***Number the Stars***

***Chapter 9***

***Summary:***

* After dinner, everyone goes their own way, but Annemarie decides she wants to talk to her uncle.
* She meets him by the cow that he's taking care of, and Henrik milks the cow while Annemarie thinks about what to say. It's never easy to confront someone.
* Finally, she gets it out. She accuses him of telling her untruths, and it's easy to see she's pretty upset. Actually she's upset at him *and* at her mother. She knows that Great-aunt Birte isn't really part of their family. What gives?
* Henrik finishes milking the cow and then tells Annemarie the truth, albeit in a roundabout way. In other to tell her she's right (we figured), he asks her how brave she is.
* He tells her that she has to trust them; he can't give her all the details of what's going on. Basically, she can't know too much or it will harm her.
* Annemarie accepts this. Turns out she is pretty stinkin' brave.
* Then Henrik says that they better get started with the "funeral."
* The action then shifts to the evening, when the house is full of flowers. Oh, and a coffin. Annemarie now has to keep things from Ellen in the same way that her mother and Henrik had kept them from her. Ugh.
* Several people Annemarie has never met show up to help mourn Birte: a young couple and their baby and an elderly man.
* Annemarie's mom realizes that Annemarie knows the funeral is a sham.
* Even though it's a fake funeral, Annemarie compares it to the one that her family had for Lise.
* Henrik seems anxious (and to be honest, we're a bit anxious, too).
* A few more people arrive, and Henrik takes Ellen out to meet them. Henrik brings Peter in, then Ellen comes in—along with her parents. (Sigh of relief.)

***Brief Summary:***

After supper, Annemarie heads out to the barn to have a private conversation with her uncle. He is milking Blossom and being watched intently by The God of Thunder. He smiles at her, but continues to milk silently. Annemarie breaks the silence to accuse him and her mother of lying. In response, he asks her how brave she is. She admits to not being very brave at all, but Henrik says he thinks if the time ever came for bravery, she would be very brave indeed. However, he tells her, it is easier to be brave if you don't know all the facts. She thinks back to the day the soldiers stopped her on the road, and realizes she hadn't known all the facts then, or she would have been a lot more frightened by the incident than she was. Uncle Henrik admits that there is no such person as Great Aunt Birte and asks her to forgive him and Inge for lying because they lied in order to help her be brave. Just then, a hearse pulls up to the house, and he tells her it's time to head inside for their night of mourning.

The wooden casket rests in the living room, surrounded by lit candles. Kirsti is sent to bed, complaining bitterly that she's old enough to stay up with the others and that she's never seen a dead person before. Ellen expresses her condolences to Inge for the loss of her Aunt Birte. Annemarie had said nothing to Ellen and realizes that by her silence, she has become complicit in the lie. Annemarie understands she's protecting Ellen in the same way her mother had tried to protect her. Although she doesn't know what's really going on, she knows it's safer if Ellen believes in Great Aunt Birte.

As the night progresses, other people arrive, who Mama introduces as friends of Great Aunt Birte. As Mama tells her daughter this, they look into each other's eyes, and Annemarie realizes her mother knows her daughter is aware of the lie. That simple understanding, transmitted by a look, makes them equals in that moment. Annemarie helps Mama prepare food in the kitchen for their guests. Just before Henrik has to leave to go to his boat, Ellen's parents arrive, safe and sound, in the company of Peter Neilsen. Mr. Rosen picks up Ellen and holds her as if she were a small child.

***Brief Analysis:***

The moment of shared understanding that Annemarie finds in her mother's eyes is a turning point in Annemarie's life. At ten years old, she is gradually emerging from the safe cocoon of childhood and starting to look at the world from an adult's point of view. There will be many more milestones in her young life before she becomes a full-fledged adult, but this moment is perhaps one of the most important Annemarie will face. No longer is she the child to be protected, like Kirsti. She is now behaving more like an adult, having crossed that boundary even sooner than her friend, Ellen. As Annemarie remains complicit in the lie designed to soothe the children, she takes on the role of an adult, while Ellen retains the role of a child, who Annemarie now helps to protect.

