***Number the Stars***

***Chapter 16***

***Summary:***

### ***I Will Tell You Just a Little***

* At the beginning of this chapter, Henrik and the Johansen ladies are back home, and everything seems okay. They are telling jokes and letting their hair down—everything's much less serious.
* Annemarie fills us in on what happened in the meantime. The doctor picked up her mother, fixed her ankle, and put a cast on it. But this meant that when Annemarie got back from taking the package to Henrik, no one was there. So Annemarie tried to milk the cow all by herself. (Think you could do that?)
* Annemarie's thoughts are interrupted when Kirsti speaks up, wondering about Ellen. Where did she go?
* Mrs. Johansen tells a little white lie, explaining that Ellen's parents arrived and picked her up.
* Henrik takes Annemarie aside, back out to the barn.
* Henrik milks the cow while he and Annemarie talk. He says that it's not safe for her to know everything, but that since she showed such great courage, he'll let her in on a few of the details.
* Annemarie doesn't think she was courageous, but we know she was. After all, if she'd been caught, she could have been killed.
* Henrik explains that he knows a Danish fisherman, who happens to be one of many people who doesn't agree with the Nazis' ideas. This guy has found a way to use his sea craft to help some of the Jews (and other people persecuted by the Nazis) get to safety. He constructed a secret compartment in the ship and has been using it to smuggle people over to Sweden.
* Here's another revelation: Peter is a Resistance fighter.
* The ship sure fooled Annemarie—she was on it herself and couldn't tell there was anyone hidden there. Good thing, too. Turns out the Nazis stopped by after Annemarie did.
* Next up, Annemarie asks about the significance of the handkerchief. Henrik explains that it had something on it to help fool the Nazis' dogs so the people on the ships would have a better chance of going unnoticed. Peter helped put everything together, and Henrik is one of many people now using these handkerchiefs to thwart the Nazis.
* Think about this: because of Annemarie's bravery and goodness, the Nazis were fooled when they came to visit Henrik. She's definitely a hero.
* Henrik took all his passengers across the water to Sweden. He reassures Annemarie that nothing else bad is going to happen to her friend. He also reassures her that her friendship with Ellen will outlast their separation—and the war.
* Now that everything's on the table, the two are able to relax and laugh. Exhale.

***Brief Summary:***

Dinner that night is a cheerful affair, with Uncle Henrik teasing Annemarie about the fact that she milked Blossom herself. He promises to show her how to do it properly. When Annemarie had returned home from the harbor that morning, she found a note from her mother saying the doctor was taking Inge to the local hospital, and that she would be back soon. With all the chaos, everyone had forgotten about Blossom. When Annemarie heard her lowing uncomfortably, she had gone to the barn and done her best to milk the cow. Kirsti wonders when Ellen is coming back; the family has told her that the Rosens came by last night and picked her up. Mama distracts her by asking for her help, while Annemarie and Uncle Henrik head to the barn for the milking lesson.

In the barn, Henrik, Annemarie, and the kitten have a serious conversation. Uncle Henrik reminds her of their conversation about it being easier to be brave if one doesn't know much. Since she was so brave, though, he says he will tell her just a little. She asks Henrik why she hadn't seen the Rosens on his boat, and he explains that he, along with many other fishermen, have built concealed compartments in their boats, big enough to hide several people. Peter and other members of the Resistance bring fugitives to Henrik, and he pilots them safely to Sweden. Annemarie is startled to learn Peter is in the Resistance, but then she realizes it only makes sense. Henrik tells her she didn't hear the Rosens because they were hiding quietly, and that's why the baby had to be drugged, so it wouldn't wake up and cry out. But her friends had been able to hear her, as well as the German soldiers who came to search the boat.

