

# Rescue: Ordinary Individuals Making Extraordinary Decisions

By Sandra Rubenstein, Horace Mann School, Bronx, New York

Graduate of USC Shoah Foundation's 2010 Master Teacher Workshop

## LESSON

### Target Audience:

Grades 4-6

### Time Required:

Seven 45-minute class periods

### McREL Content Standards Addressed:

- [Language Arts](#)
- [Critical Reading](#)
- [Graphic Organizers](#) (Level II)
- [Writing Responsively to the Literature](#)

### Lesson Overview

This unit is designed for those students who have completed a teacher guided reading of *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry.

The unit theme is about ordinary people who show courage, bravery, and kindness and take risks under extraordinary circumstances of danger. The theme is about not being a bystander in the face of wrongdoing.

Video testimony from USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive feature a Holocaust survivor whose experiences mirror those reflected in the novel.

### Student Objectives

- To understand the motivation of those who risked their lives to help others.
- To understand the concept of making choices in their every day lives.
- To help children visualize and better understand the dangers and risks of rescue during the Holocaust.
- To help students think critically and assess the pros and cons of choosing to help.
- To relate the testimony of Holocaust survivor Mette Shayne from the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive to the experiences of the characters in the novel *Number the Stars*.

### Materials

- Video incorporating excerpts from Mette Shanye's testimony from USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive (13 min. 55 sec.).
- Parent Letter: The instructor should send home a letter to the parents before the children view the testimony of Mette Shayne. This is an important part of the learning process that allows children to continue their discussions and express their thoughts about the testimony with their parents at home.
- Index cards
- Graphic Organizer
- Paragraph Template
- Reading Paragraph Rubric
- Packet- print out the following for students:
  - Biographical Profile: Mette Shayne

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### Materials (cont'd)

- Map: Rescue of Danish Jews
- Photo of Georg Duckwitz  
<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/revolt/images/duckwitz.jpg>
- Photo of Chief Rabbi Marcus Melchior of Copenhagen
- Photo of Jørgen Haagen Schmith (“The Lemon”)  
<http://www.timelapse.dk/citronen.php>
- Two photos of Danish rescue fishing boats from United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Museet for Danmarks Frihedskamp

### Prior Knowledge/Background Information

Students should understand some background information about World War II and the Holocaust. By reading *Number the Stars* as a unit, the teacher will have introduced and discussed the following:

- Hitler’s rise to power.
- The beliefs of the Nazi party, including the concepts of a “master race” and discrimination.
- Maps of Europe before and after German conquests.
- The neutrality of countries such as Sweden and Switzerland.
- Why was it so dangerous to be Jewish?
- Why was it dangerous to help Jews?
- What would be the consequences if caught?

### Procedure

#### Class Period 1

- Send home Parent Letter to inform parents that the children will be viewing testimony of a Holocaust survivor.
- Hand out the Graphic Organizer. Discuss specific literary examples in *Number the Stars* when individual characters exhibited character traits such as courage, caring, quick-thinking, and others that students may add.
- The teacher should ask the following questions: *Why do you think Annemarie was courageous? Let’s find an example from the story to support your opinion.* (The teacher should model one or two examples of a particular trait and write these on the board. Students will copy these examples onto their Graphic Organizer. Students should add the page number of the specific example where possible.)
- Have students work together to brainstorm other traits and examples from the book then discuss as a class.

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### Procedure (cont'd)

#### Class Period 2

- To prepare for watching the testimony of Mette Shayne, hand out copies of the Packet and review the following with students:
  1. **Mette's bio:** *"Let's look at this biography of Mette. When was she born? (October 9, 1934) How old was she when she fled Denmark for Sweden? (Almost 9 years old) What else can we learn about Mette from this bio?"*
  2. **Vocabulary:** Review the following words and definitions:
    - assimilated – integrated into the community.  
*This means that although Mette Shayne was Jewish, she did not know she was Jewish. She was not brought up with any religion, and did not practice any of the religious or cultural traditions.*
    - B.B.C – This is an acronym that stands for the British Broadcasting Company.  
*During World War II, it is widely agreed that the BBC World Service, broadcasted from England, was among the most reliable source of information available. At the time, it was broadcasted on the radio. There was no such thing as television in 1943.*
    - aktion – this was the term the Nazis used when relocating the Jews.
  3. **Map of Danish Rescue:** The instructor should trace Mette's journey from Denmark to Sweden and then compare her journey to Ellen's in *Number the Stars*. Ask students the following: *From where did Ellen leave? What about Mette? Which journey do you think took longer? Why do you think so?*
  4. Photo of **Georg Duckwitz:** Have students read p. 135 in *Number the Stars*, where Georg Duckwitz is mentioned in the Afterword. Then ask students the following: *What was Georg Duckwitz's role in helping the Jews of Denmark escape to Sweden? What is his nationality?*
  5. Photo of **Chief Rabbi Marcus Melchior:** Ask students the following: *What was Rabbi Melchior's role? How do we know he was courageous? Why do you think he used his bicycle rather than the telephone?*
  6. Photo of **Jørgen Haagen Schmith ("The Lemon"):** Discuss "the Lemon" and why he received this nickname. Ask students the following: *What is a resistance fighter? What was Schmith's role in helping the Jews escape? Why do you think he was courageous? What happened to him?*
  7. **Peter Neilsen, the resistance (or freedom) fighter from *Number the Stars*, p. 136:** He "represents those courageous and idealistic young people, so many of whom died at the hands of the enemy." Ask students the following: *How can we compare Peter Neilsen to "The Lemon?"*

