

The Boy Who Dared Study Guide

The Boy Who Dared by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

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Contents

The Boy Who Dared Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
1942 "Present Day": Page 3 & Third Reich Time Line.....	4
Memories of 1928-1932: Pages 3-11.....	6
Memories of 1933-1938: Pages 11- 40.....	10
Memories of 1938-1939: Pages 40-81.....	17
Memories of 1940: Pages 81-90.....	22
Memories of 1941: Pages 90-137.....	24
Memories of 1942: Pages 137-154.....	28
Memories of 1942 & Author's Note: Pages 154-174.....	30
Characters.....	33
Symbols and Symbolism.....	36
Settings.....	39
Themes and Motifs.....	40
Styles.....	45
Quotes.....	47



Plot Summary

The Boy Who Dared is a fictional account of a real-life story. Based upon the inspiring yet tragic life of Helmuth Hubener, the story accounts the bravery and cunning of one boy against the unfathomable oppression of the Nazi regime during World War II. As Hitler rises to power, Helmuth's life is dramatically altered and his community changed forever. While some remain silent, Helmuth battles his inner convictions to find his voice and fight while avoiding arrest. His story is truly an inspiration for youths similarly struggling against tyranny and injustice, even today.

The story begins with Helmuth facing execution in Plotzensee prison in 1942. Through a series of flashbacks, he evaluates his life and what led him to his current situation. Awaiting execution at any time, he has spent almost a year in the prison, listening to others led to their deaths at the guillotine. Throughout the recollections of his life, there are flash-forwards to his final day in prison before being executed.

The first flashback takes us back to when Helmuth Hubener is just three-years-old. Germany is still reeling from the effects of World War I. As punishment for their involvement, the Treaty of Versailles imposes strict reparations, to the detriment of their labor force, food supplies and most notably, their status within the European community. Once a powerful country, they are reduced to a lackluster shadow of their former glory. Hitler seizes upon the opportunity to offer the Germans a chance to redeem themselves. In reclaiming their wealth and sense of national pride, the rest of the world will be forced to take notice. Helmuth's first recollections in the book are of a parade to celebrate the re-emergence of Germany as a united nation. He is overcome with the pageantry and pride of the event, sparking his interest in serving the Fatherland and making his citizens proud as a "good German".

By the time Helmuth reaches middle-school, the lines between the government and every day life have blurred. Lessons revolve around Nazi ideals and individual sacrifice for the greater cause of Hitler's objectives. Being a dedicated and pure German is held as a high ideal. More and more, Helmuth discovers that Hitler uses the ideals of the Fatherland to further his own personal agenda of world domination. Hitler finds scapegoats for the woes of the Germans - first the Communists, then the Jews and eventually all the Allies. Constantly on the attack, he uses paranoia to pit neighbor against neighbor, asking all to constantly prove their devotion to his cause.

As a teenager, Helmuth finally rebels by seeking forbidden radio broadcasts from beyond the German borders. When he learns the truth of German losses and war atrocities, he cannot be a silent follower any longer. He organizes a group of friends to join him in distributing anti-Nazi literature throughout Hamburg. As he plans to expand distribution and seeks help from a French-speaking co-worker, he is arrested by the Gestapo for treason. To help reduce the sentences of his friends and accomplices, Helmuth assumes full blame for the treasonous acts and is sentenced to death. His friends receive severe sentences, but their lives are spared.



1942 “Present Day”: Page 3 & Third Reich Time Line

Summary

The Boy Who Dared, by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, is a unique work of fiction in that it occurs in the past, present and even future. This first chapter sets the tone and circumstances of the story-telling. The third-person narrative begins in the present day of 1942, twenty-four years after the end of The Great War, or World War I. It is also three years after World War II began, when Germany invaded Poland in 1939.

In October of 1942, it is day 264 of Helmuth Hubener's imprisonment within Plotzensee prison in Berlin, Germany. The sparse and humble prison environment features only a small stool, scrawny table and a wooden-planked bed with no mattress. The only other object in the room is a shivering and trembling Helmuth, who realizes it is Tuesday ... and the prison's executioner works on Tuesdays.

Bartoletti's book contains more than a fictional account of the last day and lifetime recollections of Helmuth Hubener. At the back of the book, there are historical photographs of some of the main characters: Helmuth and his family, Rudi, Karl. There is also a picture of Helmuth's actual execution announcement. However, one of the most powerful tools to understand the complexity of the time in which this story takes place is the Third Reich Time Line, included by Ms. Bartoletti. Throughout the rest of the novel, Helmuth tries to make sense of his German, post-World War I society and what motivates his people to support Hitler - or even allow him to come to power in the first place. The timeline is an excellent reference to compare back to as events unfold in Helmuth's story.

Analysis

This first scene not only establishes the setting for the storytelling (Helmuth's cell), but also begs many questions. By now, it is known that Helmuth is a youth. He is also a youth in a very adult situation, within a sparse and cold cell awaiting execution. It is this very kind of setting that prompts Helmuth to contemplate how he got there, the meaning of his actions, and those he considers most important in his life. As modern readers, we also defiantly ask these very same questions.

What circumstances could have created this situation? By today's standards, even a most heinous youth crime would never permit such seemingly abhorrent treatment. The question of execution is also something that seems incredible - almost uncivilized. The scene is perfectly set for readers to discover exactly what kind of incredibly heinous act could elicit the Nazis at that time to pursue such an unfathomable punishment.



Consider some of the back story - even at this very early juncture of the story. It is 1942 and a very tense time within the already stressed German "empire". Referring to the Third Reich Timeline at the back of Bartoletti's book, the German Nazis are formulating plans for the "final solution for the Jewish problem". Around the same time, Hitler has declared war on the United States, and his armies are laying siege to Moscow. The latter bold act is a direct violation of the "German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of 1939" and demonstrates Hitler's fervent boldness as his God-like fame and "just" war efforts gain rightful momentum in his own mind. Hitler is cleaning house while making incredibly aggressive maneuvers to dominate in a final, delusional showcase of pure oppression. Perhaps it is not so incredible to believe that a young boy of seventeen could be a casualty of the same madness and desire for complete control of countries, cultures, and even individual freedoms.

Discussion Question 1

What is the value of the Third Reich Time Line provided by the author at the end of the book?

Discussion Question 2

What do you know of war-related crime and punishment during German history at this time? What kinds of crimes do you think would warrant a youth to be held accountable in this manner? How do you think crime assessment and potential punishment is different in modern times?

Discussion Question 3

It is Day 264 of Helmuth Hubener's incarceration. If you were Helmuth, what would be your own state of mind? Would you have mentally lasted this long? What would you do to survive - aside from recollect events, as Helmuth does?

Vocabulary

heinous, elicit, unfathomable, fervent, delusional, oppression, casualty



Memories of 1928-1932: Pages 3-11

Summary

Helmuth recounts many early, character-shaping memories during these first episodes of his life which serve to shape his evolving thoughts throughout the novel. This also begins the first flashback of the story, which takes readers back to 1928, and perhaps one of Helmuth's earliest memories. As he sits and shivers within the cell walls of Plotzensee prison in Berlin, Germany, Helmuth remembers himself as a young boy, aged just three-years-old.

Helmuth and his mother, Mutti (Emma), walk up Luisenweg, the Hammerbrook street in their hometown of Hamburg, Germany. It is there that they live in a small flat next to his grandparents, Oma and Opa. Just up ahead of them are Helmuth's two half-brothers, Gerhard (age 7) and Hans (age 8). Helmuth strains to pull away from his mother, who is firmly holding his hand. Mutti pulls him back, saying she doesn't want to lose him. Helmuth internally resents the fact that his older brothers are given more freedom than he is. He soon sees a parade and large crowd up ahead, obviously the reason for his mother's protectiveness.

Helmuth and his mother's walk is interrupted by some "brown-shirted men wearing red-and-black armbands and tall, black, shiny boots". They are soldiers. One of the men tells Helmuth he is a big boy and immediately asks if the youngster wants to be a soldier to serve the Fatherland (Germany). Helmuth excitedly remembers how he loves to play with toy soldiers and answers a resounding YES. Pleased, the soldier compliments Mutti on what an intelligent-looking boy he is. Mutti boasts of his bravery.

The flashback abruptly ends, and Helmuth is again in his 1942 prison cell. The loud, morning bell rings, he rises for the day and sits on a stool to wait.

Almost immediately, Helmuth has another flashback. This time, he jumps ahead from 1928 to 1932. He is five-years-old and in a comfortable, familial situation he remembers fondly throughout the book. Sandwiched between his two brothers in their bed, he listens to Mutti's and his grandparents' nighttime rituals. Through the wall, he hears Opa's gramophone, while Mutti slides open and closes worn, wooden drawers. It is revealed that the grandparents live in the next flat over to help watch the boys while Mutti works overnight shifts as a nurse.

Helmuth revels in the comfort of being between his older brothers in bed. Gerhard, the more approachable brother, answers Helmuth's questions about Heaven. The younger boy asks about its boundaries and the meaning of infinity. Helmuth claims he feels like he's floating when he thinks about the limitless boundaries of infinity. Gerhard stops responding to Helmuth's thoughts, and the two fall asleep alongside Hans.



Flash-forward to another memory: It is after school and Helmuth is playing with his toy soldiers in his grandparents' flat. His French and German soldiers, representing fighting on the Western front during World War I, are lined up in two straight lines. Gerhard comments that unless the German toy soldiers circle the French, they will lose. Helmuth is angered that Gerhard always knows best but adjusts the soldiers and plays on while his brother settles into a Karl May adventure novel. Opa enters and compliments Helmuth's soldiers' formation. He laments that the Germans should have won the war. Opa opens a newspaper and comments on the news. His free-thinking political opinions are strong, calling Hitler a lunatic and warning that if he comes to power there will be war. Oma enters and says that Hitler scares her, citing his "crazy eyes" and ability to bring a crowd to hysteria. Helmuth doesn't understand their fear. It is his belief that Hitler wants to fight for Germany to make it better. He silently vows that he would fight if given the opportunity in the future.