Annemarie begs to know what the handkerchief was for. Henrik explains that when the Germans bring dogs onto the boats, the dogs can sniff out the people hiding in the secret compartments. Peter had taken the problem to scientists and doctors, and they had come up with a clever solution: the handkerchief was coated with a special drug which attracts the dogs to smell the handkerchief, while at the same time ruining their sense of smell for a time, long enough to get through the search. Thanks to Peter, all the captains will have similar handkerchiefs. Annemarie asks if the Germans had brought dogs when they searched her uncle's boat this morning. He says yes, but, fortunately, it was after she had brought him the handkerchief. He tells her everyone on board the boat is now safe in Sweden. He had personally delivered them into good hands.

Annemarie worries about how difficult the journey must have been, hidden in that cold, cramped space. Henrik admits it was a difficult journey, but that it no longer mattered once the fugitives stepped onto the shores of Sweden. He told her it had been a beautiful morning, with a crisp breeze, and that the baby had woken up just as he was saying goodbye. Annemarie wonders morosely if she'll ever see Ellen again. Uncle Henrik assures her that the war will end someday. Their serious conversation ends on a light note as The God of Thunder falls into the milk pail.

***Brief Analysis:***

The difference in maturity levels between Kirsti and her older sister is now even more pronounced. Annemarie's brave actions have saved the day, allowing her friends to make good their escape. Now even her Uncle Henrik begins to treat her more like an equal. While Kirsti is kept in the house on a pretext, Henrik invites Annemarie out to the barn for an adult conversation. He has not granted her full-fledged adult status, of course, as he gives her a highly edited version of the Resistance movement's plans. Yet he tells her more than he would have told the average ten-year-old girl.

Annemarie has proven, with her actions, that she is certainly not a girl of average maturity. As is so often the case in times of stress, people - both children and adults - have a way of rising to the situation. The courage and maturity Annemarie found within herself is but one such story from this period in history. The greatest tragedies can inspire people to the greatest heights of moral courage and brave action. Annemarie is continuing in the tradition of her people, who worked together to save Denmark's Jews from extinction.

***Critical Study:***

Uncle Henrik, Mrs. Johansen, Annemarie, and Kirsti sit at the table after dinner. They laugh about Blossom, the cow. Uncle Henrik teases Annemarie because she had to milk Blossom on her own. When she got home, her mother and Kirsti had gone to the hospital. Annemarie heard Blossom complaining and went to milk her, but she did not really know how. Kirsti asks if Ellen is coming back. Mama says that Ellen's parents surprised them by coming to pick her up last night. Uncle Henrik offers to show Annemarie the real way to milk a cow. Kirsti wants to go, too, but Mrs. Johansen says she must stay to help take care of her mother.

Annemarie asks her uncle where the Rosens are. She did not see them on the boat. Henrik says they were there. He stops and tells Annemarie she should not know these things, but because she was so brave he will tell her. Annemarie says she does not think she was brave, only scared. She did not even think about the danger, she adds. Uncle Henrik tells her that is what it means to be brave: to do what you must without thinking of the danger. He tells Annemarie that he and other fishermen have made hiding places in their boats. Resistance members, like Peter, bring people to the boats. Annemarie is surprised to hear that Peter is in the Resistance, but she realizes it makes sense. She says she did not hear any of the people in Henrik's boat. She wants to know if they could hear her, and Henrik says they could. They also heard the soldiers who came to search the boat.

Annemarie wants to know why the handkerchief was so vital. Uncle Henrik explains that she is being told a secret. The Germans have trained dogs to find humans so they can tell if there is anyone hiding in a boat. Peter talked with some scientists to solve the problem, and the scientists came up with a special drug that kills the dogs' ability to smell. Annemarie came just in time. Not long after she delivered the packet to her uncle, German soldiers brought dogs to the boat. The handkerchief saved them all. Now the Rosens and the other passengers are safe in Sweden. Annemarie asks if the Nazis will invade Sweden and Henrik says no. Suddenly Annemarie feels sad, and wonders out loud if she will see Ellen again. Uncle Henrik is sure that she will—they will be joined someday and the war will end someday. The kitten, who has followed them to the barn, falls into the milk, which makes them laugh.

