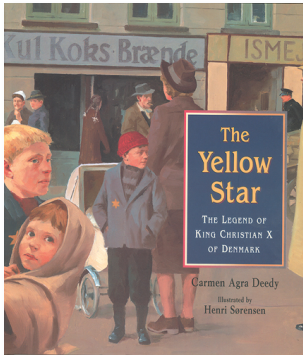


TEACHER'S GUIDE



The Yellow Star

The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark

Written by Carmen Agra Deedy | Illustrated by Henri Sørensen

HC: 978-1-56145-208-8

Ages 8–12 | Historical Fiction

AR • RC • Lexile • F&P • GRL S; Gr 4

ABOUT THE BOOK

For centuries, the Star of David was a symbol of Jewish pride. But during World War II, Nazis used the star to segregate and terrorize the Jewish people. Except in Denmark.

When Nazi soldiers occupied his country, King Christian X of Denmark committed himself to keeping all Danes safe from harm.

The bravery of the Danes and their king has inspired many legends. The most enduring is the legend of the yellow star, which symbolizes the loyalty and fearless spirit of the king and his people.

Carmen Agra Deedy has recreated this legend with Danish illustrator Henri Sørensen. Deedy's lyrical prose and Sørensen's arresting portraits unite to create a powerful and dignified story of heroic justice, a story for all people and all times.

THEMES

- Heroism, courage, concern for others
- Responsibilities of leaders
- World War II
- Holocaust
- Jewish history
- Human rights

A NOTE FROM THE PREPARER

This story of King Christian X's response to the order that Jews in Denmark must wear yellow stars on their clothing is a powerful introduction to the bravery of people who resisted the Nazis during World War II. Students in the middle elementary years are generally

aware of the Holocaust, but often they know little about the ways people responded to the terrible things happening around them. Though the story in this book is a legend, it illustrates the strength and spirit of a nation committed to justice for all its people.

BEFORE YOU READ

To understand the context of this story, students need to know a bit about World War II in Europe.

- Begin by asking what students know about World War II. When did it take place? What countries were involved? Why were these countries fighting? What happened to Jewish people at this time? Why were Nazi soldiers in Copenhagen? It is not necessary to give extensive information about any of these questions. Your purpose here is simply to put the book in context.
- Using a map of Europe, have students locate Germany, Denmark, and Copenhagen (Denmark's capital).

AS YOU READ

The first two pages of the book emphasize the unity of the Danish people. At the same time, the author points out that all Danes were not the same. Talk with your students about the different kinds of people shown in these two illustrations: different ages, gender, occupations, and so forth.

Continue this discussion as you read the third page. Who is the guest in the picture? Note that either of the men in the conversation could be the guest because many different kinds of people live freely in Denmark.

After reading the fourth page, ask your students how they think the Nazis will respond to the removal of the flag. Why do they think this will happen?

After reading the fifth page, ask the students whether the Nazis had made a smart decision in allowing the flag to remain down? Why do they feel this way?

As you read the page where the king is pondering his decision (before he goes onto the balcony), ask the students what they think the king will do. Why might he choose to do this?

After reading the next to the last page, ask the students what the king did and what it meant.

On the final page, all of the Danes are wearing yellow stars. What message does this give to the Nazis?

AFTER YOU READ

At the end of the story, read the first page and the bulleted items on the second page of the Author's Note to the class. Discuss the meaning of legend. Note that all countries and cultures have their own legends, and that often these stories contain values important to the culture. Discuss what values important to the Danes are embedded in this legend. Why might people who were not Danes find this an inspiring story? After the discussion, read and discuss the rest of the Author's Note.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Have students choose a character from one of the illustrations in the book and write a series of diary entries based on the events of the story. The first entry should be written as if it were in early 1940. The second entry should be after the Nazi occupation of Denmark, perhaps around the time that the king ordered the flag removed. The third entry should take place when the Jews were ordered to wear the yellow star, and the final entry should be after King Christian X appeared wearing the star.
- Ask students to interview people who were alive during World War II to see what they experienced and what impact the war had on them. Students need to be sensitive as they do this because people who have painful memories may not want to be interviewed. Share the interviews with the class, either by having oral presentations or by compiling a class book of the interviews.
- Based on one of the events of the story, have students write a news story, editorial, or letter to the editor. Ask if they think stories like the ones they wrote

would be published in the newspapers while the Nazis occupied Denmark. Research to see whether censorship existed in the countries occupied by the Nazis.

