

Focus ON READING

Vocabulary

READING
COMPREHENSION

Number
the Stars

Lois Lowry

ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Reproducible Activities

Focus Your Reading

Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. In what ways are Annemarie and Ellen similar? In what ways are they different?
2. How do the descriptions of the German soldiers differ from descriptions of other characters in the novel?
3. How is the German occupation affecting life in Annemarie's neighborhood, city, and country as a whole?
4. What kind of relationship do the Johansens and the Rosens have? What importance do you think this will have as the story progresses?
5. What does Peter do? What role does he play in Annemarie's family?

Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

- How old are Ellen and Annemarie at the beginning of the novel?
 - ten
 - eleven
 - twelve
- How long have the German soldiers been in Denmark when the girls are stopped on their way home from school?
 - two years
 - three years
 - four years
- What happens when the girls tell their mothers about being stopped by the soldiers?
 - Ellen's mother tells the girls to take a different route to school the next day.
 - Annemarie's mother tries to make a little joke about it so that Kirsti won't worry.
 - Ellen's mother says that it may be time for her husband to join the Resistance.
- Where is Amalienborg, the palace where King Christian X lives?
 - in the center of Copenhagen
 - just outside the gates of the city
 - out in the country, where the woods are good for hunting
- How old was Lise, Annemarie's sister, at the time of her death?
 - seventeen
 - eighteen
 - nineteen
- Why does Papa say that King Christian allowed the Germans to enter Denmark?
 - The king believed Denmark could stay neutral.
 - King Christian allowed the Germans in because he wanted to join their side.
 - The king was afraid that too many Danish citizens would die if they fought the Germans, because Denmark had such a small army.
- Which of the following countries does Annemarie say is still free from the Germans?
 - Sweden
 - Norway
 - Holland
- Why are the winter nights so cold in the Johansens' apartment?
 - The rooms are old and drafty.
 - Mr. Johansen turns the heat down.
 - No fuel is left to heat homes.
- What does it seem to Annemarie that she and her family have for dinner nightly?
 - cabbage
 - brown bread
 - potatoes
- Why does Annemarie find it frightening to see Peter at her home late at night?
 - Peter reminds her of the night Lise died.
 - There is an eight-o'clock curfew.
 - Peter may turn her family in to the Nazis.

Deepen Your Understanding

... she sped along the street called Osterbrogade, past the small shops and cafés of her neighborhood here in northeast Copenhagen. Laughing, she skirted an elderly lady in black who carried a shopping bag made of string. A young woman pushing a baby in a carriage moved aside to make way. The corner was just ahead.

Annemarie's Copenhagen neighborhood is a place of comfort and safety. It is a familiar, predictable part of the world, where Annemarie and Ellen can run, play, and enjoy life—that is, until the day when they are stopped by German soldiers on the way home from school and life begins to change.

In *Number the Stars*, author Lois Lowry has included special details that help readers to form a picture of Annemarie and Ellen's neighborhood. These carefully chosen details are examples of the author's powers of description. Description helps to make the people and places that we read about believable and real.

Write a paragraph in which you describe your own neighborhood. Try to choose your words with great care so that readers can form a clear picture in their minds about the area where you live. Try to include details that appeal to as many of the senses as possible. For example, what does your neighborhood look like? smell like? sound like? Are there any special landmarks? What kinds of people live there? What makes the area special?

Focus Your Reading

Questions to Think About

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1. How does age affect the different ways in which Kirsti and Annemarie view events?
2. What makes Mr. and Mrs. Johansen begin to talk about Lise?
3. How are Kirsti's youth and innocence both an advantage and a disadvantage for Annemarie and her family?
4. What is really happening to Mr. and Mrs. Rosen?
5. What sacrifices do the adults in this novel make? What sacrifices are the children making?

Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. What is the very favorite book of Annemarie's mother?
 - a. *The Little Mermaid*
 - b. *A Tale of Two Cities*
 - c. *Gone With the Wind*
2. Why is Kirsti so upset about her new shoes?
 - a. They are too shiny and new-looking.
 - b. They are made of fish skin.
 - c. The buckles aren't shiny enough.
3. What does Annemarie tell Ellen she remembers best about Tivoli Gardens?
 - a. the fireworks
 - b. the carousel
 - c. the delicious cakes
4. Why do the Rosens send their roasting chicken to the Johansens on the Jewish New Year?
 - a. because the Johansens have much less food than they do
 - b. because they are going away and cannot cook it themselves
 - c. because Mrs. Rosen has decided to cook roast lamb instead
5. What does Ellen's father want her to be when she grows up?
 - a. an actress
 - b. a teacher
 - c. a musician
6. At what time do the soldiers come to the Johansens' looking for the Rosens?
 - a. midnight
 - b. two o'clock in the morning
 - c. four o'clock in the morning
7. Why does Mr. Johansen tear pictures out of the photograph album?
 - a. He doesn't want the officer to see Lise's birthdate written there.
 - b. He rips the pages in anger.
 - c. He is afraid that the officer will make fun of the pictures.
8. On the morning the soldiers come to the Johansens', why does Mr. Johansen tell Ellen she should not go to school?
 - a. He is afraid that the Nazis will be looking for Jewish children at school.
 - b. He is afraid that the girls will get sick.
 - c. He thinks the girls deserve a vacation.
9. Why does Papa call Uncle Henrik so early in the morning?
 - a. Uncle Henrik goes to work around five A.M.
 - b. He does not want the German soldiers to notice the phone call.
 - c. Telephone calls are being rationed.
10. How does the soldier on the train try to trick Mrs. Johansen?
 - a. He asks her if Ellen is her daughter.
 - b. He asks why the children are on vacation.
 - c. He asks if she is visiting her brother for the New Year.

