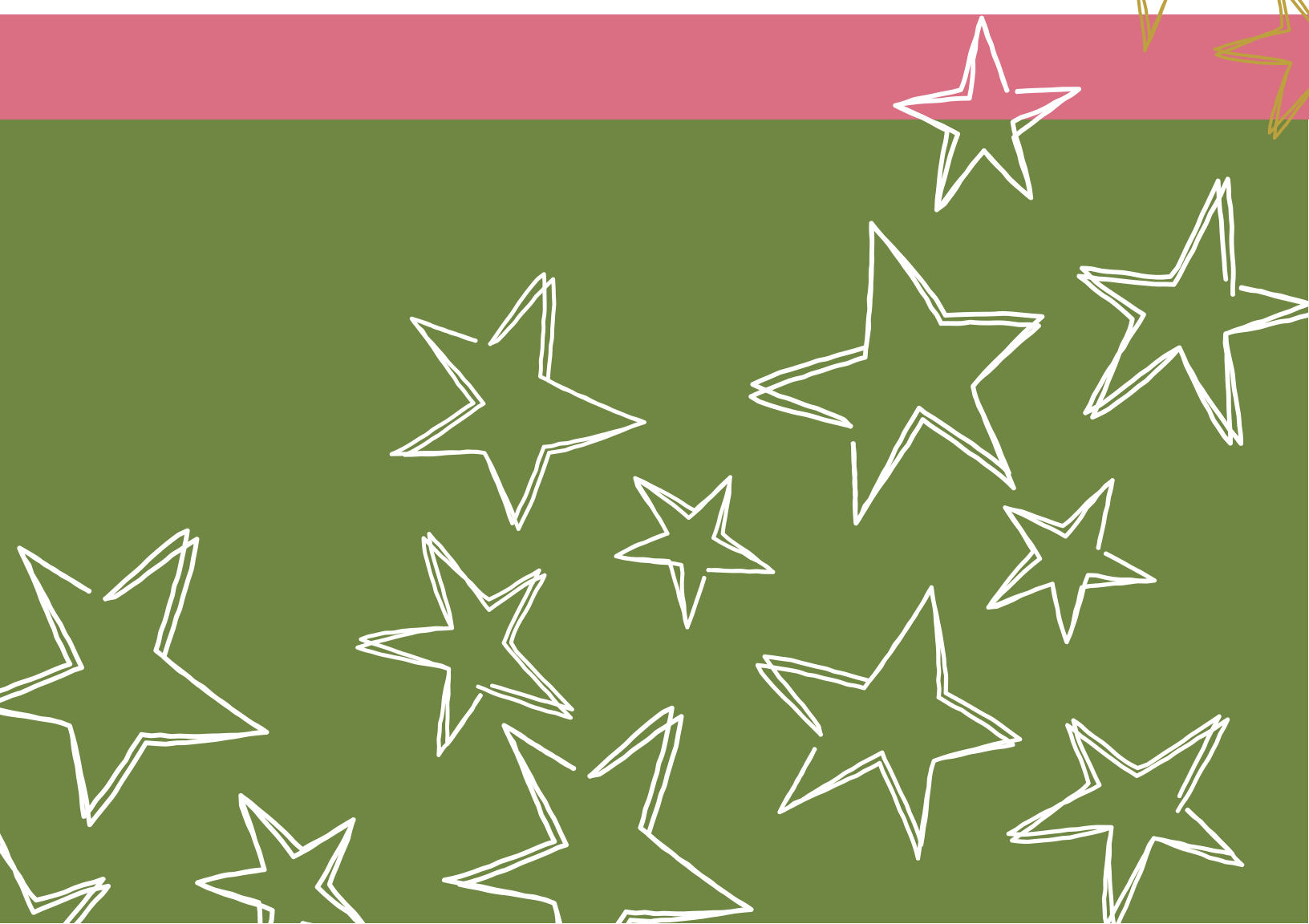


A READ-ALOUD DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

# *Number the Stars*

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- *Language Arts Naturally Toolkit* -





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# Introduction

Reading aloud as a family is one of the foundational strategies for creating an atmosphere conducive to learning naturally. Simple, but effective, reading aloud provides so many more benefits than you might think. Reading aloud:

