

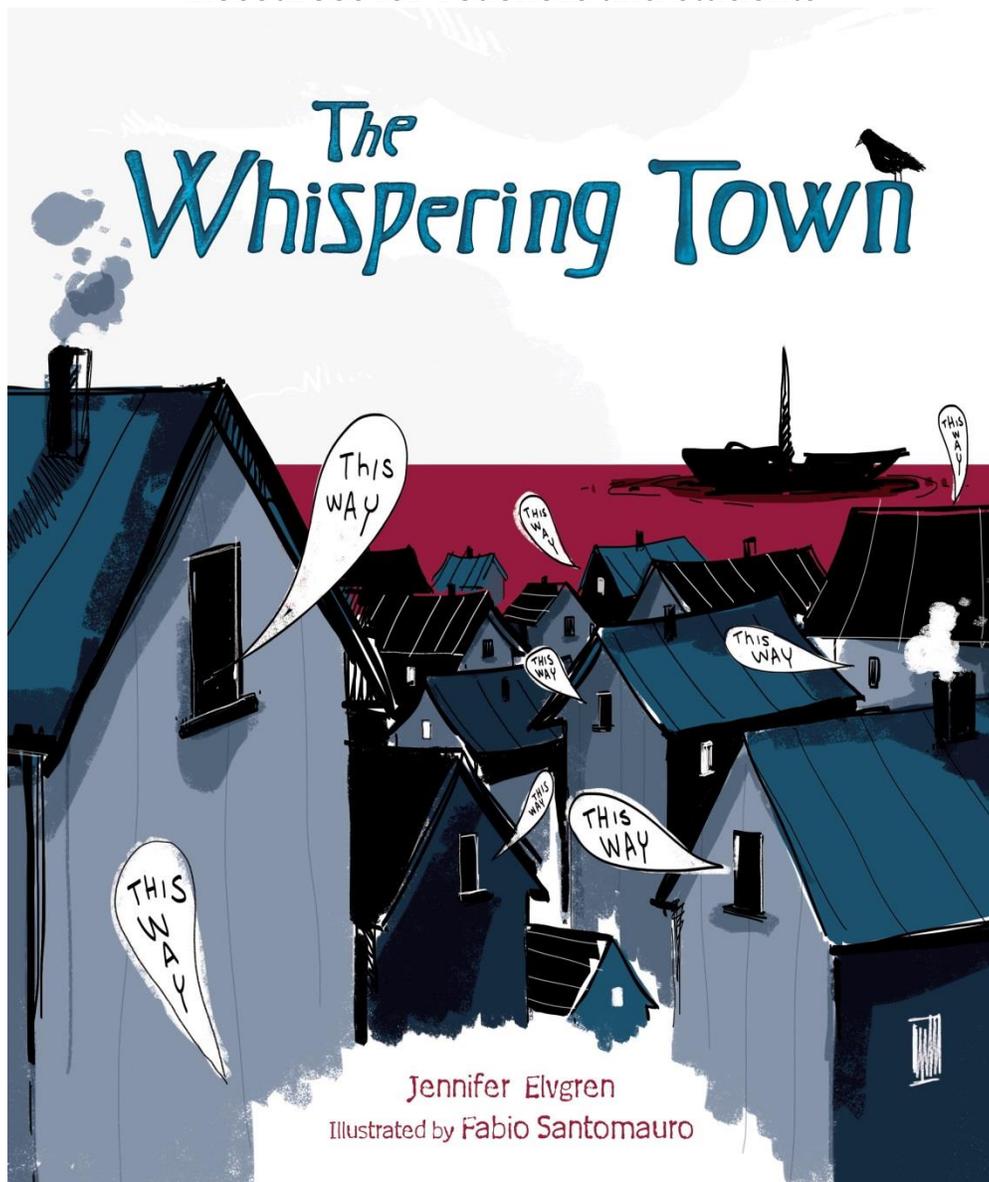
# KAR-BEN

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## eSource

Resources for Teachers and Students



Jennifer Elvgren

Illustrated by Fabio Santomauro

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eSource by **Natasha Heny, Ph.D**

# About the Book

## About the Author



A former print journalist, Jennifer finds her story ideas in real life, present and past. Her fiction has appeared in *Highlights for Children*, *Spider*, and *Ladybug* magazines. She is the author of *Josias, Hold the Book*: a Bank Street College of Education Best Children's Books of the Year selection. Jennifer lives in Albemarle County, Virginia, with her husband, three children, Caspian the Border collie, Copperfield the Foxhound, and Goodnight Moon the American Quarter Horse.

## About the Illustrator

Fabio Santomauro was born in Rome. He's been drawing since he was very young – he once ingested a whole inkpot so ink is literally in his blood! He would like to become an inventor or a detective, but loves working as an illustrator in the meantime. He studied animation cinema at Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, the national school for cinema in Italy. On sunny days he likes to stroll around the villas of Rome juggling with clubs.

# Summary and Context

In *The Whispering Town* it is 1943 in Nazi-occupied Denmark. Anett and her parents are hiding a Jewish woman and her son, Carl, in their cellar until a fishing boat can take them across the sound to safety in neutral Sweden. With the help of the baker, the librarian, the farmer, and her neighbors, Anett keeps Carl and his mother safe even as Nazi soldiers search her street for hidden Jews. With the Nazis closing in, and worried about Carl's safety, Anett thinks of a clever and unusual plan to get Carl and his mother safely to the harbor on a cloudy night without the moon to guide them.