This role differentiation is highlighted by the safe return of Ellen's parents. Mr. Rosen holds Ellen in his arms as if she is a very young child. The imminent danger confronting the Rosen family has caused him to become highly protective of his daughter, and it has caused Ellen to retreat even more deeply into the world of childhood. It is easier for Annemarie to make the leap to a more mature perspective on the situation, because she is not Jewish, and her family's future is not nearly so frightening as the Rosens'. Although on this night, she is in every bit as much danger as Ellen. If Annemarie makes it through the night, she and her family will be able to return to their homes and lead a more or less normal existence. The Rosens, however, cannot return home. The only thing certain about their future is that it will be filled with danger.

***Critical Study:***

After supper, Annemarie goes to the barn and confronts Uncle Henrik, who is milking the cow. She angrily accuses him of lying to her. She is sure there is no Great-aunt Birte. Instead of answering her directly, Uncle Henrik asks Annemarie how brave she is. This is a question that she does not want to hear or deal with. She is afraid of her own answer. She answers that she is not very brave. Henrik tells her he thinks that is not true. He thinks if she had to be, she could be very courageous. He explains that it is easier to be brave sometimes if you do not know everything. Annemarie begins to understand what he means when she remembers the time they encountered the soldiers. It was easier to be brave then, because she did not know that Ellen was in danger. Henrik admits there is no great aunt, but for her sake he will say no more.

The casket is placed in the living room. Kirsti has been sent to bed. Ellen tells Annemarie she is sorry about her aunt's death. Annemarie does not reveal that there is no aunt Birte. She realizes that she is protecting Ellen. Others arrive. Mrs. Johansen says they were friends of her aunt. She knows that her mother is lying, and also that her mother knows she knows. They look at each other and Annemarie feels that they have become equals. Annemarie goes back to the kitchen to help prepare food. As she helps, she wonders why they are making food, when usually friends brings food to the family of the deceased. Uncle Henrik gets ready to leave for the boat. Peter Neilsen comes in and kisses Annemarie hello. Ellen comes inside with her parents.

While Annemarie jokes with her mother and her sister about the butter being relocated, for a moment Annemarie experiences relief. She feels comfortable for an instant. This sense of comfort is like being back in the good days for Annemarie. While they are joking, the entire war briefly seems like a made-up story. Here again the war is equated with fiction or fairy tales. The changes Annemarie has gone through are so traumatic that they seem made-up as soon as Annemarie relaxes. For a day, or part of it, she is able to play outside without worries.

The faked death of an invented person named Great-aunt Birte causes a new issue to surface for Annemarie. She knows that her uncle and her mother are not telling her the truth, but she has no idea why. This is particularly upsetting to her because it is inconsistent with her movement into the adult world. Her talk with Uncle Henrik illuminates several things for Annemarie. It is the first time that she has a direct discussion about bravery, a concept that has become significant to her. Because of their talk, Annemarie is able to admit her doubts about her own bravery. Her uncertainty about how brave she could be has further confused Annemarie about her position in the world. All the adults she looks up to are brave, as far as she can tell. But Uncle Henrik's explanation of why it is best not to know too much shows Annemarie that it is hard for adults to be brave too. Henrik admits that neither he nor Mrs. Johansen know everything either. So Annemarie sees that she is in the same position they are. She finds herself in an adult's position when she lies to Ellen only moments later, concealing the truth for Ellen's safety. This makes it clear to Annemarie that it is not a question of not being old enough to know the truth, but a question of doing your best to protect the people you love.

As the night goes on, Annemarie still has doubts about what she is being told. However, now she can understand and accept the necessity of not knowing everything. She is sure that is not being told the truth, which is not the same as being lied to. Annemarie has a very powerful feeling when she and her mother look at each other. For the first time, they are on the same page. Each understands that Mrs. Johansen cannot tell Annemarie everything, and that Annemarie knows and accepts this. Annemarie says that she feels she has become equal to her mother. Whether or not this is true in Mrs. Johansen's eyes, it is important to Annemarie's growing sense of belonging with the adults.

Transformation is a theme in this chapter. Annemarie's idea about lying is transformed, as is her notion of bravery. To Annemarie, this is a turning point in her status. She has been transformed, at least for now, from a child to an adult. When Peter arrives he is also transformed. He is more serious and urgent. He is the same person, but he acts differently. Even the house they are staying in has been transformed to accommodate the funeral and the mourners. The theme of transformation also hints at the dual purpose that Henrik's boat is about to serve.