- Increases attention spans
- Grows vocabulary
- Develops reading comprehension
- Models reading with expression

But maybe most importantly, it gives you **the chance to build family relationships** through a shared experience. In her book, *For the Children's Sake*, Susan Schaeffer Macauley explains it this way:

*"A family, a class, or any group that reads aloud has a sense of communion as they share together ideas and human experiences."*

The time our family spent reading books together became some of our favorite memories. The discussions they generated, as well as the fact that we really enjoyed so many stories together, **deepened our relationships through the sharing of ideas and experiences.**

Reading aloud, and discussing different topics that naturally come up, is **a non-threatening way to talk with our kids about worthy character traits we want them, and ourselves, to develop.** Just as Jesus used stories to teach his disciples, we can use stories to teach our children. For us, reading aloud was a natural way to train their character as well as their minds.

**And it gave us the opportunity to appreciate the *craft of writing*.** Compelling uses of imagery and literary devices, how good authors write natural sounding dialogue, and how they can *hook* readers with a great opening paragraph or leave them waiting to hear more at the end of each chapter.

## **A Few Notes**

You can complete the book in four weeks or work through it at your own rate. Give yourself permission to slow down and chase rabbits! Education is a marathon, not a sprint.

Part of the goal of this guide is to help you and your children appreciate both the story and the craft of writing. Once you start thinking that way, you and your children will see the beauty of literary language, the power of word choice, and how reoccurring metaphors and theme give us a deeper understanding of the meaning and message found in literary works.

**Setting:** time and place the events of a story occur

**Mood:** atmosphere of a literary work

- What is the setting of *Number the Stars*?
- Notice how quickly the mood of the book changes from the first few paragraphs. What clues does the author give about how Annemarie, Ellen, and Kirsti feel about the incident with the soldiers? How do their mothers react?
- Based on this chapter, do you have any predictions about what will happen in the book?
- What does Kirsti love to eat? Do you think there is any significance to this detail? Why?
- If you were one of the characters in this chapter, what do you think you would miss the most about how life has changed?



*Pretending to be a character in a book helps children to develop **empathy**—the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.*

*It's so easy to be focused on how **we** feel, that we forget about how **others** might feel. This is especially true when people are different than us or are experiencing different circumstances. **Literature exposes us all to ideas, people, and places that we might not otherwise encounter!***



**Fairy Tale:** Classic stories passed down for generations that usually have an element of magic or fantasy

- What do we learn at the beginning of this chapter about Kirsti? What do we learn about Annemarie's sister, Lise, in this chapter?
- Why do you think Kirsti likes fairy tales?
- How do the people of Denmark feel about their king, Christian X? What characteristics do you think make a good (or bad) leader?
- Which country is still free of Nazi occupation?
- At the end of the chapter, what is the one thing that Annemarie thinks has not changed? Is there any connection between the beginning of the chapter and the end of the chapter? What is it?
- Why do you think the author might repeat the idea of fairy tales? (Continue to notice how the author mentions fairy tales, kings, and queens.)

- Notice once again how the author brings up "pink, frosted cupcakes." (See chapter 2, page 12, paragraph 1 for the first reference.) When an author repeats a phrase or idea, you can bet that it is intentional! Why do you think the author has the characters talk about this again? Notice it is mentioned at the beginning and end of the chapter. Why?
- Reread the last three paragraphs. What frightens Annemarie?
- Notice the idea of "fairy tales" is mentioned again. Why? Do you have any predictions about what might happen based on those last few paragraphs? What character trait do you think Annemarie will need?

## Read Chapter 4

### Narration

Retell, in your own words, what happened to the Rosens and how Annemarie's family plans to "hide" Ellen.

**What is narration?** *It's simply telling something in your own words! This skill will help your kids learn how to summarize and paraphrase information. You'll find out what they understand as well!*

*If you have children who don't like to narrate, you can **be a little sneaky about it**. Simply ask them to tell dad, a grandparent, or someone else what they read about today.*



## Read Chapter 5

- There is another reoccurring phrase you will notice as you read: ghost stories. What does Annemarie think about ghost stories?
- Is deception/lying ever OK? Why, or why not?
- Can you think of a time someone in the Bible lied? What was the result of the lie?
- Does a good result mean that lying and deception is alright? Why do you think this?