The flashback ends, and Helmuth is again in his 1942 prison cell. He hears footsteps coming to his door and fears it could be his execution day. He states that no one knows their execution day until that day. He knows that letters requesting clemency have been submitted on his behalf, but the results are unknown. At his door this morning, it is just a man delivering his morning meal of stale bread. The lackluster food makes him think of Mutti's breakfasts. Mutti couldn't typically afford more than turnips, potatoes and cabbage for supper, but they never experienced hunger. Helmuth remembers most of Germany in an economic depression. Hitler promised to make everything better - work and bread were his platform. And when he was appointed chancellor, everyone celebrated. Mutti celebrated by making fresh rye bread, sausage and onions.

Analysis

A dominant theme surfaces very early in the novel that carries throughout the rest of the work. Helmuth is an unusually strong and cunning child, certainly mature behind his seven years. It's important to note that the author, Susan Campbell Bartoletti, created *The Boy Who Dared* by interviewing Helmuth's childhood friends, family and even teachers. The depiction of Helmuth as a precocious child seems entirely accurate, especially given the bold acts he commits later on. However, she admits that the account is presented given the best information she had available through these interviews and eyewitness accounts.

Helmuth is recognized as a standout as early as 3-years-old. His identification as an outstanding specimen by the German soldiers at the parade is based solely on his exterior presentation. Mutti seems to revel in his presence, and it's later (and often) stated that Helmuth appears to be her favorite child. Helmuth both admires and resents his older brothers, who seem to have more freedom than he does. Even as a toddler, his internal desires want to seize any opportunity to exercise his individual freedoms, while on the outside, he seems to play along with whatever societal masquerade plays out. In this case, the complimenting soldier who represents order and reform mistakenly identifies Helmuth's outward conformity while disregarding his more powerful internal spirit.



Mutti's situation is reflective of Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. A single mother, she works evenings to support her three sons with whatever help she can get from Oma and Opa. Although the family doesn't starve, food is hard to come by and work opportunity is even harder to find. It's critical to understand German society at this time, as it directly affects Helmuth's environment, and acts to instigate future behaviors from the main characters. Referring back to the Third Reich Timeline at the back of the book, it is widely believed that the harsh Treaty of Versailles created many of the economic conditions at this time. Signed in 1919 at the end of The Great War, Germany was faced with tough economic sanctions and bore the brunt of punishment. Germany was also not allowed to re-militarize the Rhineland, however Hitler eventually violated this decree. By 1925, Hitler began to rebuild the Nazi party, and just a year later, the Hitlerjugend (Hitler Youth) was formed. Hitler rode the tide of swelling nationalism by stoking the embers of disdain for other nations who wished to hold Germany back from returning to its former glory.

Helmuth struggles to keep up with his brothers in this scene, representing his desire to perhaps be recognized as older than he is. His desire to break free from the comfort of Mutti's side demonstrates his innate fearlessness and independence, even in the chaotic parade setting - symbolic of the growing chaos within Germany, itself. Mutti's boasting to the soldier perhaps offers Helmuth the reassurance that he can be strong and bold still within the confines of the rigid, military arms of the Nazi establishment.

Helmuth's memory of sleeping beside his brothers is one of his fondest - and recurs often in the novel. The sensation of floating even within the limitless space of infinity is freeing and exhilarating to him - while others may react with fear. Even his strong brother, Gerhard, deems him "ridiculous". This represents Helmuth's desire and seeming ability to move beyond boundaries if the desire suits him - and the boldness in which he may pursue actions of ideas beyond the norm.

Almost immediately, Helmuth has another flashback. This time, he jumps ahead from 1928 to 1932. He is five-years-old and in a comfortable, familial situation he remembers fondly throughout the book. Sandwiched between his two brothers in their bed, he listens to Mutti's and his grandparents' nighttime rituals. Through the wall, he hears Opa's gramophone, while Mutti slides open and closes worn, wooden drawers. It is revealed that the grandparents live in the next flat over to help watch the boys while Mutti works overnight shifts as a nurse. Gerhard is clearly defined as practical and anchored in the world. So, his explanations are matter-of-fact with little room for imagination. Here, Hans is established as almost a ghost character, who rarely seems to interact with Helmuth, perhaps due to the greater age difference.

In the toy soldier scene, Helmuth reacts rather strongly to Gerhard's correction of his toy formation. Here, it is Gerhard who thinks out of the box to present a stronger outcome. Helmuth almost seems to resent his brother for always knowing better than he. The truth may be that Helmuth is angrier at himself for not considering the option. His grandfather's open scorn of the Nazi party may seem quite surprising. This is the first time in the novel that open opposition to Hitler and the Nazi party is voiced. Yet, it



establishes not only that there may be even more popular opposition to the party, but also that Helmuth is exposed to many sides of the current political debates.

The introduction of the American Karl May adventure novel is important here. Perhaps Gerhard is not as close-minded and unimaginative as Helmuth believes. Later on, Helmuth also develops a love of this novel series, and it causes him more harm than good. The foreign novel represents a glimpse of the opportunity, culture and possibilities beyond Germany's borders.

As the novel takes readers back to Helmuth's 1942 prison cell, he is now more awake. Helmuth reminisces more about the creature-comforts of home. The memories start to flow, as the years and events unfold even faster.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the historical accuracy of *The Boy Who Dared*. Based on the research of Susan Campbell Bartoletti, do you think she is able to capture the true story of Helmuth Hubener and Germany at this time? What tools within the story does she employ?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Helmuth's first recollections of his relationship with his brothers. How do Gerhard and Hans differ in their interactions with Helmuth? With which family member is Helmuth most similar?

Discussion Question 3

At this early point in the novel, how does Helmuth unconsciously differentiate himself from his brothers? His family? Based upon your knowledge of Hitler Youth, does Helmuth seem like an ideal or undesirable candidate?

Vocabulary

flat (n.), sonata, infinity, ridiculous, artillery, shrapnel, infantry, warmonger, clemency



Memories of 1933-1938: Pages 11- 40

Summary

In late January of 1933, Helmuth sits with his classmates in the auditorium, awaiting unknown big news via the school's radio. Hitler is announced chancellor of the newly formed government, the National Socialist Party. Jubilation erupts in the room, and some older boys bolt to their feet, shouting "Heil Hitler!" Helmuth observes that amazingly no teachers move to quiet the boisterous students. The boys belong to the Jungvolk, the Hitler Youth group for boys aged ten through fourteen. Helmuth is also swelling with excitement at the news.

Helmuth hears one of the Jungvolk boys taunt his classmate, Benno Seligmann, one of the few Jews in his school. Seligmann ignores the boy's taunt and leer, but Helmuth sees Benno's blush of either embarrassment, fear or anger. The teachers continue to ignore the students, but Helmuth hears them having the same arguments he is hearing all over now. Some say Hitler will cure their unemployment, inflation and lack of food supplies. Others say he is only a warmonger, who will bring only more misery to Germany. Most seem to agree on the main cause of Germany's hardships: The Treaty of Versailles. Because of the treaty, Germany was forced to take most of the blame for the war and to pay high reparations. Those reparations caused unemployment and much shame and humiliation to the once proud people. The Jews are also brought into the argument. It's agreed that this will be a tough time to be a Jew in Germany, and Hitler's open verbal attacks of the Jews are discussed openly but without much moral repulsion. The only lament is that bad things can happen when groups are targeted out of fear or cries for patriotism, as it seems Hitler is doing. Helmuth doesn't fathom why being a Jew is a bad thing. Being a Mormon and member of the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter-day Saints, teaches him that the Jews are God's first chosen people, and they have the right to worship in any way they choose.

Helmuth notes that there is one group of teachers who seem to stand idly by during the other teachers' discussions. In their minds, both parties lie, and they remain indifferent.

School is dismissed, and Helmuth heads home. Crowds outside are as excited as the older boys at school. He is stopped by a soldier who quizzes him about Hitler. Helmuth identifies him as Germany's new chancellor, and the soldier calls him a smart boy who is needed to fight for his Fatherland. He gives Helmuth a leaflet advertising a parade that evening and urges him to attend to support the "awakening" of Germany. Helmuth swells again at the collaborative excitement and the soldier's compliment. Helmuth vows to himself to one day fight for Germany.

At home, Helmuth arrives to the smells of sausage and onions, as Mutti cooks in celebration. Helmuth sees she is tired from not sleeping enough and reminisces on her circumstances. She divorced Hans and Gerhard's father and never married Helmuth's. Oma and Opa agree she needs a man to care for her as she cares for everyone else.



Mutti widely smiles at Helmuth, reinforcing his belief that he is her favorite. However, she disappoints him when she says he cannot attend the parade because of his young age. Helmuth laments not having a father who would take him and resents that his older brothers may go. Later, Helmuth listens to the parade on the radio - a taxed luxury in Germany. The RRG, or Reich station, captures all the excitement of the event. The grand, marching Nazi soldiers sing in unison about overcoming servitude and rebuilding Germany. Helmuth is sad again in missing out on all the pageantry and patriotism. Oma tucks him into the cold bed, un-warmed by the company of his brothers until morning.

Two days later, Hitler is on the radio. His simple yet powerful speech charges up Helmuth. Hitler warns of the poison of Communism and vows to protect Germany from its clutches. To further alienate enemies, Hitler identifies the "new" foundations of German nationalism: nation, Christianity, morality and family. Mutti supports the speech, but Opa again cites his disbelief in his credibility and motives.

Flash-forward to 1942 inside Helmuth's prison cell. He uses his slop bucket and finishes his business using newspaper clippings featuring Hitler. The scene flashes back again to early 1933, as Helmuth discusses a dream involving a sparrow with Mutti. She tells him that sparrows guide souls to Heaven. This theme will be highlighted at the end of the book, as well.

Helmuth follows Mutti out of bed to listen to the radio. The Reichstag, or parliament building, is on fire, and Hitler blames the Communists. The Nazi's have someone in custody, and when Helmuth questions Mutti on whether or not he is the right person. Mutti says that the radio says so, and apparently that's all she needs to verify this truth. The next day, new Nazi flags spread around Helmuth's neighborhood. A family friend, Heinrich (Brother) Worbs visits and shares a newspaper that says Hitler has decreed a state of emergency to protect Germany. In effect, he is seizing more power in the face of the alleged, Communist enemy. Brother Worbs is outraged, as basic freedoms are now at stake to supposedly protect the very citizens meant to be protected. He says that instead of fearing Communists, Germans will now have to fear each other. Oma looks at the picture of the alleged arsonist in the paper, noting how young he is and that he'll surely be sentenced to death.

