

from *Number the Stars*

by Lois Lowry



ABOUT THE READING Lois Lowry was the daughter of a military officer. As a child, she dreamed of being a writer. After college, Lowry began writing children's books for a living. She received the Newbery Medal for her book *Number the Stars*. The book provides a fictional perspective of the Nazi-led relocation of Denmark's Jewish population in 1943.

VOCABULARY

synagogue a building or place of worship or religious instruction of the Jewish faith

congregation a group or assembly gathered for religious worship



As you read the passage below, think about the roles the story's characters play in each other's lives.

"Early bedtime tonight, little one," Mama announced after the dishes were washed. "We need extra time for the long story I promised, about the king and queen." She disappeared with Kirsti into the bedroom.

"What's happening?" Annemarie asked when she and Ellen were alone with Papa in the living room. "Something's wrong. What is it?"

Papa's face was troubled. "I wish that I could protect you children from this knowledge," he said quietly. "Ellen, you already know. Now we must tell Annemarie."

He turned to her and stroked her hair with his gentle hand. "This morning, at the **synagogue**, the rabbi told his **congregation** that the Nazis have taken the synagogue lists of all the Jews. Where they live, what their names are. Of course the Rosens were on that list, along with many others."

"Why? Why did they want those names?"

"They plan to arrest all the Danish Jews. They plan to take them away. And we have been told that they may come tonight."

Annemarie Johansen and her family have taken Ellen into their home to hide her from the Nazis.

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“I don’t understand! Take them where?”

Her father shook his head. “We don’t know where, and we don’t really know why. They call it ‘relocation.’ We don’t even know what that means. We only know that it is wrong, and it is dangerous, and we must help.”

Annemarie was stunned. She looked at Ellen and saw that her best friend was crying silently.

“Where are Ellen’s parents? We must help them, too!”

“We couldn’t take all three of them. If the Germans came to search our apartment, it would be clear that the Rosens were here. One person we can hide. Not three. So Peter has helped Ellen’s parents go elsewhere. We don’t know where. Ellen doesn’t know either. But they are safe.”

Ellen sobbed aloud, and put her face in her hands. Papa put his arm around her. “They are safe, Ellen. I promise you that. You will see them again quite soon. Can you try hard to believe my promise?”

Ellen hesitated, nodded, and wiped her eyes with her hand.

Jewish people were relocated to concentration camps during World War II.

Why might Papa tell Ellen that her parents are safe?

ANALYZING LITERATURE

1. Main Ideas Why were the Johansens able to take in Ellen, but not her parents?

2. Critical Thinking Why was it necessary for Ellen and her family to go into hiding?

ACTIVITY

3. Number The Stars is a work of historical fiction. Historical fiction is set in the past and usually portrays events that could have occurred, based on history. Write your own short story that is set during World War II.