***Critical Analysis:***

Annemarie is with [Uncle Henrik](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Uncle_Henrik), her mother, and Kirsti. They all laugh that Annemarie has milked Blossom the cow without being kicked. A short time later, Uncle Henrik invites Annemarie to go to the barn for a milking lesson. He tells her that she was brave, and he explains the Rosens and others were hidden in the ship. She says she was not brave, but Uncle Henrik explains that bravery is when you don't think about the dangers but simply do what you must.

They talk about the Resistance movement, and Annemarie learns that [Peter Neilsen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Peter_Neilsen) is part of it. She is not surprised because he brings the secret newspaper to her parents. Henrik also explains the baby was drugged so she'd be quiet, and that because of the packet that Annemarie brought, they were all safe when the soldiers came. Henrik tells her that Peter, on behalf of the Resistance, has had doctors and scientists create a drug. "It attracts the dogs, but when they sniff at it, it ruins their sense of smell." These handkerchiefs are given to ship captains so they can use them to protect their human cargo. Annemarie realizes if she had not found the packet, the soldiers likely would have found the Rosens and the other Jews hidden on her uncle's ship. Uncle Henrik tells her that they are all safe in Sweden now.

Here, [Uncle Henrik](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Uncle_Henrik) explains what the handkerchief was for, and in doing so, the reader will understand why the soldiers said they thought she had meat. The dogs reacted that way because of the chemical-laden handkerchief. He gives Annemarie, and thus the reader, answers to explain how and why her actions were so important. Because she brought him that scrap of cloth, because she faced the soldiers, because she ran through the dark woods, because she was brave, her friends and the people who had assembled at Henrik's house were safe. Ordinary people sometimes do things that seem small but have large consequences. Annemarie saved lives.

Her actions were not as routine or as risky as [Peter Neilsen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Peter_Neilsen)'s. Her actions were a result of the moment she was in, and they were a result of her mother's injury. This novel, written for young people, tells a story from history, but it also makes the point that ordinary people sometimes do extraordinary things. Because of the actions of a lot of ordinary people in Denmark, thousands of lives were saved. Annemarie, [Mrs. Johansen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Mrs._Johansen), Peter, Henrik, and others are fictional representations of the kind of people who really did save lives during World War II in Denmark.

***Significance:***

When Annemarie gets home from the harbor, she finds out that [Mama](https://www.gradesaver.com/number-the-stars/study-guide/character-list#mama) has gone to the hospital. In the absence of an adult, Annemarie milks Blossom by herself. Later, Mama comes home with a cast. Because Annemarie was brave, [Uncle Henrik](https://www.gradesaver.com/number-the-stars/study-guide/character-list#uncle-henrik) agrees to explain to her how the Rosens escaped from Denmark. Uncle Henrik concealed Ellen, her family, and the other refugees in a secret compartment at the bottom of his boat.

The handkerchief in the packet was soaked in a special drug intended to deceive the German dogs. The German soldiers were aware of Jewish refugees escaping to Sweden in fishing boats, so they would send highly-trained dogs to sniff out the scent of humans, which even the overpowering smell of fish could not hide. However, the drug-soaked handkerchiefs attracted the dogs, and once they smelled it, they would temporarily lose their sense of smell. By bringing the handkerchief to Uncle Henrik, Annemarie saved the Rosens’ lives.

Uncle Henrik tells Annemarie that shortly after she delivered the packet, the Germans came with their dogs to sniff for refugees on the boat, but they found nothing. Without the handkerchief, though, the refugees and Uncle Henrik would have been compromised. Uncle Henrik explains that the Rosens will be safe in Sweden because the Nazis will not invade for political reasons. He reassures Annemarie that she will see Ellen again after the war is over, and they go inside.