Deepen Your Understanding

She loved Tivoli Gardens, in the heart of Copenhagen; her parents had taken her there, often, when she was a little girl. She remembered the music and the brightly colored lights, the carousel and ice cream and especially the magnificent fireworks in the evenings: the huge colored splashes and bursts of lights in the evening sky.

When Annemarie thinks about Tivoli Gardens, she is remembering a favorite childhood place that she can no longer visit. Tivoli is closed because of the war; the Germans have actually burned part of it down. For Annemarie, Tivoli represents a happier, more innocent time, when people still laughed and were carefree.

In her description of Tivoli Gardens, Lois Lowry has used imagery to convey the sense of beauty and wonder that this place holds for young Annemarie. For example, there are references to music, a carousel, and ice cream. The fireworks are described as “huge colored splashes and bursts of light” in the dark sky. These images paint a clear picture of Tivoli in readers’ minds.

Write a brief essay that tells about a special place you remember from your childhood. Perhaps you have not been there for many years, but you still remember it with great affection. What makes this place magical for you? How did it appeal to you as a child? In your essay, be sure to include images that will help your readers “see” this remembered place, too.

Focus Your Reading

Questions to Think About

The following questions will help you understand the meaning of what you read. You do not have to write out the answers to these questions. Instead, look at them before you begin reading, and think about them while you are reading.

1. What importance does the sea have for the different characters in this novel?
2. How does life in the country compare with life in the city for Annemarie and her family? How do the Germans affect life in both places?
3. In what ways does the trip to Uncle Henrik's cause Annemarie to grow up a little?
4. What does Ellen's gold necklace symbolize? Where might Annemarie have hidden it?
5. How many characters in this story are keeping information from others? Are all of them justified?

Check Your Understanding

Multiple Choice

Circle the letter of the best answer to each question.

1. What do Annemarie and Ellen find in the meadow on their first day at Uncle Henrik's?
 - a. a newborn calf
 - b. a kitten
 - c. a dog
2. What does Ellen say her mother feels about the ocean?
 - a. She says that her mother loves the ocean and has always wanted to take a cruise.
 - b. She says that her mother is afraid of the ocean.
 - c. She says that her mother has always wanted to live by the seashore.
3. For whom is Uncle Henrik's boat, the *Ingeborg*, named?
 - a. for his fiancée
 - b. for his mother
 - c. for his sister
4. When Ellen asks where her necklace is, how does Annemarie answer?
 - a. She looks upset and won't answer the question.
 - b. She says that her parents have taken it away for safekeeping.
 - c. She says that she has hidden it in a very secret place.
5. What does Kirsti name the kitten?
 - a. Gitte
 - b. Ingeborg
 - c. Thor
6. Why is there usually no butter at Uncle Henrik's place now?
 - a. The Germans take it for their army.
 - b. Blossom, the cow, is not producing enough cream.
 - c. Uncle Henrik sells it to earn money.
7. Why is Annemarie confused when Uncle Henrik says that Great-aunt Birte has died?
 - a. She thought Great-aunt Birte was already dead.
 - b. She has never heard of this aunt before.
 - c. She and her mother have just seen Great-aunt Birte.
8. What does Annemarie say when Uncle Henrik asks her how brave she is?
 - a. "Not very."
 - b. "I am brave when I need to be."
 - c. "I hope that I'm as brave as Mama and Papa."
9. Where is Great-aunt Birte's casket?
 - a. in the downstairs guest bedroom
 - b. in the kitchen
 - c. in the living room
10. Who arrives just as Uncle Henrik is about to go to his boat that night?
 - a. Peter Neilsen and Ellen's parents
 - b. Annemarie's father and Peter Neilsen
 - c. Ellen's parents and Annemarie's father

Deepen Your Understanding

Redheaded Peter, her sister's fiancé, had not married anyone in the years since Lise's death. He had changed a great deal. Once he had been like a fun-loving older brother to Annemarie and Kirsti, teasing and tickling, always a source of foolishness and pranks. . . . He no longer sang the nonsense songs that had once made Annemarie and Kirsti shriek with laughter. And he never lingered anymore.

In the passage above, Peter Neilsen is described as someone still mourning the death of his fiancée, Annemarie's sister Lise. Peter no longer jokes and sings with the girls as he used to; he no longer stays to chat or pass the time.

Throughout *Number the Stars*, there are references to death and loss. Many of the main characters in the book are dealing with feelings of great sadness about a person, a place, or a thing that was once loved and is now missing from their lives. This sense of loss is one of the novel's themes, or major topics.

Write a one- to two-page essay in which you explore the theme of death and loss in this novel. Be sure to consider the concept of "loss" on as many levels as possible, from the most mundane (such as no longer being able to find coffee in Copenhagen) to the most tragic (such as the death of another human being).