A week later is election day, and the Nazis win a slight majority of seats in the Reichstag. Transformation is everywhere, as Germans now cite protection as their reason for leaning toward the Nazis. The presence of soldiers increases, and even Helmuth's teacher, Her Zeiger, wears his uniform and regalia to school. There is a fervent movement to show outward support of the Nazis. The paranoia masked within national pride is reaching fever pitch in record time. In school, Her Zeiger shares a newspaper headline urging Germans to protect themselves and not shop at Jewish businesses. This is pushback from the Jews combined efforts to economically boycott German goods in protest of Hitler's anti-Semitism. Yet, Hitler uses their reactions to further his agenda. And citizens in positions of power start to influence their youth, adding another layer of boldness. Helmuth's teacher directly compares the Jewish boycott to a planned takeover of Germany which will result in even more suffering for all. Even more heart wrenching is when Her Zeiger singles out Benno Seligmann as a



Jew, asking him what he thinks about his kind wanting to destroy Germany. Benno calls out the teacher's ignorance, is punished, and transfers to a Jewish school.

Benno's situation shocks Helmuth and is a turning point in the novel. He remembers how Benno's father is a war hero. How can someone who served Germany be treated so badly by those he fought to protect?

It's now April. Mutti sends Helmuth to the baker, Herr Kaltenbach for apple-cake trimmings, a family treat. As he approaches Suderstrasse, a market area of several Jewish shops, he encounters chaos. Hitler Youth and storm troopers plaster signs of DO NOT BUY FROM JEWS! on business doors and paint on windows. A storm trooper blocks Helmuth from Kaltenbach's door. Then he sees Herr Seligmann cleaning the graffiti off his window while wearing his full army uniform. He is badly beaten, and Helmuth cries out in shock and helplessness. A German baker takes his business, as the Jewish baker closes his shades.

At home, Opa urges the family to not make trouble. They must wait for all the foolishness to pass – and he believes it will. The next month at the movies, newsreels showcase Hitler Youth burning books while a narrator dictates that non-German books promote liberal thinking and are not allowed. Helmuth wonders if the Karl May books will be outlawed, and he can't imagine not having the opportunity to read what he wants. He asks Gerhard if it's ever okay to break a law. Gerhard says that it's justified only if you help someone or protect them from harm. Helmuth admits he's hidden Gerhard's May books, but Gerhard says he is Hitler's favorite author, so they are fine.

Flash-forward to 1942 inside Helmuth's prison cell. Helmuth overhears another inmate receiving their execution order. When he hears the guillotine drop in the distance, Helmuth prays to God and is certain He hears him. Helmuth feels as if he's floating.

Flashback to April of 1935. Helmuth meets Hugo Hubener, a Rottenfuhrer, or noncommissioned Nazi corporal. He is dating Mutti and spending more and more time in the small flat. He speaks positively of Hitler always, and brings in a new People's Receiver radio that only receives German stations. Helmuth feels he bullies his way into a fatherly role – and Helmuth internally rebels. By 1937, Hugo moves them all into a new, larger flat, away from Oma and Opa. Helmuth sees that Mutti is happy and plays along for her sake.

Analysis

In the school auditorium as news is announced of Hitler's ascent to power, Helmuth witnesses two things that shape his future attitude and cause for action. First, his normally-strict teachers seems to completely ignore the rowdy actions of the students. In a society based upon order and discipline, he notes that they don't correct behaviors. While it seems they are wholly-immersed in discussion of the news about Hitler, there's another underlying theme of ignorance. They ignore the negative behavior (including the taunting of Benno), as if it's not happening at all. This accepted act of ignorance is



certainly something that Helmuth notes now and in the future. And he develops a disdain for any citizens - most notably adults - who exhibit this behavior.

The second act involves the blatant, public persecution of Benno Seligmann. One of the few Jews in Helmuth's school, he is openly taunted regarding his religious practices. There is a direct correlation between the news of Hitler's new power to the growing lack of perceived power of the Jewish community in Germany. Although this behavior is morally and ethically wrong, the teachers do not take any action against the Jungvolk boys leading the charge against Benno. As Helmuth matures, he increasingly questions why the Jews are targeted. Just as troubling is the lack of response from many Germans to openly help the Jews. In the eyes of God, his Mormon beliefs dictate that the Jews are God's first chosen people. Therefore, he cannot conceive why they could be so dishonored, and fails to connect their prosperity or success with the degradation of Aryan society. While the fictional novel can't delve too deeply into Helmuth's exact thoughts, there are many breadcrumbs, including his shock at witnessing the destruction of the Jewish neighborhoods and the bullying of Benno.

The teachers in the auditorium have a heated discussion regarding the potential positive and negative repercussions of Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. Some say Hitler will cure their unemployment, inflation and lack of food supplies. Others say he is only a warmonger, who will bring only more misery to Germany. Most seem to at least agree on the main cause of Germany's hardships: The Treaty of Versailles. Hitler's open verbal attacks of the Jews are discussed openly but without much moral repulsion. Perhaps, at that time, they cannot fathom the terrible effects of the label of Jews as scapegoats for Germany's many problems. For many readers, it may come as a surprise that there was this much division among the Germans. Especially for high school students, the common perception of that time is that most Germans were on board with the Nazi regime. However, contrary to what they may see in the media, there were many Germans who morally opposed Hitler. Even without knowing the full extent of war atrocities committed in the name of their Fatherland, citizens fought them in any way they could without arousing suspicion and punishment. German citizens secretly hid Jews and political adversaries of the state, and even Nazis betrayed their superiors by sharing strategic, military secrets with the Allied forces. Some were discovered, while others quietly and covertly practiced civil disobedience to save their Fatherland from the real threat of Adolph Hitler.

As for the group of teachers who seem to stand idly by during the other teachers' discussions, there were those who practiced a level of indifference, as well. Whether they were practicing self-preservation like Opa or demonstrating hopelessness like Mutti, they remain disconnected from reality.

Helmuth makes his way home and is met by a German soldier advertising the celebratory parade. It's too easy for him to be swept away by the excitement of the event, the soldier's urging that he attend because he acts "smart". It is easy to wonder how many other youths at that time were swept up in the same sense of national pride, redemption and exclusiveness. However, given what Helmuth experienced earlier in the day, it's clear he won't be so easily swayed. Mutti actually plays an important role in



holding Helmuth back that evening. She doesn't let him attend the parade, so he forced to stay home with his thoughts. He digests the day, without the comfort of his brothers in their warm bed.

When Hitler is on the radio a couple of days later, Opa openly questions his motives. What truly motivates Hitler? What is his agenda? As the free conversation flows in Helmuth's home, it's no wonder that he soon begins to similarly question his surroundings. The only difference is that no one else in his family will take action.

The next flash-forward to 1942 introduces a symbol that readers see at the very end of the novel as well. Helmuth and Mutti see a sparrow one day. She tells Helmuth that sparrows guide souls to Heaven. It's a fond memory rooted in home, family and spirituality. On Helmuth's last day of life, he will again see a sparrow and think of his mother. The thought will lend him significant comfort.

When news breaks of the fire at the Reichstag, action in the novel begins to pick up. This time, it is Helmuth who openly questions the national news - not Opa or Oma. When he asks how they know they have the right perpetrator, Mutti quickly says that the radio told them so. Helmuth has an immediate reaction to that, and readers have the impression that is simply not an adequate answer for his maturing intellect. The fact that Mutti cannot fathom (or doesn't want to) there could be a truth outside of what is told her, simply doesn't register with Helmuth. To add further fuel to the fire, Hitler soon declares a state of emergency to protect Germans from the Communists, who are supposedly behind the act. Brother Worbes, visiting the night this is announced, is quick to connect the dots. He knows that Hitler is furthering an agenda via the fire. This also stokes the flames already seeming to ignite within Helmuth's mind. Obviously, Germans do later learn that Hitler is, in fact, taking advantage of the situation to seize more control. Under the guise of protector against the Communists, he is already slowly removing the freedoms of his country's citizens. Brother Worbs is quite insightful in saying that instead of fearing Communists, Germans will now have to fear each other.

Another breadcrumb is Oma looking at the picture of the alleged arsonist in the paper and noting how young he is. Oddly enough, she says that he will be sentenced to death. It is as if she already sees that there will be no rational thinking within the new regime. This also foreshadows what will happen to Helmuth in the future, yet for a less severe crime. While the Reichstag is a physical crime, Helmuth's mere act of trying to mentally sway his people will be considered just as heinous.

When the Nazis win a slight majority of seats in the Reichstag soon after, Helmuth's community transforms around him. The lines between school and state blur, as his teacher wears his Nazi uniform and full regalia during school hours. Teachings now revolve around acting as a patriotic German citizen, doing good deeds in the name of the state, and even sacrificing one's self to protect or honor it. As a new and improved German society is pitched further to its people, there is a fervent movement to show outward support of the Nazis. And if you're not involved in the wave of obsessed nationalism, you're an outcast who is bullied into joining in. The progression toward paranoid inclusion and exclusion takes shape at breakneck speed.



The first to be targeted as outcasts are the Communists and Jews. Seen as scapegoats for all that is wrong within the boundaries of Germany, they are considered either anarchists or of untrue lineage. When Her Zeiger shares a newspaper headline urging Germans to protect themselves and not shop at Jewish businesses, the lines between state and school are eliminated. Teachers who should be encouraging free-thinking as a means of discovery are now openly calling for conformity of thoughts and deed. The ultimate abuse of power and authority is when Her Zeiger, the teacher, singles out Benno Seligmann, a mere student, as a Jew. When Benno calls out the teacher's ignorance in a fairly respectable way, he is punished and has to leave the school. This scene symbolizes the departure of free thinking in an environment where questioning concepts (not authority) should be encouraged. It also represents what is beginning to happen in all of German society.

In April, Helmuth witnesses the full devastation of the fanatic nationalism now gripping his country. The Suderstrasse, a market area of several Jewish shops, is destroyed. So is Herr Seligmann, Benno's father. Whereas his son was outcast with words, his father is cast out in a disgusting physical act of force. Even while wearing his German army uniform, he is pushed out of society. Neighbors now turn against neighbors in public to show that they are true citizens, and pro-Nazi. The tides are turning for the worst in Hamburg.

Helmuth meets Hugo Hubener in 1935, perhaps at the worst time in his growing discomfort with the Nazis. A Rottenfuhrer, or noncommissioned Nazi corporal, he epitomizes Helmuth's distaste of Hitler. To make matters worse, he is taking away Mutti, whom he believes favors him over everyone else. As Hugo tries to assume a fatherly role, Helmuth can't help but rebel internally. But like a good German citizen, he maintains the appearance of calm for the sake of his leader, in this case, Mutti.

