

Discussion Guide for The Boy Who Dared

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About the Book

Just as the Nazis are rising to power, Helmuth Hübener, a German schoolboy, is caught up in all the swashbuckling bravado of his time. The handsome storm-trooper uniforms, the shiny jackboots and armbands, the rousing patriotism — all serve to draw him into this bright new world full of promise and hope.

In the beginning, Helmuth's patriotism is unwavering. But every day the rights of people all over Germany are diminishing. Jews are threatened and their businesses are being destroyed, the truth has been censored, and danger lurks everywhere. Anybody can turn on you. The world has turned upside down: Patriotism means denouncing others, love means to hate, and speaking out means treason. Silence becomes everyone's guilty secret. How much longer can Helmuth keep silent?

Told in flashback with breathtaking suspense, Newbery Honor Book author Susan Campbell Bartoletti magnificently explores the life of a heroic German youth who dared to stand up against the Nazis.

About the Author

Susan Campbell Bartoletti encountered Helmuth Hübener's amazing story while writing *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*. She was so moved by his heroic actions that she wanted to flesh out his story into a fictional form. She also wanted to provide a dramatic meditation on the meaning of his short life that raises questions about moral courage, nationalism, and individual responsibility.

Ms. Bartoletti is the author of many award-winning books for young people, including *Black Potatoes: the Story of the Great Irish Famine* and *Growing Up in Coal Country*. She lives near Scranton, Pennsylvania, with her husband. They have two grown children.

Also by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow

- A Newbery Honor Book
- A Sibert Honor Book
- An Orbis Pictus Award Honor Book
- A Sydney Taylor Notable Book
- Parents' Gold Choice Award
- IRA Notable Book for a Global Society
- CBC/NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People

A word about this author guide: When speaking in schools to students, I am often asked, "Where do you get your ideas?" And, "How do you write a story?" I wrote this guide to provide additional teaching materials to connect the story with history and the political climate of the times. But I also wanted to share a bit of my writing process to inform budding new writers -- and to help readers of all levels maximize their reading experience.

For more information about me and my work, you can [look at my website](#).

Setting

For me, a story begins with setting. Setting reveals a great deal about my characters: for instance, it determines how they look, dress, act, and even how they talk. When I begin a book, I need to know at least two dimensions of setting -- where and when the story takes place.

But wait! Did you notice I said *two dimensions*? Are you wondering how many dimensions there are in story setting? According to Stephen Hawking, author of *A Brief History of Time*, there are four. (In his book, he explains story time in terms of the four coordinates of an event.)

The four dimensions of story time, or setting are:

1. When the story takes place.
2. Where the story takes place.
3. How much time the story covers from beginning to end.
4. Level or degree of conflict in which the story's struggle occurs. This dimension will be explained a bit more thoroughly below.

Using the first two dimensions, I will show you how my story was created.

Understanding the Third Reich

In order to write *The Boy Who Dared*, I had to understand a great deal about the time period during which the story takes place - those terrible twelve years known as the Third Reich. I found it helpful to understand the following historical terms and people (listed below). How did I learn about them? I looked them up. I read. I researched.

If you look at the bibliography in *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, you will see the sources of my exhaustive research. I read each and every one of those books - and took copious notes. But you should be able to do some pretty good research with a dictionary, an encyclopedia, and perhaps a Web site or two.

Below you will see a list of basic vocabulary and terms to know. It might help readers to look up unfamiliar vocabulary and terms, in order to have a better understanding of the story. Readers will find that a dictionary will offer definitions of some basic terms, such as *boycott* and *warmonger*. Other terms can be defined or identified using the Internet or select print sources.

I found the following websites helpful:

[United States Holocaust Memorial](#)

"The Hitler Youth: Complete History in Five Chapters"

An excellent print source is Christian Zentner and Freidemann Bedürftig's *Encyclopedia of the Third Reich*. Vol. I-II. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1991.

And for those teachers who like to build classroom libraries, I recommend Barbara Rogasky's book, *Smoke and Ashes* (Holiday House); Jim Giblin's *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler* (Clarion 2003); and my own *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* (Scholastic 2005).

Vocabulary and Terms to Know

boycott

warmonger

Great War

Brownshirt

Karl May

Communists (see below)

Nazis

chancellor

Adolf Hitler

Treaty of Versailles

Storm Trooper (SA)

Fatherland

Weimar Republic

Star of David

SS

Extraordinary Radio Law

Paul von Hindenburg

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Heinrich Mann

Hitler Youth

U-boat

propaganda

blitzkrieg

defeatist

black market

Heinrich Mann

ration

plutocracy

idealism

denounce

underground

inflation

swastika

doctrine

dissent

inflammatory

incite

German Words to Know

It took me a good two years to research *Hitler Youth*. And while I do not speak German, as I researched, I managed to learn enough words to work my way through the German archives and to loosely translate. For publication purposes, I worked with several wonderful translators.

