

Prepared by Susan Quintana
For
The New Mexico Holocaust Museum

Lesson Plan: The Whispering Town By Jennifer Elvgren



Grade Level:

This lesson was developed for grades 2-5. We are following the [Age Appropriate](#) Guidelines from the USHMM.

All lessons can be adapted to Middle and High School.

Subject:

History; English/Language Arts; Multi-disciplinary

Rationale:

The Holocaust and the story of the Danes allows students to apply the ideas of Upstanders, Bystanders and Prepretators to the Holocaust.

Key Question(s):

- What did the Danish people do during the Holocaust to be Upstanders?

Educational Outcome(s)

- Apply the concept of Upstanding to the Holocaust
- Hear and understand one story of how Upstanding was accomplished during the Holocaust.
- Apply the ideas of Upstanding to one's own life

Teacher preparation:

We encourage teachers to familiarize themselves with background knowledge on the Holocaust by viewing this [site](#) at the USHMM and view the [Introduction to the Holocaust](#).

Pre read the Picture book *The Whispering Town* and look at *stop points and discussion activities*.

Lesson details

- Review content
- Prepare body cutouts

Materials

- *The Whispering Town*- Picture book

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2

Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3

Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.9

Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Vocabulary

Cellar
Courage
Rumors

Upstander
Perpetrators
Bystanders

Steps to the lesson:

Place the vocabulary words on the board.

Upstander and bystander are especially important to this lesson.

Ask the students what they Whisper about. The idea should be so no one will hear or that there is a secret to tell.- other answers are acceptable

At this point explain to the students that this book is about the Holocaust and people who helped the Jews. I suggest only answering questions about the holocaust to stay within the guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust to younger children.

Read aloud *The Whispering Town*. Your Read Aloud plan could include stopping points at the following points.

- **But the Whispering Voices Gave me Courage-** Why are they whispering? Why is Anett frightened?
- **“Here is extra,” he whispered, handing me a bulging bag-** Why did he do that? Why is he whispering?
- **“Mama tapped three ties on the cellar door to warn our friends to be quiet.”-** Why does Anette’s mom do this?
- **“Be careful.” she whispered back, handing me extra books.** - Why is she whispering? Why does the librarian give Annette extra books?
- **“No moon tonight,” he said. Maybe the clouds will clear tomorrow.-**What is important about the clouds and no moon.
- **“Wish them well, he whispered back, giving me extra eggs-** Why is he whispering? Why did the farmer give extra eggs?
- **“I haven’t heard any rumors,” I say, trying to stop my voice from shaking.-** How does Anette feel?
- **“Papa what if people stood in their doorways and used their voices to guide our friends to the boat? I suggested.-** Why does Anett suggest this? Why might this work? What might have to do with the book’s title?
- **“Remember me always, Anett”** Why might Carl say this? How might he feel?

After you finish the book, Discuss the following questions:

- **Why did the author name this book *The Whispering Town*?**
- **Who were the Upstanders in this town?**
- **How were Anette and other members of the town Upstanders? (What did they do?)**
- **How did this take Courage**
- **Who were the Perpetrators in this story?**
- **What were they doing in the story?**
- **Why were they asking about Rumors? What might they do with this information?**
- **Were there any Bystanders?**

5. Have students look at a map.



Link-<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/map/rescue-of-danish-jews-fall-1943>

Ask the following questions:

- Can you find the fishing village of Gilleleje on this map?
- Imagine what it must have been like to live as Anett lived, helping Danish Jews escape to Sweden.
- Can you locate other towns and villages in this map from which the Jews left to get to Sweden?
- Which point of departure for the Jews do you imagine was the most dangerous? Why?

6. On the board make a list of the Upstanders and their actions. (You could also let small groups make a list or allow for students to draw pictures of the actions.)

7. Taking this information, have each student create a cut out figure. This figure should have a coat. On the coat one can see the students place all the actions seen in the book. When the coat is opened students should write regarding the following:

In The Whispering Town, Anette found the courage to be an Upstander. This was not easy. I can stand up and do the following:

8. Have students present their figure. The student should name one thing he/she can do to be an upstander and show courage.

Extension to the lesson:

A taped copy of an outloud reading

<https://hmh.org/education/whispering-town-storytime>

Other resources:

Another lesson plan with a group of activities

[The Whispering Town eSource.pdf](#)- This has the map I attempted to replace above

[Using Picture Books with Older Readers: The Whispering Town \(Elvgren\) - Mrs. ReaderPants-](#)

This site has an excellent look at the pictures and their meaning.

Information about how the Danes saved the Jews of Denmark

<https://hmh.org/education/whispering-town-storytime>

[How Denmark saved its Jews during the Holocaust](#)

[Viking Oceans: Danish Heroes - Helping the Jews Flee Nazi Rule-](#) You may like this one the best.