Discussion Question 1

What impact do Opa and Brother Worbes individual comments about the Nazis have upon Helmuth?

Discussion Question 2

What does Herr Meins say to Benno Seligmann? How does Benno respond?

Discussion Question 3

What significance does the entrance of Hugo play upon the story? How does Hugo react to the boys? How do the boys each react to Hugo?

Vocabulary

arpeggio, desperate, jostle, inflation, patriotism, snicker, implore, murmur, culprit



Memories of 1938-1939: Pages 40-81

Summary

It is now 1938, and Helmuth starts Oberbau, the middle school at Brackdamm. Most boys wear Hitler Youth uniforms, but not yet Helmuth. His teacher, Herr Vinke starts a lesson regarding honor over cowardice, telling a story about a drowning sailor. The sailor is given the choice of keeping himself or the naval flag afloat. Helmuth suggests the sailor should drop the flag and live to fight another day, and Herr Vinke is outraged. He punishes the whole class by assigning an essay, "Adolph Hitler, Savior of the Fatherland". In a notable turn of events, Helmuth's anger swells instead of his historical pride.

For the first time, Helmuth deeply contemplates the thinking of his peers and superiors. He is most upset that Herr Vinke has pitted the other students against him just for speaking his mind. At home, Gerhard says the assignment mocks God as the Savior. Hugo says that God and country go together, and Hitler is a blessing. He questions Mormon teachings, which angers Helmuth. Gerhard states that he mocks the essay, not Hitler, and the church tells them to follow the laws. Helmuth can take no more. He defends Hugo's position and decides to write the paper in a way that will please his teacher so he can keep his Party record book in top standing. Gerhard storms out, and Hugo praises Helmuth, making him feel ashamed.

Helmuth struggles with the rampant idolization of Hitler. The only new jobs are in war factories, making planes, tanks and guns and cheap People's Radios. The Jews are persecuted relentlessly via stringent laws. Even his school forces students to pass tests to assure all they understand the superiority of the Aryan race. He finishes his assignment, feeling like a coward. His later grade is exemplary.

In springtime, a Nazi official visits Helmuth's class to ensure all boys are enlisted as Hitler Youth. Only Helmuth and one other boy are yet to sign up - but they do now. Proud Hugo surprises him with a Jungvolk shirt and dues monies. Helmuth participates in meetings, games and weekend hiking and camping trips, missing much church to his disappointment.

Flash-forward to 1942 within Helmuth's prison cell. Helmuth joins the other prisoners in the yard for exercise, yet isn't allowed to make eye contact with anyone. He thinks about his two best friends, Rudi Wobbe and Karl-Heinz Schnibbe. Fellow Mormons, they were all friends from day one.

Flashback to the summer of 1938. The Nazi Gestapo are visible everywhere, and no one feels safe, even from their own neighbors. Helmuth sees Rudi at the park and assures him that he is Jungvolk but doesn't share their views. He's embarrassed to admit, however, he is intrigued by the HJ-Streifendienst, or junior Gestapo. The idea of detective work excites him. He shows Rudi a book, Lord Lister, gennant Raffles, der



grosse Unbekannte about a gentlemen thief similar to Robin Hood. He suggests he and Rudi "play" detectives and offer to help the local police solve crimes. Nervous, cautious Rudi eventually agrees. Helmuth creates business cards and they head to the local police station. Herr Becker, an officer in charge asks if they want to report suspicious activity, but Helmuth simply offers detective services. After some convincing, he amazingly gives them the case of a murdered streetwalker. Within the week, they report back the name of an unemployed dockworker who was last seen speaking with the prostitute. The Inspector quickly assumes the dockworker must be an anarchist in need of rehabilitation and tells the boys they will bring him in. Helmuth immediately senses that they may have just determined this man's fate via basic assumptions about his character.

Helmuth sees Rudi another time, and Rudi's arm is injured. He had an accident, but while in the hospital, the nurses found his Lord Lister card. Two Gestapo agents interrogated and roughed him, thinking he worked for a British detective agency. Rudi tells them to talk to Herr Becker as a character reference, and they leave. Both boys are scared.

Flash-forward to 1942 within Helmuth's prison cell. Helmuth cleans his cell and thinks about the dockworker and the Gestapo interrogation he must have endured. He alludes to knowing much about these interrogations and that victims will say just about anything to end them.

Flashback to the fall of 1938. Rumors say that Germans are being persecuted by Czechs and Poles living in those countries. Hitler advances and then gains the Sudetenland. Jews are rounded up; lines form at train stations. Hugo is pleased, saying there are too many in Germany. It seems everyone assumes they are being deported back to Poland and other areas or simply relocated. Poland does accept some Jews, but many are sent back into German hands. Germany is prospering with the war effort, but tensions are high.

On November 7th, a young Jew named Herschel Grynszpan shoots a Nazi official in Paris. German newspapers declare the world's Jews are attacking, much to Hugo's agreement. Soon after, Hugo and his fellow Nazis participate in a night of raids and violence against the Jews. Mutti knows what is going on but remains silent. She tells Helmuth that silence is how "some people get on sometimes". Helmuth visits the Grindel district to inspect the damage - smoldering synagogues and looted shops - disgusted.

Flash-forward to 1942 within Helmuth's prison cell. Helmuth gazes out a cell window and sees a sparrow flying. He paces until he hears the keys in his cell door. The prison guard tells him it is time.

Flashback to early 1939. Things have been quiet. Fourteen-year-old Helmuth has taken on the custom of Mutti's silence, eating alone and quietly studying. He graduates into the Hitler Youth proper, a group focused wholly-focused on might versus right. Eighteen-year-old Gerhard receives his letter to appear before the military induction board. He



can defer service until graduation but must serve six months in Reich Labor Service. Hans is already building valuable submarines and won't be drafted.

By late summer, the German newspaper headlines talk of German persecution by the Poles. Hitler declares war on Poland. The Extraordinary Radio Law is passed, banning any listening to foreign radio stations to avoid "untrue" propaganda. Helmuth doesn't understand how they can possibly obtain the truth from just one source. But Gerhard tells him no matter what they have to defend the Fatherland. Britain and France declare war on Germany, honoring their pact with Poland. British planes drop leaflets warning the German people that their leadership has doomed them. Hitler orders all leaflets be destroyed - now and in the future.

The German Blitzkrieg moves quickly across Poland, leveling cities. People whisper of atrocities but cannot believe them. Mutti and Hugo marry. Helmuth questions Hugo about the atrocities on their wedding day, and Hugo says that Germany is only for Germans, and they can't tolerate defeatists. He warns a now distant Helmuth to watch himself. Mutti is silent.

When Warsaw falls that fall, Hugo brags that he was right about a quick war now that Hitler has Poland.

Analysis

This is the first time that Helmuth is called out as a non-conformist. The repercussion are a hard lesson for Helmuth, who sees that perhaps some forms of silence are the only feasible option. When Herr Vinke starts the lesson regarding honor over cowardice involving the drowning sailor, Helmuth thinks nothing of voicing his question. To his surprise, Herr Vinke is quick to correct his thinking, in an almost fanatical manner. Aside from publicly ridiculing Helmuth's audacity to question a basic tenant of Nazi-thinking, he establishes him as a target by punishing the entire class. Helmuth's essay, "Adolph Hitler, Savior of the Fatherland", is something the boy struggles with and against. He can't fathom why he was punished, and also cannot justify the content. To compare Hitler to his Savior is contradictory to his religious beliefs. In effect, he would have to denounce his faith for the sake of a government leader ... which causes a moral and ethical conflict.

When Hugo and Gerhard argue over the essay, the clear division in their positions is evident. Hugo holds the concept at face value - Hitler is a Savior, because he will save the German nation. Gerhard believes that Hitler should not be compared to God, however he may still possess God-like qualities in helping Germany. Hugo follows blindly, while Gerhard follows with eyes half shut. Both will serve in the end, however, Gerhard quietly retains his integrity. At the end of the book, the author notes that Gerhard saw Hugo in later years, a changed man. Perhaps it isn't until later life that Hugo finds the balance his step-son did years before.



Helmuth receives a high mark on his essay, but at the expense of his belief system and faith. As his schoolwork becomes more focused on Nazi teachings, he becomes numb. A gifted student by all accounts, the Nazis take away one of his greatest joys in learning. The only things left to discover are how to become a good citizen and how best to serve the Fatherland.

In springtime, when a Nazi official visits Helmuth's class to ensure all boys are enlisted as Hitler Youth, Helmuth is again called out as a non-conformist. Assuming Mutti's silent tactics, he enlists in the Jungvolk. This is much to Hugo's delight, and much to Helmuth's disgust. However, he seems to be swayed via the hikes and game-like environment. Further from his faith, he misses church engagements. At this point in the novel, readers have to wonder if he will follow along in silence, or if his once-swelling anger will force him into action.

The Nazi Gestapo presence is felt everywhere in Helmuth's community. The world feels smaller - lacking imagination and even fun. Perhaps to combat this, he and Rudi form the ill-fated Lord Lister Detective Agency. The result is the possibility they may have condemned an innocent man, based upon circumstantial evidence. The fact two, young boys could influence the life of another person terrifies Helmuth. And the power of the Gestapo is finally, clearly evident to him. This first brush with the Gestapo is foreshadowing of what Helmuth, himself, will face in the near future. Rudi's later brush with the Gestapo after the agency card is found on his person is another indication of the quick-conclusion tactics of the Gestapo.

Tensions are high, while attention focuses more on the Jews. When Herschel Grynszpan shoots a Nazi official in Paris, the German newspapers declare the world's Jews are attacking. In retaliation and fear, Hugo and many Nazi soldiers across Germany stage mass attacks on Jewish neighborhoods and businesses. Mutti's silence to Hugo's obvious participation serves as a final nail in the coffin of her relationship with Hugo. Her excuse of silence being how "some people get on sometimes" is simply not good enough. Helmuth visits the damaged Grindel district, the representation of his destroyed relationship with Mutti, both desecrated by the Nazis.

Flashing back to Helmuth's cell and his encounter with a sparrow, readers know that it is the time for his passage to Heaven. Just as Mutti explained the bird's symbolism to him as a child, now he knows there is no turning back.

