

Number the Stars Essay by Alexis R.

A person's compassion allows them to do the right thing. During the German occupation of Europe, the citizens of Denmark found the compassion in themselves to help almost all of the Danish Jews escape to the safety of Sweden. In "Number the Stars," Lois Lowry writes a story of a ten-year-old girl and her family who do the right thing by helping one of the many Jewish families in Denmark escape the German Nazi soldiers. This family had enough compassion to risk their lives for the safety of their friends.

Annemarie Johansen, a ten-year-old girl growing up in Copenhagen, Denmark, thought that brave heroes could only exist in stories. But when her best friend Ellen Rosen and her family are in danger of being "relocated" by the Germans, Annemarie must believe that she can be brave just like those heroes. Annemarie's Uncle Henrik explains to her that "it is much easier to be brave if you don't know everything." Annemarie uses this lesson when her mother tells her to bring a package to her Uncle Henrik before he sets off to Sweden. It takes all of the bravery Annemarie has to confront several Nazi soldiers when they stop her on the way to the harbor. One of the soldiers discovers the package carefully hidden underneath some food that Annemarie had placed in a basket. When the soldier asks her what is in the package, Annemarie begins to cry and tells them that she does not know; which is true because all she really knows is that it is very important. Then Annemarie realized that because she didn't know what was in the package, it was easier for her to answer the soldier.

On the night of the end of the war, two years after the Johansens help the Rosens flee to Sweden, Annemarie's parents tell her of Lise's death. She is informed that both Lise and Peter Neilsen were Resistance Fighters. Annemarie thought that it must have taken a lot of heart to be that brave. Lise had been hit by a car, but it was while fleeing from the Nazi soldiers. Peter was captured and shot by the Nazis, and buried at the sight with only a stone to mark his grave. Another young man shot during the war wrote to his family before his execution. Part of this letter was, "and I want you all to remember, that you must not dream yourselves back to the times before the war, but the dream for you all, young and old, must be to create an ideal of human decency, and not a narrow minded and prejudiced one."

"It is he who heals the broken in spirit and binds up their wounds, he who numbers the stars one by one." This is part of a psalm from an excellent book. It is also a very inspiring book. It is a book that teaches us that a person's human decency, a person's compassion, can inspire them to do the right thing.