***Number the Stars***

***Chapter 8***

***Brief Summary:***

As she drowses in bed the next morning, Annemarie hears Uncle Henrik go outside to the barn with his milking pail. She rises without waking Ellen and heads to the kitchen, where she finds Kirsti giving the kitten water from a bowl. Kirsti tells her she's decided to name the kitten Thor, for the God of Thunder. Annemarie is amused by the name, and happily surprised to find a fresh bowl of cream on the breakfast table. Her mother explains that Henrik milks his cow, Blossom, every morning, and occasionally manages to save some milk or some butter from being taken by the soldiers. Annemarie makes a joke about the soldiers relocating butter like they are relocating Jews. They all force a laugh to drive away the gloom, and when Ellen enters the kitchen, the fresh cream brings a smile to her face.

The girls play all day in the pasture behind the house while Mama scrubs and dusts Henrik's untidy home. When Henrik arrives home, Mama teases him about his housekeeping and tells him he should take a wife. The siblings laugh together, but Mama's smile disappears when Henrik tells her that tomorrow will be a good day for fishing. Annemarie realizes it's similar to the phrase her father had used on the telephone with Henrik and wonders what it really means. After all, Henrik is a fisherman and goes fishing ever day, rain or shine. Whatever its meaning, Henrik tells Inge that he will be staying on his boat all night tonight. Inge assures him that she has prepared the living room by cleaning and moving the furniture aside. When Annemarie asks what the living room has been prepared for, Uncle Henrik tells her that her Great Aunt Birte has died and her casket will be placed in the living room overnight, as is the custom for Danish funerals. Annemarie listens skeptically because she doesn't have a Great Aunt named Birte.

***Brief Analysis:***

The tension in the household has remained steady despite everyone's attempts to remain positive. Certainly the food luxuries and the visit with dear Uncle Henrik are pleasant, but Annemarie has already figured out that they are morale boosters designed to ease the tough time. She has not, however, figured out what the adults have planned for Ellen and her family. She is at that difficult age when she's old enough to know something's going on - unlike young Kirsti, who accepts the story of the funeral without reservation - but Annemarie is not old enough for the adults to share their plans. She realizes she's being lied to by the adults she loves and trusts, and that realization undermines her already fragile sense of security.

Annemarie is mature enough not to make a scene in front of Ellen and Kirsti when she hears her uncle lie. Having already been forced to lie to German soldiers herself, she understands that sometimes deception is necessary, and she will find a way to privately confront her uncle, thus giving him the benefit of the doubt that, although he's lying, his motives are probably good.

***Critical Study:***

### Chapter VIII: There Has Been a Death

Early in the morning, Annemarie wakes up to the sounds of her sister and her mother in the kitchen. She leaves Ellen asleep in bed and goes downstairs. Kirsti is playing with a kitten they found the day before. She has named him Thor, after the God of Thunder. Kirsti tries to make the kitten drink water. She says she could take him to see the cow. Mrs. Johansen shows Annemarie a pitcher of fresh milk, which they have not had in a long time. There is also some butter that Uncle Henrik managed to save from the army. Annemarie asks if they also "relocate" butter. They all laugh at the idea of butter being marched away by soldiers. The joking makes Annemarie feel that all guns and soldiers are "a ghost story, a joke with which to frighten children in the dark."

The girls spend the day playing outside. Annemarie takes Ellen to meet the cow, Blossom. When Henrik comes home, Annemarie hears him tell her mother that the next day "will be a day for fishing." She is perplexed, just as she was when she heard her father use the same phrase on the phone to Henrik. Her uncle says they will leave in the early morning and that he will stay on the boat that night. He asks if they have "prepared the living room." Annemarie asks why the living room needs to be prepared. To her surprise, Uncle Henrik announces that their Great-aunt Birte has passed away. The funeral is to be held in the traditional way—in a relative's home—that night. Annemarie is very confused. She does not understand why no one seems sad. She is also quite positive that no such aunt ever existed, but she holds her tongue for the moment.

Annemarie wakes and slips out of bed so as not to wake Ellen. Downstairs, she finds Kirsti trying to convince the kitten to drink water. Kirsti announces that she has named the kitten: "Thor, for the God of Thunder."