Flashing back to 1939, Helmuth's silence is causing him to become numb. In fact, his numbness is like a defense-mechanism. At times, the facade wears thin, like when Gerhard is called to serve. Hugo warns him to keep silent. However, even he is at times appearing to take on a defeatist attitude. When Hitler seizes Poland, he seems relieved, exposing the cracks in his ever-present confidence. At the same time, The Extraordinary Radio Act is passed, forbidding the listening of foreign radio to control propaganda. Helmuth realizes very early on that hearing only one side of a story will further inhibit his basic right of free thinking and rational thought regarding the Nazi efforts. Hitler's destroying of the British leaflets foreshadows his absolute intolerance of outside



influence in what is becoming a prison, militant state within Germany. If there was never a more claustrophobic atmosphere for a willful, mature adolescent like Helmuth.

Discussion Question 1

What is the title of Helmuth's assignment from Herr Meins? Why does it cover?

Discussion Question 2

What are Hugo and Gerhard's opinions of Helmuth's topic?

Discussion Question 3

What is the impact of Mutti's silence on Helmuth?

Vocabulary

savior, honor, rehabilitation, interrogation, defeatist, leaflet, protest, scowl, swindler, foreboding, suspicious



Memories of 1940: Pages 81-90

Summary

It is spring of 1940, and the war efforts escalate, as Nazi troops march across France. Hamburg transforms its landscape to prepare for enemy attack and just in time as the British bomb the coast. Two bombs hit a neighborhood, and Helmuth is angered by the civilian damage he attributes to Hitler's greed. Paris soon falls to the Germans, and Gerhard begins his labor service there, and Helmuth takes his empty room at Oma and Opa's. Finally free of Hugo's house, he volunteers as a secretary at church and stays up nights to write letters to church members at the front.

One night, Helmuth, Rudi and Karl walk home from choir practice singing, "You Are My Sunshine", a forbidden American song. They encounter junior Gestapo who demand identification and a reason they're singing the song. Although released, Helmuth is furious.

By the end of 1940, Germany is marching across Europe, and the German people are elated at his dominance. Helmuth, Rudi, Brother Worbs and another Mormon friend are on air-raid duty on New Year's Eve. In toasting the new year, Worbs asks to "break the yoke of the Nazi butchers," shocking the boys. This is last time Helmuth will see Worbs for some time.

Flash-forward to 1942 within Helmuth's prison cell. Helmuth eats his noon soup. He regrets so much in his life, but none more than causing hardship to Gerhard.

Analysis

This section is short but presents a huge transition into early adulthood for Helmuth. In the spring of 1940, the war effort is accelerating. It also hits home with a British bombing at the Hamburg coastline. Helmuth immediately connects the destruction to Hitler's greed for more. In fact, he makes these connections more frequently and often now, which is a major turning point for him in terms of his open vocalizations.

When Gerhard is called to service, Helmuth aggressively seeks the opportunity to occupy his brother's old room at Oma and Opa's flat. Just as the Nazis take the freedom of the Parisians, Helmuth experiences new-found "freedom" of sorts living away from Mutti and Hugo. He is able to finally breath outside the confines of Hugo's pro-Nazi cheering and his mother's unfathomable silence.

Helmuth rediscovers his religion, albeit in the tedious task of writing letters to his Mormon brothers at the military front. While writing has caused him repulsion in the past, now it allows him a freedom he hasn't experienced in some time. He stays up nights to write the letters, seemingly enjoying the only time he has to think and communicate beyond the confines of pro-Nazi school essays and nationalist



conversation. Although he is angry to write letters to his brothers while they risk their lives, the time spent seems to offer him at least a little release.

Helmuth's temporary nirvana is interrupted the night he, Rudi and Karl are questioned about singing "You Are My Sunshine" in public. The interrogation infuriates Helmuth to a breaking point not seen before. How could the innocent act of singing in happiness incite Nazi ire to that extent? It's also interesting to note that the other boys don't think it's worth the risk at that time. Yet later on, they risk all to do so much more.

Brother Worbs' honest criticism of the Nazis on New Year's Day is the last Helmuth hears from him for some time. For Helmuth, it represents how little it will take for someone to be considered dangerous, suspicious or threatening by the Nazis. This is also a statement regarding Helmuth's maturity. At the end of the novel, Helmuth's harsh punishment is considered inappropriate due to his age and maturity. Yet, it's determined that because of his intellect, he is quite mature. However, one would think the contrary given what he witnesses in his life and how events had little barring on his caution. From the persecution and imprisonment of the Jewish citizens in his very community to the removal of basic freedoms for all, they serve as cautionary reminders of what could happen if the Gestapo find one suspect. Yet, his adolescent nature is not mature enough to act more covertly in the future.

In the final flash-forward of the section, Helmuth experiences regret. Perhaps he's matured even beyond his 17 years at the time of his execution day, because of all he's experienced. In a final act of maturity, he thinks about those he put in danger, and those he disappointed or caused hardship. He thinks mostly of Gerhard.

Discussion Question 1

How does Helmuth exercise some personal freedom after Gerhard leaves for his service?

Discussion Question 2

Explain the details of the night Helmuth, Karl and Rudi sing the foreign song. What was the song?

Discussion Question 3

What did Brother Worbs say on New Year's Day? Would you have said the same under those circumstances?

Vocabulary

curfew, identification, detention, garbled, ration, informer, nudge, seethe, clamber, regret



Memories of 1941: Pages 90-137

Summary

In early 1941, Gerhard returns home for a visit before his now expected draft. Germany needs more soldiers - and he is forced to serve. Helmuth is ecstatic to see his brother. Gerhard has a gift from the French black market - a Rola shortwave radio that can pick up foreign stations for future use. He tells Helmuth to hide it in a closet until the laws change. Gerhard warns Helmuth that to break the law would be a selfish act - and is forbidden. The actions of the Nazis are not the first atrocities and won't be the last. He assures Helmuth that Germany will soon be victorious, and this will all be over. The family celebrates Gerhard's visit, and Hugo tells Helmuth he would make a "smashing officer". Helmuth sits in learned silence. Later that night, Helmuth asks Gerhard if God cursed Germans with Hitler. Gerhard replies that the Germans did that, not God. And as he departs for war a few days later, he reminds Helmuth that he's not a Nazi but will always defend the Fatherland.

Flash-forward to 1942 within Helmuth's prison cell. Four uniformed prison officials and two guards enter his cell. One of the men identifies himself as Executory Leader.

Flashback to spring of 1941, just a little over a year before Helmuth's execution day. As Helmuth finishes his thesis for graduation, his mind wanders. He thinks of the hidden-away Rola radio that Gerhard locked in the closet. He sneaks it out of Oma and Opa's closet and tunes into a BBC London presentation of the German news. The BBC delivers the broadcast each evening in perfect German for those who dare to break the Radio Law. Helmuth is shocked to hear honest accounts of wins and losses for all sides, including the British. He turns the radio back to the German-approved station and locks it back in the closet. Helmuth lays awake, contemplating the factual reporting by the British, which makes their accounts seem that much more authentic. Despite all he's discovered, Helmuth's pro-Socialist thesis of "The War of the Plutocrats" earns him high respect from his school. Helmuth's teacher, Herr Meins, warns him privately to not be so publicly idealistic.

Helmuth begins a prestigious apprenticeship at Bieberhaus, the social welfare department. One day, he's in the basement and discovers a large load of confiscated books. He steals *Geist und Tat*, Spirit and Action by Heinrich Mann - a bold move. Getting braver, Helmuth tells Rudi about the book. He asks Rudi what would happen if more Germans spoke out against Hitler and his oppression. Rudi is worried, but Helmuth is just getting started.

The Nazis continue their run of Europe through June. Hugo tells Helmuth that Brother Worbs was arrested for criticizing a Nazi statue and sent away to Neuengamme, a concentration camp for hard labor. Helmuth thinks about the Heinrich Mann book he stole and decides that most people think life "too short to think about others", yet someone has to take a stand. He shares the news with Rudi and Karl.



Another day at the pool, Helmuth informs Rudi and Karl that Rudolf Hess, Hitler's closest friend and high-ranking Nazi, is a deserter and sitting in British prison. As Germany reports that Hess is simply "missing", Helmuth fears he's blown his cover. The tension is broken up by a radio announcement that Germany has declared war on Russia. Helmuth knows that no one has ever defeated the Russians, and this will require even more German troops. All the other people at the pool stop and listen. Instead of cheering like before, they now whisper.

Helmuth listens to his black market radio every night. The Russians fight bravely, and German losses mount. His disdain for German radio grows, along with his desire to share the truth. One night, he invites Karl to the flat and shows him the radio. Karl finds his bravery and incredulously listens to accounts of massive German losses and retreat. All this is completely contrary to what he's previously heard. Helmuth lectures Karl on their basic right of freedom and free thinking, and Karl says he sounds like a pamphlet. When Karl leaves, Helmuth sits down to write an essay titled, "Who is Lying?"

The next night, Helmuth invites the ever-hesitant Rudi to listen to the radio, when Helmuth questions his courage. After switching off nights to listen securely with each friend, Helmuth finally brings his friends in together. One night, the British signal is too jammed to listen anymore. Helmuth announces that he is ready to serve the Fatherland - but in a covert way. He shares essays in pamphlet form he's written, denouncing the Nazis. He asks the boys for help in distributing them. After much discussion, they agree and start ... first every week and eventually twice a week.

In December of 1941, Germany declares war on America. Hugo blames the Jews and Roosevelt. Brother Worbs suddenly returns from the camps, unrecognizable, broken and aged. He refuses to tell Helmuth details of his captivity for his own protection, but does warn him that during Gestapo interrogation, prisoners will admit to anything "to get the pain to stop". Helmuth writes a pile of new leaflets that evening.

After the holidays, the effects of the war are felt throughout Germany. Food rations are scarce, and there are pleas for winter supplies for soldiers at the fronts. At work, Helmuth befriends Gerhard Duwer, who seems to agree with his anti-Nazi thinking. He brings him home to listen to the radio and shares his pamphlets. Duwer says he has contacts in Kiel who can mass-produce the pieces to Helmuth's delight.