Most of the following German words and terms in this novel are defined within the text. Look for textual clues to define the following words. You can find German pronunciation guides on the Internet. Please note that the page numbers are from the hardcover version of this novel.

Here is a basic pronunciation guide. (Note: Much of German is pronounced the same as English, but there are some German sounds that are different. Some require you to form your mouth in ways unfamiliar to English.)

CH -- This sound is made by placing your mouth in position to pronounce the letter "Y" and whispering the word "he". (Depending on which region you are from, this can also be pronounced in a more guttural way - by making the sound you make when clearing your throat as though there is a popcorn kernel caught there.)

For the ü sound, form your lips as though you are going to whistle and then say a long e sound

F=V

V=F

S=Z

Sch=Sh

Z=TS

J=Y

Pf= pf

R- the letter R is often rolled

Final E is pronounced "eh"

When two vowels are together, pronounce the second one. (I always remind myself that the second vowel does the talking.)

Oma- OH-mah (9)

Opa (9)OH-pa

Guten Tag (12) GOO-t'n TAHG

Reich (12) Rych (rhymes with Pie)

Heil (12) Hile (rhymes with Kyle)

Jungvolk (13) YOONG-fohlk

Judenfrei (13) YOOD'N-fry

Mutti (4) MOO-tee

kuchen (18) KOO-chen)

Bitte (18) BI-teh (short i)

Ach, nay (18) ACH, nay)

Nein (18) NINE

verboten (18) FER-bow-ten

Reichspost (19) Rychs-pohst

Herr (28) HAIR

pfennig (30) PFEH-nig

Juden Laden (31) YOO-d'n LAH-d'n

Rottenführer (39) RAH-ten-fyeh-rer

Volksempfänger (39) FOLK-sem-pung-air

Lebensraum (40) LAY-b'n-zrahwm

Oberbau (41) O-ber-bow

Ach, ja (52) ACH

Kameradschaft (53) KAH-mair-rahd-shahft

HJ-Streifendienst (56) SHTRY-f'n-deenst

Gestapo (56) GEH-shtah-po

Luftwaffe (83) LOOFT-vaff-eh

Schutzhaftgefangener (100) SHUTZ-haft-geh-fahng'n-ner

Geist und Tat (108) GYST UNT TAHT

Achtung (114) ACH-toong

Characters in the Novel

After I know my story's setting, I need a cast of characters. As I write and get to know each one, I ask myself: What does this character want or fear more than anything? That helps me to develop the character's storyline. I call this *character motivation*.

As you think about each of the characters listed below, ask yourself that question. Remember that what a character wants more than anything may change or evolve as the story progresses.

Below is a list of characters from the book. From this list, choose a character and create an acrostic poem out of their name. Try to choose words that reflect what he or she wants or fears.

Choose one character from the list below and follow their development through the book. How do they change from beginning to end? What are their flaws? What are their strengths? How do their characters dictate or influence the action in the story?

Helmuth (Guddat) Hübener

Gerhard Kunkel

Hans Kunkel

Mutti (Emma)

Oma

Opa

Hugo Hübener

Karl-Heinz Schnibbe

Rudi Wobbe

Heinrich Worbs

Gerhard Düwer

Heinrich Mohns

Werner Kranz

Plot

Books are built with chapters. Chapters are built out of scenes. Scenes are built from events.

In order to have a scene, something - an event - must happen. It might be something physical. It might be something emotional. It might be something out of the character's control. But some event - some change - must take place. (This is what creates story tension and makes a reader want to turn the page.)

A plot contains several pivotal or key scenes - major scenes in which a character faces a choice that causes the scene to pivot or turn in some way. In a pivotal scene, the character makes a decision that alters the direction of the story. The most effective pivotal scenes portray decisions that grow out of a character's personal value system, not out of a plotting necessity.

(If you want to learn more about creating pivotal scenes, I recommend Syd Field's *Screenplay* and Robert McKee's *Story*.)

Writers are often told to begin a story at the moment that's different from the one before. This is called an *inciting incident*, a scene incident that propels the action of the story. (This scene is also the fourth dimension of setting mentioned above: the story's position in the level or degree of conflict.)

A writer must make choices. For example, I could have begun this book at the moment that Helmuth's half-brother Gerhard comes home with the shortwave radio. I tried that. It didn't work. Beginning the story at that moment didn't help me understand how Helmuth became the sort of teenager who would resist the Nazis. It didn't help me understand his family and the circumstances that helped shape him.

Using Reader's Theater to Dramatize Pivotal Scenes

The following scenes reflect Helmuth's growth throughout the story. Reader's Theater can be an effective way to present literature in a dramatic form within the classroom. It requires no stage sets, costumes, or props. All you need is a student to act as a narrator and student(s) to perform the character roles.