## Based on a True Story

On a moonless night in 1943, in the small Danish fishing village of Gilleleje, the town's citizens stood in their doorways and whispered to their Danish neighbors directions to the harbor.

In 1943, the Nazis took over the Danish government; shortly after, they began to round up the approximately 8,000 Danish Jews and send them to concentration camps. The Danes, who viewed their Jewish neighbors as full Danish citizens, hid Jews in their homes, in warehouses, barns, hotels and churches. In secrecy, they secured boats to transport them across the sound to neutral Sweden. As a result, most of Denmark's Jews were saved.

**Common Core Standards addressed by the activities included in this guide include:  
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.1, 2.3, 2.7, 3.3, 3.4 and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.4**

## Before Reading Activities

### Possible Sentences:

Before opening *Whispering Town*, predict what the story will be about by studying the cover of the book and playing with some of the vocabulary you will find inside. Choose **two** of the words from the list below and write a sentence describing what you imagine might happen in the story. After reading *Whispering Town*, come back to your sentence and see how close your prediction was.

cellar  
cot  
Nazi  
rumor

harbor  
Danish Jew  
trembling  
alley

knotted  
cloudy  
shaking  
worried

*This is what I think will happen in The Whispering Town:*

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### Exploring Courage:

What does it mean to be courageous? Think about someone from history or your own life whom you admire for acting courageously. What did that person do that took courage? How would *you* have felt if you were in the same situation?

### Prior Knowledge:

*Whispering Town* is set in a small fishing village in Nazi-occupied Denmark in the middle of World War II. Fill out the chart to identify what you already know and what you would like to learn about this time period.

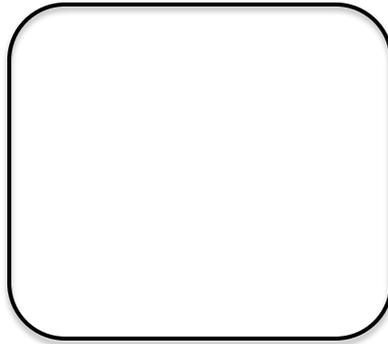
| I know... | I would like to know... |
|-----------|-------------------------|
|           |                         |

## After Reading Activities

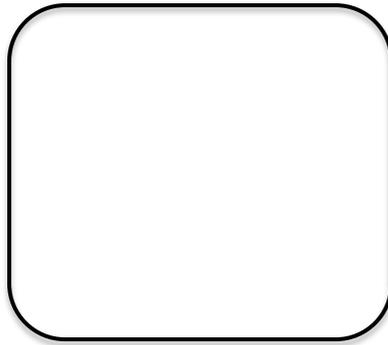
### Help from the Villagers

To help her friends hidden in a secret room in the cellar of her house, Anett visited the farmer, the librarian, and the baker. Each villager gave her something to bring back for her friends. Draw a picture to illustrate the gifts provided.

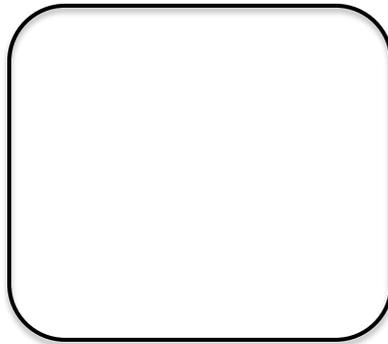
**Farmer**



**Librarian**



**Baker**



### Brave Anett

Anett's papa calls her "Brave Anett!" after he discovers the Nazi soldiers had been to their house. Why does he call her that? Can you find any words the author uses to show that Anett was frightened when the soldiers came to her home?

## A Clever Plan

Anett had a clever plan for guiding Carl and his mama through the moonless night to a boat in the harbor so they could escape to the safety of Sweden. Can you put the events of that dangerous evening into order?

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 1) _____ | a. The villager's stood in their doorways whispering, "This way."  |
| 2) _____ | b. Anett told her father of her plan to help guide their Jewish friends to the harbor.                                 |
| 3) _____ | c. Anett remembered how the whispering voices of Carl and his family guided her down the dark cellar stairs.           |
| 4) _____ | d. Carl and his mama followed the whispering voices until they reached the safety of the boat.                         |
| 5) _____ | e. Anett asked the baker, librarian, and the farmer to help her spread the word about her plan to the other villagers. |
| 6) _____ | f. Carl and his mama left the cellar   |

## Exploring a Symbol

One morning when Anett brings Carl and his mama breakfast, a heart-shaped stone falls to the floor. Carl tells Anett, "I found this with my papa the last time we walked on the beach." At the end of the story, just before Carl leaves Anett and her family, Carl gives her the stone and says, "Remember me always, Anett." Why do you think Carl had the stone with him while he was in the cellar? Why do you think he gave Anett the stone as he left?

## Synthesis: The Danish Resistance

The author's note at the end of *Whispering Town* explains that the historical context of Anett's courageous act is the Nazi occupation of Denmark. Look up the definition of "resistance;" using the information from the author's note, briefly explain what you think the Danish resistance was. Do you think that Anett and her village were a part of the Danish resistance? Why or why not?

## Map Activities



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?

## Extension: Denmark in the Holocaust

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum has many resources for students who are interested in learning more about the Holocaust. If you found that after reading *Whispering Town* you wanted to know more about the Danish resistance, read “Rescue in Denmark” found on the Holocaust Museum Memorial Museum site, currently at this link: <http://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007740>. Can you find the answers to the following questions?

1. What made Denmark different from other Nazi-occupied countries during World War II?

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2. How did the Danes find out that the Nazis were going to deport the Danish Jews?

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What else did you learn that you found interesting in this article?

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