Analysis

In early 1941, Gerhard returns home for a visit before his now expected draft. Germany needs more soldiers - and he is forced to serve. Helmuth is ecstatic to see his brother. Gerhard has a gift from the French black market - a Rola shortwave radio that can pick up foreign stations for future use. He tells Helmuth to hide it in a closet until the laws change. Gerhard warns Helmuth that to break the law would be a selfish act - and is forbidden. The actions of the Nazis are not the first atrocities and won't be the last. He assures Helmuth that Germany will soon be victorious, and this will all be over. The family celebrates Gerhard's visit, and Hugo tells Helmuth he would make a "smashing



officer". Helmuth sits in learned silence. Later that night, Helmuth asks Gerhard if God cursed Germans with Hitler. Gerhard replies that the Germans did that, not God. And as he departs for war a few days later, he reminds Helmuth that he's not a Nazi but will always defend the Fatherland.

Flash-forward to 1942 within Helmuth's prison cell. Four uniformed prison officials and two guards enter his cell. One of the men identifies himself as Executory Leader.

It is not just curiosity that gets the best of Helmuth in this section. He simply cannot stand the silence. Unlike Mutti, it isn't in his nature to remain silent or do nothing. But before he can take action, he needs information. By all accounts, Helmuth is an unusually bright, inquisitive and driven boy. The elusive Rola radio, hidden away in Opa's closet is just too much for him to resist. Having no knowledge of the world beyond German borders is only adding to the suffocation he feels at this time.

Helmuth's bravery in accessing the radio is only second to his craving of knowledge. It is surprising that he is so shocked by the honest, fact-based British reports. However, he may be more shocked that his suspicions are proven correct. After listening, he lies awake in bed, going over every detail to confirm authenticity. Just as his suspicions are proven correct, ironically his paper "The War of the Plutocrats" earns high praise. Yet his teacher, Herr Meins, warns him privately to not be so publicly idealistic. The fact that Herr Meins maintains such a pro-Nazi facade yet apparently understands Helmuth's stance is a warning. It may have also served to Helmuth as an example of one way of living with the Nazi lie. However, Helmuth is too intoxicated with the truth, and far too headstrong to remain so silent and impassive.

Helmuth is getting bolder, and perhaps more careless. At his breaking point and knowing too much, he cannot seem to control himself. He wants to know more and exerts his right to freedom again by taking the Heinrich Mann book from the social welfare department. He cannot fathom why the Nazis are so afraid of words - something that he will soon use as a weapon against them. He converses with Rudi and asks him about group dissent against Hitler, seemingly desperate to speak freely about "what if", forbidden scenarios. He reaches another turning point, now determined to take action. Most people think life "too short to think about others". But, Helmuth determines he has to take a stand - somehow.

Helmuth almost slips in divulging details regarding Rudolf Hess to Rudi and Karl. Interestingly, at the same time, his community learns that Germany has declared war on Russia. Perhaps he is not alone in his dissent, as there are more whispers of shock than awe from the crowd. Perhaps, Helmuth is not as alone as he thought. The more he listens to the Rola, the more he is motivated to turn thoughts into actions. The Germans are losing, but the citizens have no idea of the truth or toll to the Fatherland they love. When he finally sits down to write the "Who is Lying" pamphlet, Helmuth becomes more of a Savior than Hitler ever could be. This brings full circle the theme of Savior, and the assignment he previously struggled with so much. While Hugo and Gerhard discussed their viewpoints in private, Helmuth will eventually take his thinking to the public. Writing the piece was his first step toward that treasonous act.



Helmuth invites Rudi and then Karl to listen to the radio. Perhaps he wants them to hear the truth. Or, more precisely he wants validation that what he hears is shocking and deserves to be shared. He also needs their support to give him the courage to take the next steps. Those come quickly, as they begin to distribute Helmuth's pamphlets. The addition of Duwer promises mass production via contacts in Kiel.

Brother Worb's return from prison camp In December of 1941, is the final straw for Helmuth. The old man is so beaten down and broken that all he can do is warn Helmuth not to be seen with him. Eyes are everywhere, but not Helmuth is determined that so will his literature. Brother Worb's account that prisoners will admit to anything "to get the pain to stop" during Nazi interrogation is foreshadowing to Helmuth's own future interrogation. However, after Helmuth does break, he miraculously regains the strength to fight for his friends and accomplices.

Discussion Question 1

How does Helmuth's family celebrate Gerhard's return?

Discussion Question 2

What is Helmuth's impression of the British broadcast on the Rola radio? Describe the broadcast.

Discussion Question 3

Where was Brother Worbs? What is his warning to Helmuth? How would you have helped Brother Worbs?

Vocabulary

shortwave, executor, jimmied, plutocracy, socialism, idealism, apprenticeship, agitator, bayonet, comrade, tempo, shimmer



Memories of 1942: Pages 137-154

Summary

One day, Helmuth notices another apprentice, Werner Kranz taking notes in French during a training class. He approaches him with Duwer and a pamphlet, but Werner says he is too busy, looking angry. Their boss, Herr Mohns interrupts, telling them to get back to work.

February 5th, Helmuth's worst nightmare becomes a reality. Two Gestapo agents appear at his work and seize Helmuth and Duwer.

Flash-forward to 1942 within Helmuth's prison cell. Herr Ranke reads from a court document, recounting Helmuth's treasonable acts and execution notice. He asks for any last requests, and Helmuth asks to write letters to his family. All hope is lost for him.

Flashback to 1941, as Helmuth is ruthlessly interrogated by the Gestapo. Two agents, Wangemann and Mussner, present Helmuth with a briefcase filled with his fliers. He is beaten. Then, they read him a confession letter from Duwer, stating he was an innocent accomplice, simply collecting Helmuth's fliers to later "denounce" him as a good German should. Helmuth is saddened, but realizes Duwer did this to save himself. He also realizes that he must save Rudi and Karl by clearing their names, as well.

The Gestapo take Helmuth to Oma and Opa's flat. His grandparents are in shock, as they find more materials and the Rola radio. Helmuth is taken to Concentration Camp Fuhlsbuttel to the north of Hamburg. He is relieved he kept his promise to Karl and Rudi that none of them would implicate each other if caught - and in this case, he took full blame.

Flash-forward to 1942 within Helmuth's prison cell. He feels numb, in shock. He feels like he's in a dream. He remembers being together with Rudi and Karl.

Flashback to 1941, and Helmuth is taken back to Gestapo headquarters, the so-called "Hall of Mirrors" (although it is windowless). After hours of standing, he is beaten and interrogated. They want to know who his accomplices are, and after rounds of beating, he can't hold out anymore. He names Karl and Rudi, but knows he has to survive to take the full blame. Karl is brought in and Helmuth manages to give him a secret wink of warning to let him know he has taken full blame. Karl seems to understand.

Analysis

Helmuth's desire to speak and share the truth hinders his caution, so critical to survival at this time in German history. When he reaches out to Werner, he can't imagine the repercussions. In believing the truth will set all Germans free, he fails to understand that



some are too paralyzed to take action. In fact, some are too frightened and intimidated to break any routine that might arouse suspicion.

When Helmuth and Duwer are taken into Gestapo custody, it is the end of his personal, valiant war against the Nazis. This is also reflected in the concurrent flash-forward to his execution day, as Herr Ranke reads his final sentence. All hope, ambition and good intentions have come to an end.

Brother Worb's words come back to haunt Helmuth. As he's ruthlessly interrogated by the Gestapo, he cannot hold out and implicates his accomplices. Acting again the part of the Savior, Helmuth forgives Duwer's confession, understanding that he must work to save his other friends, as well. That will be his final redemption and sacrifice for the ones he loves. He will assume full responsibility. Overnight, the boy has become the man. However, he will be judged on his actions prior to this point, being tried as an adult.

The flashbacks and flash-forwards share emotional connections at this point in the novel. Just as he feels numbness during his interrogation in the "Hall of Mirrors", he feels the same awaiting execution in prison. The only difference is his fight for survival to clear his friends in the past is a fight for redemption in death in the future. Knowing he saved Karl with a wink offers him present confidence that at least he may have "saved" one friend.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Helmuth approach Werner Kranz?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Helmuth's interrogation by the Gestapo and the repercussions of Helmuth's actions.

Discussion Question 3

Describe the brief interaction between Helmuth and Karl. What is the significance?

Vocabulary

treason, blotter, denounce, incriminate, malicious, tribunal, clarify, thrust, heaves (n.), deliverance



Memories of 1942 & Author's Note: Pages 154-174

Summary

Six months later, the boys are brought before the People's Court or "Blood Tribunal" in Berlin.

Flash-forward to Helmuth's prison cell, as he writes his final letters. He struggles with what to say, but believes his death is not in vain. God needs people to stand up to evil. His life will mean something, and he's instantly at peace with that.

Flashback to earlier in 1942 with Helmuth in Berlin. Rudi, Karl and Duwer are there. Duwer mouths that he is sorry, and Helmuth nods the same. They're shuffled into a train car and are instructed not to speak of their case. Instead, they swap stories of happier times. At Moabit Prison, Helmuth meets his attorney, who he knows is not in his favor.

On August 11, 1942, the boys enter The People's Court. All boys are uncuffed, except for Helmuth. He surmises he will be tried as an adult. None of his family are there. The Justices interrogate the boys about Nazi beliefs, but leave the hardest questions for Helmuth. They review their Party record books, knowing every detail of their lives. Helmuth again vows to himself to take all blame so the others are not tried as adults and receive harsher sentences. He talks back to the Justices and challenges them, denouncing Hitler. When his attorney asks for leniency due to his age, a Justice presents Helmuth's thesis. He says that it shows his great maturity, well beyond his years. He is truly an adult.

Flash-forward to October 27, 1942. Helmuth thinks of lying in bed between his two brothers, Mutti tucking them in. He is executed "at peace".

At this point in the novel, Bartolletti recounts her research and aftermath of the events. She visits the prison, noting a single wreath and vase of flowers where Helmuth is executed. Nearly 200 "enemies of the state" were executed there. In interviewing Gerhard, she discovered that he learned about Helmuth while in Russia. He received a final letter from him, stating he was at peace with his actions under God. For providing the radio, Gerhard was demoted but earned back rank after earning medals on the battlefield. He emigrated to the United States in 1952, as did Hans.

Mutti learned of Helmuth's death via the newspaper and was billed for his imprisonment and execution costs. In July of 1943, Mutti, Oma and Opa died in the Hamburg bombings that killed 43,000 other people.