You can learn more about Reader's Theater at the following sites:

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/instructor/readers theater.htm>

<http://literacyconnections.com/ReadersTheater.php>

Below you will find suggestions for scenes that lend themselves well to Reader's Theater. After a dramatization, ask your students: What value is at stake? What is Helmuth's truth? What choice does Helmuth face? What are his options? What does he choose? You may wish to ask students to quick-write their responses.

(Please note that the pages numbers are from the hardcover copy of *The Boy Who Dared*. Paperback page numbers will differ.)

Helmuth's silence:

Pages 34-37. Helmuth worries that the Nazis might ban his favorite books.

Pages 45-50. In order to get a good grade, Helmuth must write an essay that will meet his teacher's approval.

Helmuth begins to speak out:

Pages 79-81. It's Mutti's wedding day. Helmuth doesn't want to spoil her day, but when Hugo makes a remark about defeatists, Helmuth can't stay quiet.

Pages 84-86. A Hitler Youth patrol criticizes Helmuth for singing an American song. Helmuth defends his right to sing.

Pages 90-94. Gerhard comes home and brings an illegal shortwave radio. Helmuth and Gerhard argue about the war. Helmuth is tempted by the radio.

Pages 109-110. Helmuth has been reading forbidden books. He shares his reading with Rudi.

Helmuth acts:

Pages 117-121. Helmuth and Karl listen to an illegal BBC London broadcast.

Pages 122-127. Helmuth, Karl, and Rudi make a pact.

Pages 131-134. Helmuth recognizes Brother Worbs on the street and discovers what the Nazis did to him.

Pages 142-145. The Gestapo interrogate Helmuth.

Pages 160-163. Helmuth stands up to the judges.

Understanding Propaganda

Propaganda is the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person. Propaganda can also be ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause.

During the years of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler appointed Joseph Goebbels as Minister of Propaganda. It was Goebbels's job to spread ideas, information, and even rumors for the purpose of helping the Nazi cause. Goebbels achieved this in many ways, including in the education of young people. (You can learn more about the Nazis' system of education in my book, *Hitler Youth*, Chapter Three.)

Helmuth experiences Nazi propaganda. One important example is the scene on pages 27-30, in which his teacher Herr Zeiger rants to the class that the Jews are trying to bring about Germany's downfall. Herr Zeiger uses bits and pieces of fact in order to spread rumors about the Jews.

In this scene, there's more than meets the eye. On the surface - the textual level or the literal work of the words and sentences - the scene says one thing. But the subtext - the meaning beneath the text, or the meaning that comes from reading between the lines, - says another thing.

For instance, in this scene, Herr Zeiger says that the Jews want to bring about the downfall of Germany.

As your students read this scene, ask them what is Herr Zeiger's true purpose? What does he want to achieve? Why does he (and the Nazis) want to make people fear the Jews and make them suspicious of Jews? How do the Nazis use Jews as a scapegoat? How does Herr Zeiger appeal to the students' emotions?

Missing Scenes

What's left out is as important — or more important — than what's included. For example, on page 148 Helmuth is transported to Berlin with Karl, Rudi, and Gerhard Düwer. Although they are not allowed to speak to one another, much is said through their eyes and facial expressions. Ask your students: What might the boys have said to one another? What do you think Helmuth would have wanted to say to each of them? Write your own scene.

Music and Rhythm

The Nazis were masters of mass psychology, but they weren't the first to exploit the power of music. For centuries, armies have long recognized the power of drumming to replicate the human heartbeat. Drumming can put marching soldiers into a trance-like state. It can increase the heart rate and blood flow, and thus prepare soldiers physiologically for battle.

Introduce students listen to marching songs and discuss their effect. You may want to discuss the following with your students:

Page 21. "They stir his blood, call him to duty, make his legs long to run away from the table, away from the radio, and run down to the inner city to join the marchers."

Page 98. "Helmuth hates the drums, hates how they quicken his blood, how they belie his true feelings and try to convince him that war is good."

Music plays a part in my writing, too.

The poet Ruth Stone once said that if she cannot find the music of what she wants to say, the poem won't come.

When I write, I, too, must find the music. I try to capture the breath of the story - the cadence, the rhythm of the narration and of each character's voice. Every character has his or her own personal rhythm and personal style of speaking. I try to capture these in my writing.

Often I listen to music as I write. I play a CD over and over. During the writing and researching of this book, I listened to Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, or *German Requiem*. A requiem is a mass to honor the dead, but Brahms wrote this masterpiece as a "mass for humanity." He intended for it to give comfort to the living.

The *German Requiem* opens with the line "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted." It ends with the lines: "Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord, from henceforth. Yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." I thought Brahms's *German Requiem* fit Helmuth, and it inspired me during the writing of Helmuth's story.