In Chapter 16, Uncle Henrik rewards Annemarie's exceptional courage and maturity. Although he was reluctant at first to tell her about the Rosens’ escape, Annemarie shows through her actions that she is brave and responsible enough to keep the secret. In a situation where many lives are at stake, Annemarie must earn the trust of the adults before they can confidently share their plans with her.

Annemarie demonstrates her maturity throughout the chapter, even in less urgent situations. When she returns to Uncle Henrik's home after delivering the packet, she realizes that Blossom needs to be milked, and because there is no adult in the house, she does it herself. She also cheers [Kirsti](https://www.gradesaver.com/number-the-stars/study-guide/character-list#kirsti) up, who is upset because Ellen left without making a dress for her doll. Annemarie knows that Kirsti is behaving selfishly only because she does not know the reason for the Rosens’ midnight escape. Even if Annemarie is annoyed about Kirsti's childlike concerns, she does not scold her sister. Instead, she simply promises to make the dress in Ellen’s place.

Uncle Henrik’s explanation about the dogs resolves several lingering questions from the previous chapters. It helps explain why the dogs acted like they smelled meat in Annemarie’s basket. It also explains the urgency of Annemarie’s mission––any delay on her part would have resulted in a major tragedy - instead of escaping, the Rosens, the other refugees, and Uncle Henrik would have been "relocated" or killed.

Although [Number the Stars](https://www.gradesaver.com/number-the-stars) deals with a very dark subject matter, it also includes many moments of humor and optimism. Despite the frightening, life-or-death situations Uncle Henrik describes, the chapter ends on a light note, with Thor the kitten falling into a bowl of milk. Humorous moments in a dark story are called comic relief. In addition to serving as comic relief, moments like this also hint at the resilience of children like Annemarie. Although they grew up in a violent and dangerous time, Annemarie and Kirsti still manage to retain the optimism and innocence of childhood.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

That night at dinner, [Annemarie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen), [Mama](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/mrs-johansen-mama), and [Uncle Henrik](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) laugh as Mama tells Henrik all about Annemarie’s attempts at milking Blossom the cow. The doctor has been to see Mama, and her broken ankle is wrapped up in a cast. Little [Kirsti](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/kirsti-johansen), uninterested in the story about the cow, speaks up to ask when [Ellen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/ellen-rosen) will be coming back. Mama tells her that Ellen has gone to be with her parents, and Kirsti is indignant that Ellen didn’t wake her up to say goodbye.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The tension, fear, and danger of the previous night gone, everyone enjoys a happy and carefree meal. Only Kirsti is in the dark as to all that has transpired around her, and the others make sure that she stays innocent and naïve as to the true events of the last several days.

***Summary Part 2:***

After dinner, [Uncle Henrik](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) takes [Annemarie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) out to the barn to show her how to milk Blossom properly, but as the lesson begins, Annemarie’s mind is on other things. She asks Uncle Henrik where [Ellen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/ellen-rosen) and the others are, and points out that earlier, she didn’t see where they were hiding on the boat. Henrik reminds Annemarie of his earlier assertion that it is “safer not to know” some things, but then acquiesces and agrees to tell her just a little because of how brave she was earlier. Annemarie insists she wasn’t brave—she was terrified—but Henrik tells her that putting others before herself even in difficult situations is the very definition of bravery.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Though Kirsti is shielded from the truth, Annemarie demands to know what is going on. As Henrik provides her with some of the details of his role in smuggling Jews out of Denmark, the two of them have an earnest discussion about what constitutes bravery—and decide that true bravery comes from self-sacrifice.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Uncle Henrik](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) reveals that many fishermen, himself included, have built secret hiding spots underneath the decks of their boats. [Peter Neilsen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/peter-neilsen) brings groups of Jews to the fishermen, who ferry them over to Sweden. Annemarie, realizing that Peter is in the Resistance, chides herself for not having figured it out earlier. Uncle Henrik explains that though [Ellen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/ellen-rosen) and the others had to be silent for many hours, they could hear Annemarie when she was on the boat—as well as the soldiers who came to search it shortly after Annemarie left.