- Follow the reading of *The Yellow Star* by reading aloud the novel *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry. In introducing the novel, note the fact that it is set in Denmark during World War II and discuss with the students what they think will be similar in the two stories. As you read, continue to make connections between the two books. At the conclusion of the reading, discuss whether the books represented the Danish people in the same way.

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Students interested in history may want to do further research on one of the following topics:
 - Denmark's role in World War II
 - Nazi occupation of Denmark
 - Danish resistance movement
 - King Christian X of Denmark
 - Significance of the yellow Star of David
 They may want to consider how Denmark's response to Nazi occupation was different from that of other European countries.
- Older students reading this book may want to read more about the Holocaust and do some research on Theresienstadt, a concentration camp located in Czechoslovakia where most Danish Jews were sent.
- Students may be interested in investigating violations of human rights that are occurring today, such as child slavery, suppression of religious and political groups in China, and so forth. The Amnesty International website www.amnesty.org is a good source of material. After some students report on their findings, the class could be asked to use the information they have learned to write a persuasive essay or editorial based on the last paragraph of the Author's Note in this book.
- Using a map on a transparency to show Europe on the eve of World War II, have students make successive overlays to show the progress of the Nazi occupation of Europe during the war.
- Use the illustrations in the book and do some research to create a map of Copenhagen in 1940. Show the palace and other important locations in the city. Have students speculate about the route of the king's morning ride.
- Why is the behavior of a king important to his country? When King Christian X of Denmark rode

through the streets of Copenhagen without a guard, what message was he giving to his people and to the visitors to his country? What other important messages did the king convey to his people through his behavior in this story?

- How did the people of Denmark feel about their king? What evidence do you have to support your answer?

ART

- In several places in the book the artist uses tones of brown and white instead of full color. Ask students why they think he changes his palette in this way. What effect do these dark images have?
- Ask students to study the pictures in the book. What can they learn about Denmark just by looking at the illustrations? Find some photographs either in books or on the Internet showing some scenes of Copenhagen during the 1930s and '40s. Are the artist's drawings accurate? How do the pictures convey the feeling of the city at that time?

INTERNET INVESTIGATIONS

- The US Holocaust Memorial Museum site www.ushmm.org/education contains a comprehensive education section. There, students can find resources about the rescue of Jews by the people of Denmark as well as material on other topics related to the Holocaust.
- A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust located on the University of Southern Florida's website fcit.usf.edu/Holocaust/ contains a vast selection of activities and links to resources. Many of the activities provide interesting extensions which might follow the reading of *The Yellow Star*.

CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

- Heroism can be expressed in many ways. Discuss what it means to be a hero and who students consider to be heroic. In this story was King Christian X a hero? Though we think that his wearing of the yellow star was a legend, in what ways, if any, would you still consider him a hero?
- Many books set during World War II could be used in conjunction with *The Yellow Star*. The books listed in the "Related Reading" section are stories in which people in different ways and different places display exceptional courage in the face of danger.

RELATED READING

Upper Elementary School:

- Adler, David. *Hiding from the Nazis*
- Adler, David. *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm*
- Giff, Patricia Reilly. *Lily's Crossing*
- Lowry, Lois. *Number the Stars*
- Maguire, Gregory. *The Good Liar*
- Mochizuki, Ken. *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*
- Oppenheim, Shulamith Levey. *The Lily Cupboard: A Story of the Holocaust*

Middle School:

- Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl*
- Harrison, Barbara. *Theo*
- Lobel, Anita. *No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War*
- Napoli, Donna Jo. *Stones in Water*
- Opdyke, Irene Gut. *In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer*
- Van der Rol, Ruud and Verhoeven, Rian. *Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary, A Photographic Remembrance*
- Volavkova, Hana (ed.). *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp 1942-1944*