You can read more about the *German Requiem* and even listen to it here:

[http://www.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Ein_deutsches_Requiem,_Op._45_\(Johannes_Brahms\)](http://www.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Ein_deutsches_Requiem,_Op._45_(Johannes_Brahms))

Have your students listen to the music of the Requiem. Have them discuss how the music makes them feel. What does it make them think of? How does this music connect to Helmuth and his story?

The Legacy of World War II

World War II lasted six years and involved more than 56 nations. It left 53 million people dead. This number includes soldiers, mostly young men in their late teens and early twenties; civilians like Helmuth's mother and grandparents; and 11 million Holocaust victims. Millions more were crippled physically. Others suffered emotionally from combat experiences, whether as soldiers on the front lines or as survivors in bombed-out cities. The war's toll on humanity was staggering.

What caused such a war? What forces were at work? How was something so cataclysmic able to overcome the world?

There is no one reason for World War II, although most historians point to the harsh terms imposed upon Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. These terms created a climate of despair and caused many Germans to look toward a leader who promised to build a greater Germany and to end unemployment, inflation, and poverty. That leader was Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nazi party.

A War Over Ideology

Historian Stephen Ambrose tells us that World War II was fought over political ideology or belief. The three main contenders, he says, were Fascism, Communism, and Democracy.

Fascism. The philosophy of fascism holds that the state is the supreme unit and that the individual is subordinate to the interest of the state, the party, or society as a whole. The individual has no rights that the state is bound to respect. An individual's freedom, property, and even life are privileges that the state can take away if the welfare of the state requires it. For example, consider the way that the Nazi government took away the freedoms of the German people - and even Helmuth's life, when the court decided that the state needed to be protected from an individual like Helmuth.

Fascism is often considered a totalitarian state. In a totalitarian state, a dictator or dictatorial caucus controls the public and private lives and actions of every individual and every enterprise. Both fascist and totalitarian states often rely on brutal force, but a totalitarian state uses terror to alter and subdue the population. For example, the Gestapo used fear to subdue the German people, and the Nazi concentration camps were an attempt to alter the population by eliminating Jews and other "undesirable" peoples.

What countries in the world today are under fascist rule?

Communism. Communism is marked by a one-party dictatorship in which the state owns all factories, mines, railways, banks, and farms. In theory, it's the vanguard of the working class. In the aftermath of World War I, many working-class Germans saw hope in the promises of communism as a way to end inflation, unemployment, and poverty.

What countries in the world today are under communist rule?

Democracy. Democracy describes a government in which the supreme political authority rests with the

people, usually through elected representatives. In the United States, this is called a representative democracy. The government's power is shared three ways: the executive, legislature, and judicial branches. The three-branch system is intended to prevent any one branch - or any one person -- from gaining too much power.

The United States president takes an oath to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States." Preserving democracy is the president's most important job of the president's term in office. The United States Constitution sets out the principles, structures, and processes of the American government. It is also the body of laws that guarantees the basic rights and freedoms of the American people. It is important for American citizens to always be vigilant that our freedom is preserved.

Germany today. Today, the Federal Republic of Germany is a thriving democracy with a federation of sixteen states. The first nineteen articles of its constitution — its Basic Law -- guarantee the inalienable rights of every German citizen. These rights include, among others, the protection of human dignity; freedom of faith, expression, assembly, association, and movement; parental rights; privacy; and the sanctity of the home. All Germans have the right to resist any person seeking to abolish the constitutional order, should no other remedy be possible. Article 102 of Germany's Basic Law, reads, simply: "The death penalty is abolished."

- Part of Collection:

[The Holocaust: A Collection of Teaching Resources](#) , [Reader's Theater](#)

- Subjects:

Adolescent Issues, Main Idea and Details, Independent Reading, Literature, Cause and Effect, Compare and Contrast, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, Plot, Character, Setting, Story Elements, Summarizing, Reading Response, Literature Appreciation, Research Skills, Vocabulary, Word Origins and Usage, Literary Response, Writing Prompts, German, Equality, Fairness, Justice, Historic Figures, Human Rights, Social Studies through Literature, World War II, Holocaust, World War II Aftermath to Today, Music, Loyalty, Patriotism, Tolerance and Acceptance, Prejudice and Tolerance Experiences, Understanding Self and Others, Educational Technology

- Skills:

Development of Reading Comprehension, Literary Elements, Cause and Effect, Compare and Contrast, Drawing Conclusions, Fact and Opinion, Identifying Author's Purpose, Main Idea and Details, Making Inferences, Plot, Character and Setting, Point of View, Problem and Solution, Sequence of Events, Summarizing, Theme, Public Speaking, Research Skills, Vocabulary, Word Origins and Usage, Expository Writing