***Critical Analysis:***

After supper, Annemarie goes outside to the barn to talk to [Uncle Henrik](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Uncle_Henrik), who is milking Blossom the cow. She confronts him. "You are lying to me. You and Mama both." He continues to milk, acknowledging she is angry. Annemarie continues on: "But I know there is no Great-Aunt Birte."

When he finishes the milking he asks, "How brave are you, little Annemarie?" She denies she is, but Henrik argues he thinks she is like him and her parents. "Frightened, but determined, and if the time came to be brave, I am quite sure you would be very, very brave." Despite this, he tells her it is easier to be brave when you don't know everything. Annemarie thinks back to the day she met the soldiers, and she decides Henrik is right. He tells her they have lied to her, but they did so to help her be brave. Henrik hears a sound outside and stiffens up. He realizes the hearse has arrived, telling Annemarie with a smile it is carrying "Great-Aunt Birte, who never was."

More and more guests arrive as the night goes on. Annemarie and her mother prepare food, but Annemarie notices none of the guests brought food, not like at Lise's funeral. No one spoke, as there was no Great-Aunt Birte to speak of. Henrik worries that it is getting late, but then [Peter Neilsen](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Peter_Neilsen) arrives along with Ellen's parents.

This chapter continues to increase the tension, but it also continues the theme of bravery. [Uncle Henrik](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Number-the-Stars/character-analysis/#Uncle_Henrik) responds to Annemarie's recognition of the lies she's being told with an explanation, rather than denial or excuses. Part of being brave, according to the way the topic is handled in the novel, is ignorance. Not knowing everything enables people to be more courageous. Henrik points out they lie, not because they doubt her but because it makes bravery easier. This is underlined when he confirms he has faith in her—"If the time came to be brave, I am quite sure you would be very, very brave," he tells her.

The memory of Lise resurfaces here again. Her funeral, which was three years before, was different. There, as with many memorials, guests told stories. They remembered the dead by celebrating their lives. For the fictional Great-Aunt Birte, this isn't possible because she never existed. The silence of the gathering also points to the real reason the guests are there. They are persecuted by the Nazis, and they have fled from their homes, businesses, and synagogues. To be sure the reader realizes these visiting guests are all Jews, the chapter ends with the arrival of Ellen's parents—and of Peter, who, the reader knows, often brings news of the Resistance and an underground Resistance newspaper. The funeral is a ruse to fool the Germans; the gathering is really a Resistance activity. All of this we see through the eyes of a young girl who is proud she understands what is going on.

***Significance:***

After dinner, Annemarie goes out to the barn alone to ask Uncle Henrik about Great-Aunt Birte. She is angry that he lied to her, but Uncle Henrik explains that he only lied because it will be easier for Annemarie to be brave if she does not know everything. At first, Annemarie does not understand this, but then she thinks back to the day that she and Ellen were stopped by the German soldier on their way home from school. It would have been harder for Annemarie to answer the soldier’s questions if she had known at the time that the Germans wanted to take the Jews away. After thinking about this, she realizes that Uncle Henrik and Mama are just trying to protect her.

That night, a hearse delivers Great-Aunt Birte’s casket. Many strangers arrive soon after and sit silently in the living room. Mama tells the girls that these people have come to mourn Great-Aunt Birte, but Annemarie knows this is not true. Ellen, on the other hand, still thinks Great-aunt Birte is a real person and is very sad that the Johansens have lost a relative. Annemarie wants to tell Ellen the truth, but she remembers what Uncle Henrik said and realizes that it will be easier for Ellen to be brave if she does not know.

After a few hours, Uncle Henrik asks Ellen to come outside with him. A few minutes later, they come back inside with [Peter Neilsen](https://www.gradesaver.com/number-the-stars/study-guide/character-list#peter-neilsen) and Mr. and [Mrs. Rosen](https://www.gradesaver.com/number-the-stars/study-guide/character-list#mrs-rosen).

In Chapter 8, Annemarie takes responsibility for Ellen by promising to keep her necklace safe. In Chapter 9, Annemarie protects Ellen again deciding not to tell her friend that the adults are lying about Great-Aunt Birte. Annemarie knows that telling Ellen the truth would make her feel better because it would ease the burden of this secret. However, she also knows that things will be easier in the long run for Ellen if she does not know the truth. The fact that Annemarie is able to prioritize the greater good over short-term relief shows that she is growing up.