[Mrs. Johansen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Mrs._Johansen) cleans the house, and when [Uncle Henrik](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Uncle_Henrik) returns home he says, "Tomorrow will be a day for fishing." Annemarie recognizes the code phrase from her father's call to Henrik. She is further confused when she is told the preparations taking place at the house are because there has been a death, her Great-Aunt Birte. Uncle Henrik tells the girls that Birte's casket will be in the living room: "It is the old custom, you know, for the dead to rest at home, and their loved ones to be with them before the burial." However, Annemarie senses something is wrong here. There was no call about a death, and there is no sadness. Most importantly, she has heard all the family stories and never heard anyone ever mention Great-Aunt Birte.

***Critical Analysis(Ch 5-7):***

[Lowry](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/author/) interjects humor into the text by way of the kitten. This, like the earlier example of the shoes, is part of the function Kirsti's character has in the novel. She reminds the reader things are bleak at this time, but she sees it through the eyes of a young child and younger sibling. Along with that, however, comes the reality that a child's ability to know when to keep secrets is questionable. Throughout the text, Annemarie and her parents must constantly wonder what Kirsti will do or say.

Here, too, the reader sees the extent of the risk the Danes are taking. Readers will surely realize they are planning to extricate the Jews and this ruse is part of it, and Lowry makes sure to seed the clues so her intended young readers catch on to this. When Annemarie hears: "Tomorrow will be a day for fishing," she recalls the reference to fishing made earlier between [Mr. Johansen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Mr._Johansen) and [Uncle Henrik](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Uncle_Henrik), thereby drawing readers' attention. She also clarifies "there was no Great-aunt Birte." The reader has the necessary information to feel the increasing tension and suspense, allowing them to more closely identify with Annemarie.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[**Annemarie**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) sleeps fitfully and wakes briefly at dawn when [**Uncle Henrik**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) leaves the house at daybreak to milk the cows and head out on the boat. When she wakes in earnest, mid-morning, [**Ellen**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/ellen-rosen) is still asleep, and Annemarie dresses quietly so as not to rouse her friend. Downstairs, [**Kirsti**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/kirsti-johansen) is feeding a stray kitten she’s brought in from the meadow from a bowl of milk. Kirsti announces that she has named the cat Thor, after the Norse god of thunder. [**Mama**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/mrs-johansen-mama) has made oatmeal and set out a pitcher of cream on the table—Annemarie is overjoyed, as it’s been a very long time since she’s had anything other than bread and tea for breakfast. Soon, Ellen comes downstairs, and is similarly excited and amazed by the bounty of food.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Despite the somewhat somber end to the previous evening, the morning is full of happiness, comfort, surprises, and delights. There is plentiful and luxurious food, and happiness fills the house as Kirsti plays with her new pet and the whole family enjoys a veritable feast.

***Summary Part 2:***

[**Annemarie**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen), [**Ellen**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/ellen-rosen), and [**Kirsti**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/kirsti-johansen) play outside together all day long. They spend time petting the cow, Blossom, and romp around with Thor. Inside, [**Mama**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/mrs-johansen-mama) cleans the house top to bottom, rearranges the furniture in the living room, and has the girls pick wildflowers to put all around the house. Late that afternoon, [**Uncle Henrik**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) comes home. Mama chides him for falling behind on his housekeeping, and the two joke and banter happily for a while before Henrik announces that tomorrow is “a day for fishing.” The room grows tense, and Annemarie is suspicious of the curious phrasing her uncle has used—Danish fisherman go fishing “every day, rain or shine.”

***Analysis Part 2:***

Despite the happy, carefree start to the day, as the afternoon progresses onward, it becomes clear that there is something happening underneath the calm façade. Annemarie grows suspicious of what her mother and Henrik are planning, and becomes aware that the truth is still being kept from her and from Ellen.

Summary Part 3:

As [**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) begin discussing “preparations” for something, [**Annemarie**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) grows curious about what’s happening. Henrik turns to Annemarie, [**Kirsti**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/kirsti-johansen), and [**Ellen**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/ellen-rosen) and tells him that there has been a death in the family. Great-aunt Birte, he says, will be resting in her casket in the living room tonight before being buried tomorrow. Kirsti is fascinated, but Annemarie is confused. She has never heard of a Great-aunt Birte, and no one in the family seems particularly sad about her “death.”

Analysis Part 3:

As more and more details of the strange happenings around the house emerge, Annemarie’s suspicion grows—even though Ellen and Kirsti, her sisters, remain naïve and in the dark.