Bartolletti says that Hugo wrote letters for clemency after Helmuth's arrest. In later life, Gerhard says he softened - proof people can change. Other letters were written by one



of the arresting Gestapo agents, who said Helmuth was intelligent but not mature enough to understand his actions.

Karl-Heinz Schnibbe receives five years in a concentration camp, mostly because of his caught wink-warning from Helmuth. Bartoletti interviews him, and he is still respectful of the courage and dignity in which Helmuth conducted himself. His sentence was reduced, as he opted to fight for Germany. Captured by the Russians, he wasn't released until 1949. He emigrated to the United States in 1952.

Rudi Wobbe receives ten years, but is released in 1945 when the war ends. He emigrates to the United States in 1953.

Gerhard Duwer receives four years, but is released in 1945 when the war ends.

Bartoletti also interviewed Helmuth's former teacher, Herr Meins. He noted that he knew Helmuth's true feelings, and agreed with them. But it was always too dangerous to acknowledge each other. He, like Gerhard Kunkel, didn't understand why Helmuth thought he could take on the Nazis. And because he was so immature, his punishment was too harsh.

Analysis

The past and the present collide, as Helmuth prepares for execution by reliving his final days of freedom. He makes peace with Duwer and his friends in the past, as he makes peace with his family in the form of final letters from prison.

In front of The Blood Tribunal, he is already assumed guilty. Cuffed as a serious offender, Helmuth's only goal is to defend his friends. In a final selfless act, he makes the most of a hopeless situation. He still fights for the rights and freedoms of the innocent, those who do not deserve the existence forced upon them by the Nazi regime. The deception of the Nazis is revealed through all the details of the boys' lives. They have school essays, Party record books, leaflets and witnesses. It seems as if they've been under watch at all times. As disheartening as this is, Helmuth is re-energized to use all his cunning to defeat them in some way and lessen the sentences of his accomplices.

He talks back to the Justices and challenges them, denouncing Hitler. His intelligent challenges are well-spoken, exhibiting his free thinking, and bravery and maturity. He has found his voice, reaching full status as an adult in the face of organized adversity. In the end, his friends do receive lighter sentences, albeit still harsh by today's standards. On October 27, 1942. Helmuth is executed. Yet, he is at peace then as he was at the end of the trial. The parallel final days are complete. While the endings are not ideal, Helmuth's legacy benefits his friends then as it does now to help us remember his selfless attempts to help others.

Bartoletti's final notes at the end of the novel as the only wholly factual accounts. It's interesting to note that almost all involved eventually emigrated to the United States in



the early 1950s, including Helmuth's two brothers. Gerhard's account of destroying Helmuth's final letter to protect himself seems insulting, but is truly reflective of his personal boundaries at that time. The death of Mutti and her parents seems a terrible reward for her silence during the war years. However, many other innocent lives were also lost. Regardless of position or beliefs during the war, it ended in disaster for all. On a positive note, visitors to Plötzensee prison still pay their respects to Helmuth and the other thousands of prisoners executed there. His story will always serve as an example of freedom, bravery and the pursuit of individuality when faced with unfathomable oppression.

Discussion Question 1

What were some of the questions the justices posed to the boys? Were Helmuth's questions different in any way?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Helmuth's final letter to Gerhard. What is the significance?

Discussion Question 3

What happens to each of Helmuth's family members at the end of the war?

Vocabulary

remonstration, admonishment, insolence, precocious, conspiracy, opalescent, emigrate



Characters

Helmuth Hubener

Helmuth is the protagonist of *The Boy Who Dared*. Through this fictional account of his real life, readers follow his story from the time he is just three-years-old. A native of Hamburg, Germany, he lives first in a small flat with his mother and two brothers, and later with his mother and new husband. As he grows older, he struggles to accept his nation's acceptance of Adolph Hitler. Once he finally sees the Fuhrer for the bloodthirsty dictator he is, Helmuth recognizes that he stands in direct opposition to his Mormon beliefs. Amoral and evil, Hitler must be stopped. But Helmuth fights his controlled silence to devise a strategy to share the truth with his fellow Germans, and hopefully save them from themselves. He is executed for treason in 1942.

Gerhard Kunkel

Gerhard Kunkel is Mutti's son, Hans' brother, and Helmuth's half brother. His father was divorced from Mutti. Gerhard is grounded, practical and the bane of Helmuth's free-thinking, inquisitive spirit. He is Helmuth's father-figure, and the two disagree in a manner reflective of that relationship. While Gerhard knows that Hitler may not be the solution for Germany, he tells Helmuth that it is his duty under God to follow the leaders and laws of the Fatherland. Their Mormon religion dictates this, and that should be what they believe. However, in the end, he leans more toward protecting the Fatherland and fighting for it than blindly following Hitler. He emigrates to the United States, along with Hans, in 1952.

Hans Kunkel

Hans is the oldest of the three brothers, including Gerhard and Helmuth. Perhaps because of the age difference, he isn't a big presence in Helmuth's life. He avoids service in the Nazi army, as he builds submarines to support the war efforts. He later emigrates to the United States, along with Gerhard, in 1952.

Mutti Hubener (Emma)

Mutti is Helmuth, Hans and Gerhard's mother. She lives in a small flat next to her parents, Oma and Opa. Her parents check in on her sons while she works the night shift at a local nursing home. She divorced Gerhard and Hans' father, and never married Helmuth's father. Helmuth sees her as very hardworking and always tired. She tried to teach Helmuth the value of staying silent in situations involving conflict. But as time goes on, Helmuth seems to see this as more of a weakness than a noble quality. She often says it is all one can do sometimes to remain silent. When Helmuth is still young, she marries Hugo Hubener, who tries to be a father-figure to her sons. Despite his



flaws, he treats Mutti with respect and a loving nature, which is something it appears she finds comforting. Mutti dies in 1945 during mass bombing in Hamburg.

Oma

Oma is Mutti's mother and Helmuth's grandmother. She lives in a flat with her husband, Opa, next to Mutti and the boys. She is very kind and fearful of the Nazis. Opa is often heard calming her. Helmuth enjoys her wonderful cooking. She dies in 1945 during the mass bombing of Hamburg.

Opa

Opa is Mutti's mother and Helmuth's grandfather. He lives in a flat with his wife, Oma, next to Mutti and the boys. Opa is very vocal about the Nazis and Hitler's fanaticism. However, he does not speak publicly or take the bold steps that Helmuth does. It is possible that his anti-Nazi remarks are what first incited Helmuth to question the regime. He dies in 1945 during the mass bombing of Hamburg.

Hugo Hubener

Hugo Hubener is a Nazi Rottenfuhrer, and a strong supporter of Hitler and the Nazi party. He marries Mutti and moves them into a larger flat away from Oma and Opa. He buys Helmuth his first Jungvolk shirt and praises the boys' pro-Nazi behaviors. Always convinced that the war will end swiftly, it is only at the end of the novel that he seems to understand that Hitler will never be satisfied. After Helmuth is executed, Gerhard Kunkel recalls Hugo softening, perhaps reflective of his past misconceptions.

Karl Heinz Schnibbe

Karl is one of Helmuth's two best friends and a fellow Mormon. Helmuth shows him his contraband radio, and he listens eagerly. Karl also helps Helmuth distribute anti-Nazi fliers. He is eventually arrested by the Gestapo and serves time in a concentration camp until joining the army to reduce his sentence. He is captured by the Russians and released five years after the war ends. He emigrates to the United States in 1952.

Rudi Wobbe

Rudi is one of Helmuth's two best friends and a fellow Mormon. Helmuth shows him his contraband radio, and although very hesitant at first, he eventually listens regularly. Rudi also helps Helmuth distribute anti-Nazi fliers. He is eventually arrested by the Gestapo and serves time in a concentration camp until his release when the war ends. He emigrates to the United States in 1952.

Hitler

Adolph Hitler is the antagonist of *The Boy Who Dared*. First the Chancellor and then Fuhrer of Germany, he was the leader of the Nazi party. Seeking to dominate Europe to regain Germany's power that was stripped by the Treaty of Versailles, he ultimately doomed the Fatherland. In 1945, he commits suicide in his bunker when the Allies invade Germany, leaving mass destruction in his wake.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Flat

Helmuth first resides in a small flat with Mutti and his brothers in Hamburg, Germany. The flat is located directly next to his grandparents, who check in on the boys often, while their single mother works nights. The flat represents a safe haven for Helmuth. He's protected from the outside world, can speak freely about whatever is on his mind, and his family enjoys sweet, innocent times there. Helmuth often reflects on the crowded yet comforting bed he shares with his older brothers. Even during his last moments of life, he fondly remembers the feeling of being snuggled in the middle of his brothers, safe from all, calm and "floating". When his mother marries Hugo Hubener, and they move to a larger flat away from his grandparents, the move seems to shatter Helmuth's feeling of security. His safe haven is disrupted, and he braves exposure to the outside world within a foreign environment.

Karl May adventure novel

Helmuth's older brother, Gerhard, enjoys reading Karl May adventure novels. The American novelist captures the wild and free American west, and Helmuth eventually loves the books, as well. When the Nazi's ban foreign books, Helmuth hides Gerhard's books to protect him. He soon learns that Hitler loves Karl May, and the books are not banned. However, this is Helmuth's first realization that the Nazi bans can have a direct, personal affect his basic freedoms under God. The "realness" of that situation is the first time Helmuth beings to open his eyes to the negative potential of far-reaching Nazi control.

Jungvolk

The junior representation of The Nazi Youth, the Jungvolk is Helmuth's first foray into mandatory service for Germany. The sight of the Jungvolk gangs, including their brown shirts, seem to stir rebellious thoughts in young Helmuth. When Hugo presents him with his first Jungvolk shirt when he is older, Helmuth is almost revolted by the oppression and structure it now represents for him.

The Reichstag

The Reichstag or government building is burned as Hitler begins to take power. He goes on national radio and blames the Communists. It's later discovered that Hitler's own troops likely started the fire. However, he wrongfully blamed the Communists to establish a scapegoat to create a greater sense of patriotism for the Germans. The growing fear of the Communist enemy also created German fear, making them



increasingly anxious to protect their Fatherland. The media is all over the story, as Hitler seeks to create a greater divide line between Germany and the rest of the world.

Mormon Articles of Faith

#12 of the Mormon Articles of Faith is to "honor one's country and leaders by obeying, honoring and sustaining all its laws". Helmuth frequently refers to the Mormon Articles of Faith. He bases his behaviors on the Articles, and also questions the actions of the Nazi's against these religious guidelines. Although they dictate he should honor the leaders and government of his country, he constantly questions why their actions seem so contrary to God.

