



Number the Stars (1989), by Lois Lowry Selected Passages

These selected passages can be used by students when building their arguments in the Persuasive Letter Template. Page numbers in parenthesis are taken from the Random House edition of the book, published in 1989.

“When they were almost home, Ellen whispered suddenly, ‘I was so scared.’ ‘Me too,’ Annemarie whispered back. As they turned to enter their building, both girls looked straight ahead, toward the door. They did it purposely, so that they would not catch the eyes or the attention of two more soldiers, who stood with their guns on this corner as well. Kirsti scurried ahead of them through the door, chattering about the picture she was bringing home from kindergarten to show Mama. For Kirsti, the soldiers were simply part of the landscape, something that had always been there, on every corner, as unimportant as lampposts, throughout her remembered life” (5).

“[Ms. Johansen’s and Ms. Rosen’s] uneasy looks didn’t change. ‘I slapped his hand and shouted at him,’ Kirsti announced importantly. ‘No, she didn’t, Mama,’ Annemarie reassured her mother. ‘She’s exaggerating, as she always does’” (7).

“The Resistance fighters were Danish people – no one knew who, because they were very secret – who were determined to bring harm to the Nazis however they could. They damaged the German trucks and cars, and bombed their factories. They were very brave. Sometimes they were caught and killed” (8).

“Would she die to protect [the Jews of Denmark]? *Truly?* Annemarie was honest enough to admit, there in the darkness, to herself, that she wasn’t sure. For a moment she felt frightened. But she pulled the blanket up higher around her neck and relaxed. It was all imaginary, anyway – not real. It was only in the fairy tales that people were called upon to be so brave, to die for one another. Not in real-life Denmark. Oh, there were the soldiers; that was true. And the courageous Resistance leaders, who sometimes lost their lives; that was true, too. But ordinary people like the Rosens and Johansens? Annemarie admitted to herself, snuggling there in the quiet dark, that she was glad to be an ordinary person who would never be called upon for courage” (26).

“The next evening’s newspaper had told the sad the truth. The Danes had destroyed their own naval fleet, blowing up the vessels one by one, as the Germans approached to take over the ships for their own use. ‘How sad the king must be,’ Annemarie had heard Mama say to Papar when they read the news. ‘How proud,’ Papa had replied” (32).

“Suddenly, here in this sunlit kitchen, with cream in a pitcher and a bird in the apple tree beside the door – and out in the Kattegat, where Uncle Henrik, surrounded by bright blue sky and water, pulled in his nets filled with shiny silver fish – suddenly the specter of guns and grim-faced soldiers seemed nothing more than a ghost story, a joke with which to frighten children in the dark” (69).

“‘How brave are you, little Annemarie?’ he asked suddenly. She was startled. And dismayed. It was a question she did not want to be asked. When she asked it of herself, she didn’t like her own answer. ‘Not very,’ she confessed, looking at the floor of the barn. . . . ‘I think that is not true,’ Uncle Henrik said. ‘I think you are like your mama, and like your papa, and like me. Frightened, but determined, and if the time came to be brave, I am quite sure you would be very, very brave” 75-76).

“‘But,’ [Uncle Henrik] added, ‘it is much *easier* to be brave if you do not know everything. And so your mama does not know everything. Neither do I. We know only what we need to know. ‘Do you understand what I am saying?’ he asked, looking into her eyes. Annemarie frowned. She wasn’t sure. What did bravery mean? She had been very frightened the day – not long ago, though now it seemed far in the past – when the soldier had stopped her on the street and asked questions in his rough voice. And she had not known everything then. She had not known that the Germans were going to take away the Jews. And so, when the when the soldier asked, looking at Ellen that day, ‘What is your friend’s name?’ she had been able to answer him, even though she was frightened. If she had known everything it would not have been so easy to be brave. She began to understand, just a little. ‘Yes,’ she said to Uncle Henrik, ‘I think I understand”” (76-77).

“She understood that she was protecting Ellen the way her mother had protected her. Although she didn’t understand what was happening, or why the casket was there – or who, in truth, was in it – she knew that it was better, *safer*, for Ellen to believe in Great-aunt Birte. So she said nothing” (78-79).

“Now [Annemarie] knew for certain what Uncle Henrik had meant when he had talked to her in the barn. To be brave came more easily if you knew nothing. She swallowed. ‘My Great-aunt Birte,’ she lied, in a firm voice” (84).

“It was one more time, Annemarie realized, when they protected one another by not telling. If Mr. Rosen knew, he might be frightened. If Mr. Rosen knew, he might be in danger. So he hadn’t asked. And Peter hadn’t explained” (91).

“[Annemarie] knew how frightened Mrs. Rosen was of the sea: its width, its depth, its cold. She knew how frightened Ellen was of the soldiers, with their guns and boots, who were certainly looking for them. And she knew how frightened they all must be of the future. But their shoulders were as straight as they had been in the past: in the classroom, on the stage, at the Sabbath table. So there were other sources, too, of pride, and they had not left everything behind” (94).

“Then [the German soldier’s] eyes locked on the basket. He handed the cheese and napkin to the soldier beside him. ‘What’s that? There in the bottom?’ he asked in a different, tenser voice. What would Kirsti do? Annemarie stamped her foot. Suddenly, to her own surprise, she began to cry. ‘I don’t know!’ she said, her voice choked. ‘My mother’s going to be angry that you stopped me and made me late’” (116-117).

“‘[The Rosens] were there,’ [Uncle Henrik] told her, leaning forward against the cow’s broad side. ‘You shouldn’t know this. You remember that I told you it was safer not to know. But,’ he went on, as his hands moved with their sure and practiced motion, ‘I will tell you just a little, because you were so very brave.’ ‘Brave?’ Annemarie asked, surprised. ‘No, I wasn’t. I was very frightened.’ ‘You risked your life.’ ‘But I didn’t even think about that! I was only thinking of –’ He interrupted her, smiling. ‘That’s all that *brave* means – not thinking about the dangers. Just thinking about what you must do. Of course, you were frightened. I was too, today. But you kept your mind on what you had to do. So did I’” (122-123).