 1942.
- Developmental Activities: Read Chapter one to the class.
 - When finished reading, break the students into groups of 3 or 4.
 - Hand the students a copy of a blank Venn diagram.
 - Tell the students that they will compare the two friends (Annemarie and Ellen) using the Venn diagram.
 - Explain that the students will write the descriptions that were specific only to one girl in the biggest sections right underneath that girl's name. If the two girls share something in common, explain that the students should write this in the middle section.
 - Tell the students to think about the girls' friendship. Are they more alike or different? Based on the students' own experiences, how do they think this affects their friendship?
 - Tell the students that they will have 5 minutes to work on their Venn diagrams. Then, they will share and explain their answers and Venn diagram with the rest of the class.
 - Break the students into their groups and have them work on the Venn diagram.
- Closure: Have the students share their Venn diagrams with the rest of the class.
 - Ask the students, based on what they heard, how they think they might have reacted to life in Nazi-controlled Europe. Also ask, what surprised, frightened, and/or angered them.
 - Ask students to define anti-Semitism, dictator, Nazi, and Star of David from what they heard during the lesson. Then, state the formal definition, and place these words on the word wall.
 - To bring the lesson to an end, ask the students to predict what they think will happen in chapter two.

Extension/Enrichment:

- Introduce the related books to the class. Explain that these books will be placed across the front of the room for them to read during their free time throughout the day. Have the students select a book to read and give them time to read it silently.

Assessment:

- The students' maps can be collected to make sure that they were able to locate, color, and label the countries correctly.

- The students' Venn diagrams can also be collected to check for comprehension and that they understand how to fill out a Venn diagram.
- Observation can be used to assess students' definitions, predictions, and answers to questions asked throughout the lesson.

Special Needs Adaptations:

- The length of the reading can be shortened for students with ADD or ADHD.
- A copy of the novel can be handed to a child with a hearing impairment so that he/she can read the story in his/her free time and while the story is being read to the class.
- The students in the class can act out the chapter so that a hearing impaired child can see what is happening in the story. (Each actor would have a nametag so that the child knew which character each student was portraying.)