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS & LIBRARIANS

- "What Should They Read and When Should They Read It? A Selective Review of Holocaust Literature for Students in Grades Two through Twelve, Part II." Karen Shawn. *Dimensions: A Journal of Holocaust Studies*. Anti-Defamation League, 1997.
- *The Bitter Years*, Richard Petrow. Examines the invasion, occupation, and resistance movements of Denmark and Norway during World War II.
- *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*, Margot S. Strom. A classroom resource book used in conjunction with the Facing History and Ourselves program. Visit www.facing.org for more information.
- *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry*, Leni Yahil. Offers a comprehensive look at the fate of Jews in each European country during the Holocaust.

- *Learning about the Holocaust: Literature and Other Resources for Young People*, Elaine D. Stephens, Jean E. Brown, Janet E. Rubin. Explores Holocaust literature for kindergarten through high school students. Offers an annotated bibliography arranged by grade and genre. Draws material from a wide array of genres including movies, poetry, photo essays, and books.
- *October '43*, Aage Bertelsen. An autobiographical account of the October rescue written by a non-Jewish Dane.
- *A Rabbi Remembers*, Marcus Melchior. A personal account by the rabbi of Copenhagen's synagogue at the time of the Jewish rescue.
- *The Rescue of the Danish Jews: Moral Courage Under Stress*, Leo Goldberger (ed.). A collection of essays written by internationally known Jews and non-Jews centered around the 1943 rescue of Danish Jews.
- *Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews in the Holocaust*, Leo Meltzer. Stories of non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews from death in the Holocaust.
- *The Spirit that Moves Us: Grades Kindergarten Through Four*, Laura R. Petovello, J.D. Offers lesson plans for commonly used children's Holocaust literature including *Number the Stars* and *One Yellow Daffodil*.
- *Teaching About the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators*. Produced by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum www.ushmm.org/education. Offers guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust in the classroom, an annotated bibliography and video list, and a timeline and chronology list of Holocaust and World War II events.
- *Tell Them We Remember: The Story of the Holocaust*, Susan D. Bachrach. Produced in association with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. An invaluable resource that offers 30 chapters covering Hitler's rise to power all the way through the Holocaust. A great deal of the book's information may be found in the museum. Intended for young adult, but very appropriate for teachers and parents.

REVIEWS

"...interesting and thought-provoking...."

—*School Library Journal*

"Professional storyteller Deedy retells this legend in unadorned, effective language that lends currency to history.... The spare but resonant storytelling is given an authoritative setting in Danish illustrator Sørensen's paintings; his formal style and balanced compositions reinforce the mood and dignity of the story...

This tale will find heavy use as a read-aloud and discussion starter, whether the topic is truth, history, heroism, or moral dilemmas."

—*Bulletin for the Center for Children's Books*

AWARDS

- Jane Adams Peace Association Honor Book
- Bologna Ragazzi Award for Excellence in Children's Literature
- Christopher Award, "Books for Young People" category
- IRA Teacher's Choice, Intermediate Category
- Notable Book for a Global Society, IRA Children's Literature & Reading Special Interest Group
- Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People —Selector's Choice, NCSS/Children's Book Council
- Parents' Choice Gold Award
- Parent's Guide to Children's Media Award

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carmen Agra Deedy is a *New York Times* bestselling author and has been writing and traveling around the world telling stories for more than twenty years. Her books, including *14 Cows for America*, *The Library Dragon*, *The Yellow Star*, and *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach* have received numerous awards and honors. Carmen has performed in many prestigious venues, but children are her favorite audience. Born in Havana, Cuba, she came to the United States as a refugee, and like most immigrants, sees the world from multiple perspectives.

www.carmenagradeedy.com

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Henri Sørensen has illustrated over twenty books for children, including *The Yellow Star*, *The Printer*, and *Christmas in the Trenches*. He is also the author-illustrator of two children's books, *New Hope* and *Your First Step*. Sørensen lives in Denmark.

Peachtree Teacher's Guide for
THE YELLOW STAR
prepared by Barbara Scotto,
Driscoll School in Brookline, Massachusetts

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