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### Procedure (cont'd)

#### Class Period 2 (cont'd)

8. **Photos of Danish rescue fishing boats:** Ask students the following: *How large are these boats? What do you think conditions for traveling on these boats to Sweden were like?*
9. **Discuss this quote from *Number the Stars*:** *“For nearly two years now, neighbors had tended the plants and dusted the furniture and polished the candlesticks for the Jews who fled. Her mother had done so for the Rosens. ‘It’s what friends do,’ Mama had said.” What do you think this means?*

#### Class Period 3

- Introduce Mette Shayne and view the video incorporating her testimony. (*NOTE: teacher may find it useful to view the video in sections*)
- Additional information to supplement the testimony is included in the video. The teacher should highlight Mette’s journey on a map and point out specific individuals and the roles that they played.
- After students watch Mette Shayne’s testimony, hand out index cards and ask students the following:
  - What are the similarities and differences between Ellen and Mette’s escapes?
  - Give examples of specific character traits in Mette’s testimony such as courage, caring, and quick-thinking.

#### Class Period 4

- Have students take out their Graphic Organizers. Review examples of character traits such as: courageous, caring, quick-thinking (these were already noted for the characters.) Elicit new examples of these traits exhibited by individuals in Mette Shayne’s testimony.
- After noting specific examples from the testimony, have students make comparisons between the book and the testimony with specific examples of each character trait to support their opinions.
- Then, ask students the following: *We already have examples of why Annemarie was courageous. Why do you think Mette was courageous? Give an example from the testimony to support your opinion. Who else in Mette’s testimony was courageous?*
- Review and detail the information and ideas drawn from the students on the board. Have students copy down any additional information on their Graphic Organizers.

#### Class Period 5 (Continue above lesson)

For fourth graders, this may take two class periods to complete.

#### Class Period 6

- Students will write an in-class “compare and contrast paragraph,” organizing their ideas and including specific examples from the literature and from the testimony to support their ideas.

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### Procedure (cont'd)

#### Class Period 6 (cont'd)

- Students will take out their completed Graphic Organizers.
- Hand out Paragraph Template and have students fill it out using their completed Graphic Organizers.

#### Class Period 7

- Have students respond reflectively in their journals after viewing Mette Shayne's testimony. Below are a couple of sample questions:
  - What are your thoughts about Mette's testimony? What did you think of her survival story? Can you think of any similarities or differences between *Number the Stars* and Mette's experiences?
  - Both Mette and Ellen had to flee quickly and could take only a small suitcase. What if you suddenly had to leave the country? What would you want to take with you? Why? (Remember, it would have to be something small that could be packed or carried.)

### Assessment

- **Class Participation:** An understanding of the goals and objectives based on students' verbal responses can be assessed through discussion.
- **Journal Entries:** Reading students' responses in their journals to Mette's testimony can reflect how effective and powerful exposing the children to a Holocaust survivor has been. Do they better understand how courage and choice can be part of their every day lives?
- **Student Paragraphs:** Reading students' expository writing paragraphs comparing the courage (for example) of the characters in *Number the Stars* and the courage of those individuals who helped Mette Shayne will assess critical thinking skills, organizational skills, the ability to follow directions, grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary usage, spelling, and paragraph structure. (See Reading Paragraph Rubric–Measurable Data in 'Materials')

### Closure

- Have students write their own reflections about watching the testimony in their journals.
- Some guided discussion questions: *What have you learned? What is the message you take away from the novel and the testimony? What are some of the similarities between Ellen's experiences and Mette's? What are some of the differences?*

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### Additional Resources

For more information about topics and people discussed in this lesson, the teacher may want to consult the following sources:

1. Denmark article from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Holocaust Encyclopedia* at <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005209>
2. Georg Duckwitz article from <http://www.shoah.dk/Courage/Duckwitz.htm>
3. Jørgen Haagen Schmith articles from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B8rgen\\_Haagen\\_Schmith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C3%B8rgen_Haagen_Schmith) and <http://www.timelapse.dk/citronen.php>
4. Werner, Emily E. *A Conspiracy of Decency: The Rescue of the Danish Jews During World War II*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2002.