*One great thing about literature is **how it gives us the chance to talk about our faith in authentic ways**—in ways that help our children think about what they believe and what walking with God looks like as a Christ-follower.*

*Talking about hard topics like this helps kids know that they can trust you when they have questions about their faith. It's okay not to have all the answers! **Let them see you as a fellow learner. Give them the freedom to grapple with questions that don't appear to be clear.***

*As you discuss the questions in this section, you may want to share the following stories from the Bible.*

- *The Story of The Spies & Rahab—see Joshua 2*
- *The Story of Ananias and Sapphira—see Acts 5:1–11*

*The consequences for lying in each of these situations is very different. Ask your children questions like,*

- *Why do you think the results were so different in each of these cases of lying?*
- *What do you think God might be looking at in each of these situations?*



**Fragment:** a sentence missing a subject or main verb; it's an incomplete thought

- Read page 48, paragraph 6 ("Lise Margrete...") . Look at the definition of a fragment—or incomplete sentence. What are the incomplete sentences in this paragraph? Why would the author use incomplete sentences here?

Note: Authors sometimes break grammar rules on purpose. Often it's to capture your attention or to give the passage a more musical or dramatic feel. Try to notice in other books when this happens and how it affects the feeling of the passage. The more you understand the rules of grammar, the more confident you can be to choose to break the rules for effect.

## *Read Chapter 6*

- Notice how Kirsti once again talks about castles, queens, and kings on pages 56–57. How does her mother respond? Why do you think the character Kirsti seems so enamored by these thoughts of fairy tales and royalty? Why do you think she is the best choice of the different characters to express these ideas?
- As Annemarie's mother talks about growing up in the area, she says on page 58 that her brother used to tell them ghost stories. What does she say about them? The author has brought this up a couple of times now. Why do you think she does this?

**Personification:** a literary device that is a type of comparison where an object or animal shows a human trait

- Read page 56, paragraph 5 ("The air was breezy..."). Look at the definition of personification. What sentence in this paragraph is an example of this literary device? What is the comparison? Do you think it is an effective device considering the subject matter of the book? Why?





## *Read Chapter 7*

- Have you ever had the opportunity to see something that you take for granted because it is so familiar through “fresh eyes” like Annemarie did with the house by the sea? If so, share your experience with your family. If not, think of something you do on a regular basis or a place you go to often. How can you look at it through “fresh eyes”?
- Thanking God for those things can really make us appreciate them more. Is there something “ordinary” that you could thank God for?
- Later in the chapter, Ellen asks about her necklace. Do you have any ideas of where the safe place might be that Annemarie hid Ellen’s Star of David necklace?
- Read page 71, paragraph 1 (“The meadow ended...”). What example of personification do you see in this paragraph? What is compared? Do you think the imagery was effective in helping you imagine the scene? Why or why not?



## *Read Chapter 8*

- Why does Annemarie find Kirsti’s choice for the kitten’s name so funny? If you could give another name to your pets that is totally opposite of their personality, what would it be and why?
- On page 69, did you notice anything that was repeated again? What was it? Why do you think the author mentions this again?
- What do you think the sentence “Tomorrow is a good day for fishing” means? Why?
- For what reasons does Annemarie think that there is no Great-aunt Birte? What do you think is going on? Why?

- When Annemarie and Uncle Henrik talk about bravery, what does he say to her when she says she doesn't think she is very brave?
- What did he tell her was the reason that they had lied to her? Do you think that they were right to lie to the girls? Why, or why not?
- How would you define bravery? Can you think of a time in your life when you had to be brave? If so, share the experience with your family.
- If there is no Aunt Birte, who do you think the mourners are? Why is Peter there?

**Simile:** a literary device that is a description using “like” or “as” to make a comparison

- Read page 74, paragraph 3. What is a simile? What sentence in your dictation passage is an example of this literary device? Does the simile help you picture what the cow looked like? Do you think this is an effective simile? Why or why not?