***Analysis part 3:***

As Annemarie learns more and more about the truth of what her family, friends, and neighbors risk and sacrifice daily in the name of resisting the Nazi occupation, she feels naïve for not having put together the obvious clues sooner. At the same time, she realizes just how carefully the people she loves have been trying to shield her from the burdensome truth.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Annemarie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) is horrified that soldiers searched the boats, but [Uncle Henrik](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) tells her that there is a system in place for making sure the Jews stay well hidden. The hiding places are very carefully concealed, and when fishermen pile dead fish on the deck, the soldiers do not want to dirty their shiny boots mucking around in the refuse and leave the boats quickly. Annemarie thanks Uncle Henrik for telling her so much about the Resistance and their schemes—but begs to know what the handkerchief was and why it was important.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Now that Annemarie has learned the bare bones of what’s going on all around her, she is desperate for more knowledge. She knows that she can be brave even in the face of the truth, and so hungers for it rabidly.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Uncle Henrik](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) explains that the handkerchiefs have been dipped in a special solution created by scientists working on behalf of the Resistance—solutions that ruin the soldiers’ dogs’ senses of smell and keep them from finding the hidden Jews on Resistance boats bound for Sweden. Uncle Henrik tells [Annemarie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) that the soldiers who searched his boat earlier had dogs—if Annemarie hadn’t rushed the packet to him, all might have been lost. Uncle Henrik assures her that [Ellen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/ellen-rosen) and all of the others made it safely to Sweden—and will remain safe there—thanks to her. Annemarie sadly wonders aloud if she’ll ever see Ellen again, and Henrik assures her that she will. “Someday the war will end,” he tells her; “all wars do.”

***Analysis Part 6:***

Henrik has tried to shield Annemarie from the scarier, more dangerous aspects of the truth of what he and the Resistance do in order to fight the Nazis and their torment of Danish Jews, but now he tells her the whole truth. He knows that Annemarie is growing older, and will soon learn the truth whether it comes from him or someone else. Henrik’s weathered prediction about the end of the war shows how much he’s been through, and how heavy it’s weighed on him—and implies that Annemarie will soon bear these same scars and burdens.

***Quotations***

***Quotation 1:***

"I wonder if I will ever see Ellen again," Annemarie said sadly.

"You will, little one. You saved her life, after all." (16.53-54)

***Explanation 1:***

Henrik seems super confident that Ellen will not only survive the war, but will come back to Copenhagen to be with Annemarie again. Do you think he really believes this? Or is he just putting on a brave face to help Annemarie deal with her friend's departure?

***Quotation 2:***

"Dark, and cold, and very cramped. And Mrs. Rosen was seasick, even though we were not on the water very long—it is a short distance, as you know. But they are courageous people. And none of that mattered when they stepped ashore. The air was fresh and cool in Sweden; the wind was blowing." (16.52)

***Explanation 2:***

We've spent a lot of time talking about how courageous Annemarie and her family are throughout the novel. But we can't forget about Ellen and her family. They have no choice but to be brave. It's literally a life or death situation.

***Quotation 3:***

"Someday you will find her [Ellen] again. Someday the war will end," Uncle Henrik said. "All wars do." (16.54)

***Explanation 3:***

All wars end. Great. But Annemarie wants this war to end. It's like telling your friend whose boyfriend just broke up with her, "it will get better—it always does." Well hey, it's the thought that counts.

***Quotation 4:***

"Many of the fishermen have built hidden places in their boats. I have, too. […] Peter, and others in the Resistance who work with him, bring them [Jews] to me, and to the other fishermen as well. There are people who hide them and help them." (16.22)

***Explanation 4:***

Henrik and Peter are saving lives—sounds pretty noble to us. But according to the Nazis' rules, their life-saving work is a criminal act.