Uncle Henrik tells Annemarie that she is not the only one who does not know the whole story. He explains that he and Mama are also only being told what they need to know. This is a historically accurate portrayal of how the Danish Resistance operated. Danes who were actively resisting the Germans only knew what they needed to know to do their jobs, so if they were caught, they would not be able to tell the Germans major secrets. This way, the capture of one person would not topple the entire resistance movement.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

After supper, [Annemarie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) goes out to the meadow alone. She visits [Uncle Henrik](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) in the barn, where he is milking Blossom, and asks him why he and [Mama](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/mrs-johansen-mama) are both lying to her. She says she knows that there is no Great-aunt Birte. Uncle Henrik sighs and finishes milking Blossom before turning to Annemarie and asking her how brave she is. Annemarie, startled by the question, says she’s “not very” brave at all. Uncle Henrik, though, says he believes Annemarie is very brave—but he also knows that it is “much easier to be brave if you do not know everything.”

***Analysis Part 1:***

Annemarie is hungry for the truth. She does not like being left out. When Henrik calls her bravery into question, Annemarie is forced to confront how brave she really is—and how much of what little bravery she feels she has is owed to all that she doesn’t know about the truth of what’s going on in her family and in her country more largely.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Uncle Henrik](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) asks [Annemarie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) if she understands what he’s saying, but Annemarie isn’t sure that she does. At the same time, as she reflects on the last several days—the Rosens’ flight, the Nazis’ searching of the Johansen apartment—she does concede that not knowing what was coming next did allow her to be brave, to think quickly on her feet, and to pretend that [Ellen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/ellen-rosen) really was her sister.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Annemarie thinks a lot about what has happened to her and her family over the last several days, and wonders what role ignorance and naivete has played not just in her own capacity to be brave, but in Ellen’s and Kirsti’s, too.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Uncle Henrik](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) reveals that there is no Great-aunt Brite—he and [Mama](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/mrs-johansen-mama) have lied to [Annemarie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen), [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) to “help [them] to be brave.” He tells Annemarie that for this reason, he’s not going to tell her anything else. Annemarie nods, understanding, and then the two of them head back up to the house together to begin the “night of mourning.”

***Analysis Part 3:***

Uncle Henrik is constructing a fantasy—or a fib—meant to shield not just Annemarie, Ellen, and Kirsti from the truth, but to shield their entire family from something deeply sinister.

***Summary Part 4:***

Two solemn-faced men driving a hearse bring a large, gleaming casket into the house and set it in the middle of the living room. [Kirsti](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/kirsti-johansen) is asleep upstairs, but [Ellen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/ellen-rosen) and [Annemarie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) sit up in the living room with [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). Ellen doesn’t know the truth of what’s going on, and tells Annemarie and the others that she’s sorry for their loss. Annemarie doesn’t tell her the truth, now understanding that sometimes not knowing helps make someone braver. As the night grows darker, many people from the village come through the house to pay their respects, but Mama’s knowing glances at Annemarie let Annemarie know that it is all a farce.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Annemarie has resisted Uncle Henrik’s belief that staying in the dark makes one braver—but at the same time, she acknowledges that there is perhaps something real in it. She chooses not to tell Ellen what’s really going on, thus aligning herself with Henrik’s philosophy even as she herself stews in the knowledge that things are being kept from her, too.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Uncle Henrik](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/uncle-henrik) soon announces that it is getting late, and he needs to get to the boat—he plans on sleeping on it. He blows out the candles in the house so that the place is totally dark and opens the front door. He whispers for [Ellen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/ellen-rosen) to come with him, and [Mama](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/mrs-johansen-mama) urges Ellen to follow Henrik’s lead. The two go out into the dark, and soon [Annemarie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/annemarie-johansen) can hear the sound of voices on the lawn. After a moment, Henrik returns—with [Peter Neilsen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/number-the-stars/characters/peter-neilsen) at his side. Peter greets Annemarie and Mama happily but anxiously, and a few moments later, Ellen is carried into the house—in the arms of her joyous mother and father.

***Analysis Part 5:***

At last, part of the truth emerges—the wake for “Great-aunt Birte” is a clever ruse meant to make a large gathering seem inconspicuous, thus allowing for the Rosens—and several other Jews disguised as mourners—to make their way safely to Henrik’s house.