## Read Chapter 10

- What does the soldier say that they had observed on page 83, paragraph 7? What does that tell you about what the soldiers have been doing?
- How would that make you feel if you lived in an area occupied by Nazi soldiers? Does it explain why some people in Denmark were talking in riddles at times?
- What are some of the things they said to keep the Nazis from knowing what was going on?
- What helps them have a sense of peace when the soldiers leave? Why would this particular Psalm be a comfort to the Jews? Do you have a favorite Psalm that brings you comfort?
- Who or what do you think is in the casket?

Descriptive writing appeals to the senses. Read page 83, paragraphs 4 ("Finally Annemarie went...") through 6.

- What words, phrases, or sentences help you to see what is going on?
- What words, phrases, or sentences help you hear what is going on?
- Now think about the words, phrases, and sentences that express the feelings of fear in the passage. Tell them to your teacher, too.

**Word choice** is important in this passage, painting a picture of the fear the characters felt. Imagine being there. How would you feel? What physical reaction might you experience?

## Read Chapter 11

- How do you think Kirsti might react if she finds her sweater was given away? Have you ever given up something you enjoyed so another could have it? What did that feel like?
- What do you think Peter gave the baby?
- We see again that people do not know everything so that they are protected. How can not knowing everything be a form of protection? Can you think of a way that this might be true for you today?
- What is pride? Is there a good kind of pride and a bad kind of pride? Describe both if you think there is both a negative and positive form of pride.
- What type of pride does Annemarie see?
- How important is freedom for a person? Why?

## Read Chapter 12 & 13

- What happened in chapter 12? Use as many details as you can remember.
- What must Annemarie do in Chapter 13?
- Does she know what is in the envelope? Do you think that not knowing will help her in some way?
- Go back and reread p. 26, paragraphs 1 ("Now she was ten...") through 3 and page 75, last sentence ("How brave are you...") through page 76, paragraph 2. How does Annemarie see herself when it comes to bravery? How do you see yourself?
- What does Annemarie do in this chapter? Do you think it is a brave thing or not? Why?

## Read Chapter 14

- Why do you think Annemarie tells herself the story of "Little Red Riding Hood" as she walks through the woods? (As you consider this, think back to the other times that the author has mentioned fairy tales.)
- As a child, did you enjoy fairy tales? Why or why not?
- On page 111, reread paragraph 4 ("Annemarie continued the story...") through the end of the chapter. How is Annemarie like Little Red Riding Hood? Who is the "wolf" for Annemarie? Which wolf would you have found more frightening?

## Read Chapter 15

- What happened in chapter 15? Add as many details as you can remember.

**Alliteration:** a literary device where words that begin with the same *sound* are placed close together

- Read the last paragraph on page 117. Read the definition of alliteration above. What example of alliteration do you see in the paragraph? Why do you think authors use alliteration in their writing?

## Read Chapter 16

- How does Uncle Henrik define bravery? Do you agree with him? If not, how would you define it?
- Were you surprised that Peter is in the resistance movement? Why or why not?
- What had Peter given the baby so it wouldn't cry?
- What did Annemarie learn about the handkerchief? Do you think this actually happened? Why, or why not?

## Read Chapter 17 & Afterword

- What had the Danish people done for their Jewish friends while they were away? What does Annemarie's mother explain was the reason?
- What characteristics did it take for the Danish to show this kind of friendship? Do you see these same characteristics in yourself or someone you know?
- What did you learn about Peter and Lise in this chapter? Were you surprised?
- Why do you think the author chose to end the novel the way she did? Do you think the book had a satisfying ending? Why, or why not?

*Thank you for using this discussion guide!*

*When you come to the end of a book, it's a nice time to grab some ice cream or a favorite treat and sit around the table to talk.*



*Ask questions like: What did you like about the book? Dislike? Did you have a favorite character? Which character did you identify with the most? Why?*

***These are just ideas.*** Often simply asking a few questions can open up a great conversation. And that's the best part of reading together—the chance for connection. You know your kids better than anyone else. Ask whatever comes to mind. Think about what parts of the book might be meaningful in some way to YOUR kids.

***Teach language arts... naturally.***