(Shortwave) People's Receiver

The short-wave, Volksempfänger VE 301 only picks up local German stations. During the war, Hitler bans all foreign radio news to protect Germany from enemy propaganda. However, the act makes Helmuth realize that Hitler is actually denying Germans from hearing the true details of the war. The People's Receiver is a short-wave radio that Hitler allows Germans to purchase. It becomes a symbol of resentment and oppression for Helmuth.

The Oberbau

The Oberbau is what Helmuth attends after elementary school. Most of his studies focus upon becoming a good German citizen-soldier. Lessons focus on national honor above all else, including one's own life. As Helmuth matures, he begins to understand the innate evil in these teachings. When he first questions them, he is punished, which leads him to only question more. This is the beginning of his quiet defiance against a structured society he must participate in daily, and it only serves to fuel the fire of his later anti-Nazi actions.

Lord Lister Detective Agency

Helmuth and his good friend, Rudi Wobbe, are excited by a series of stories involving Lord Lister. He is a Victorian-era gentleman thief who is very much like Robin Hood. He protects the weak and punishes the strong, typically by theft. Helmuth finds the stories of heroism and protection intriguing. To stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves is a noble profession. He and Rudi decide to emulate Lord Lister by helping right injustices in their own community. They create the Lord Lister Detective Agency to help the local police tackle unsolved crime that is now rampant. Helmuth even creates business cards.

They go to the local police station and, amazingly, a first skeptical detective decides to give them a murder investigation. In the end, they return with information regarding a



possible suspect, and the Gestapo tell them that they will pursue their lead. In fact, they seem to think their suspect may already be guilty, simply based on the young boys' suspicions. Helmuth sickeningly realizes that the two boys may have just condemned a man solely based upon circumstantial evidence. This occurred often during the Nazi occupation.

The People's Court

The People's Court or so-called Blood Tribunal in Berlin is where Helmuth, Rudi, Karl and Duwer are tried. There is no jury, just a group of justices hearing their case. However, this is anything but reflective of the name "People's". The justices seem to have already made decisions regarding the boys, as evidenced by Helmuth's intense interrogation compared to the others. He's already been found guilty - and moreso than the others - even before evidence is discussed in detail. This is another instance of assumed guilt and paranoia during the Nazi occupation. And it is those things that allowed the Nazi's to seize and retain power through fear during this time. At this point in the novel, Helmuth has seen so much of this behavior that he appears fairly numb to the obvious injustice.

Rola Radio

The Rola radio symbolizes freedom for Helmuth. Gerhard purchased the radio on the black market in France and hides it in Opa's closet for use after the war. He warns Helmuth not to listen to it, as it will pick up restricted, foreign propoganda from outside Germany, forbidden by the Nazis. The radio serves as a doorway to free-thinking, inciting Helmuth with the truth outside the borders of silo-ed Germany.



Settings

The Hamburg Flats

Helmuth and his family live in Hamburg within small flats. As a child, he first lives with his mother, Mutti, and two brothers, Hans and Gerhard. Helmuth's mother remarries, and they move to a larger flat away from his grandparents. Except during his incarceration, Helmuth never lives outside of his small, Hamburg community.

School

School has a major impact on Helmuth's perspective of the world. Helmuth's experiences in school are reflective of the German society's evolution around him. As Hitler rises to power, Helmuth sees that even his school lessons take on a darker tone. There is more emphasis on love of country and sacrifice, than individuality and free-thinking. Whereas school should be something a bright student like Helmuth would thrive upon, he begins to dread going, as Nazi-themed teachings increasingly dominate class time.

Jewish Neighborhoods

The Jewish neighborhoods of Hamburg were once thriving centers of art, craftsmanship and delicacies. As the Nazi's assume power, they begin to deteriorate. While once reflective of a diverse and proud society, as the book progresses, it becomes a representation of the breakdown of German society. When Helmuth witnesses the aftermath of the attack on the Grindel district, he is horrified by the blatant evil of the Nazis.

The Social Services Department

The Social Services Department is where Helmuth first secures apprenticeship after graduating from Oberbau. It is there that he meets Werner Kranz, who eventually turns him in to the Gestapo.

Plotzensee Prison

Plotzensee Prison is where Helmuth is sent to await execution. Over 2,200 people were executed as war criminals during the Nazi regime in World War II.



Themes and Motifs

Courage

Courage is one of the biggest themes in this book. Of those that exhibit courage, they do so in different ways. This is not only indicative of the time in which *The Boy Who Dared* takes place, but also a recurring theme throughout history. There are different factors that can determine if/when one might demonstrate courage when faced with adversity or oppression. Some may perceive that they don't have the appropriate tools or support. Others believe that they can show courage while enduring a conflict. Then there are those like Helmuth, who wear their courage outwardly and cannot fathom those who do not take action against all odds.

Helmuth's courage takes time to appear in the novel. He struggles internally with all he witnesses - in school, at home and in the neighborhoods surrounding his home. When his courage struggles to rise to the surface through action, he is tormented. He plays through scenarios in his mind - how can what he sees be real and why does no one act to help? His first acts of courage are evident in the questions he poses at home. First, he questions Gerhard about breaking the law. He seeks validation for his courage, and Gerhard provides him the perfect avenue to exact action, saying it's acceptable to break the law if you are helping someone. Helmuth then intensifies his quest for motivation by questioning Mutti's continued silence. He even goes so far as to question Hugo, who cautions him to watch his step.

Even when Helmuth finds his courage, he is at first cunning enough to realize he can't fight the Nazis in the open. Conditions are simply too hostile, and he relies on his wits to encourage alternative thinking in his community (the pamphlets) while still protecting himself and his family. His secretive actions are no less effective, when he is the clear minority during such a hostile time. Conversely, those like Brother Worbes are careless enough to arouse suspicion in the open, perhaps the most dangerous and fruitless path at that particular time.

It is not until the end of the novel that Helmuth's courage overshadows his cunning. He becomes so courageous that he is apt to take risks, openly soliciting fuel for his actions regardless of consequences (Werner's French translation). Helmuth's courage is also contagious, inciting his friends to join him in distributing the leaflets. Yet it is also his courage that prompts Helmuth to take full blame for all of their actions, after he takes time to regain his cunning when first incarcerated.

There's a clear division between those that exhibit courage and those who do not. Helmuth's mother, Mutti, is an example of someone who doesn't show courage, at least on the outside. She simply endures, which can be perceived as courageous in that she somehow "carries on". She witnesses the injustice in her community - and household - yet remains silent. She tells Helmuth that that is all some people can do. It's almost as if she urges Helmuth to do the same for his own safety and probably sanity. It's safer.



However, Helmuth, who does openly exude courage through his outward actions, seems to resent Mutti's silence as he grows older. This is the continual conflict between the two characters, and one which is never resolved. When Helmuth needs Mutt's support in the past, her silence reaffirms to him the fact that he was left unprotected in a hostile environment. In effect, she is a significant catalyst to her son discovering his own courage to account for her lack thereof.

To a lesser degree, Helmuth sees Gerhard in the same light as Mutti. Gerhard is more vocal about the injustice of the Nazis, but he chooses to "lay low" in lieu of taking action against it. Helmuth has more respect for Brother Wobbes, who is punished by the Nazis for speaking freely, than he does the silent observers (his family included) who refuse to object.

Fear

Fear is a common thread between each and every character in *The Boy Who Dared*. Even those most brave, like Helmuth, experience an underlying fear of the consequences of their actions. In most instances, characters have to alter their behaviors to placate their fears or even to ensure survival.

Mutti is a character most strongly influenced by her constant fear. Her fear involves anything that happens beyond her flat, as she sees herself as powerless to do anything or say anything that will matter. Helmuth often describes her as tiny, meek, tired and by all accounts beaten by the world. She lives next to her parents, not just for the convenience of helping to raise her sons, but moreso because it's safe. From there, she moves with Hugo, who serves as a new form of protector. Following his every command, she doesn't question his authority or opinions, and he treats her lovingly, like his child. It can even be noted that, as she works nights, she avoids most of the social interactions of her community during the daylight hours. She is seen but not seen, as she has built the perfect cocoon for herself to hide from her biggest fear - the world outside.

Brother Worbs is a character who succumbs to fear over time and only under intense pressure. He's described as a bold, physical presence, filling the room instantly. Although he is fearless (and rather careless) in publicly expressing his views against the Nazis, he eventually is too fearful to speak with Helmuth after his imprisonment. His physicality was essentially used against him, as he was literally beaten into a mental submission completely against his innate boldness. However, his fear is less about himself and more about protecting Helmuth from a fate similar to his own.

Many Germans remain silent about the horrific Nazi acts they witness, but do speak about it privately. Fully understanding and thus fearing the consequences of dissension, they are resolved to being powerless in public. To protect themselves and those they care about - including the Fatherland - they willfully ignore their surroundings and situation. According to Mutti, in the face of this kind of fear, it is all some people can do sometimes.



Characters like Oma and Opa are examples of this behavior in that they disagree with Nazi beliefs, yet are too fearful to openly take action against it. They knew Hitler was a warmonger even before he was Fuhrer, yet they don't speak against him beyond their flat. Protection of family - at the sacrifice of others and their own belief systems - is how they process their overwhelming fear of punishment. Intelligent and brave citizens, fear still paralyzes them from seeking like minds to take action and overcome the tyranny around them.

On the other hand, Helmuth does overcome his fear of the unknown and take action. He does seek like minds in the form of his closest friends. He does boldly face Gestapo interrogation and seek to clear his friends by assuming blame for all their crimes against the regime. Helmuth never lets fear dictate his courses of action. In fact, the only time he does feel fear is when his actions might affect those around him who do exhibit fear. The regrets he considers on his execution day revolve around causing anxiety - and more fear - within his family.

Freedom

Throughout *The Boy Who Dared*, Helmuth believes in the basic right of freedom. A devout Mormon, he believes that, In the eyes of God, all are born free. And according to the pre-Hitler laws of his country, citizens are given the freedom to think and act originally, with no interference (within reason) from the government. Freedom of speech is what especially dries Helmuth - the right to not only speak freely, but also to listen freely to diverse thoughts and opinions. Helmuth's treasonous act of listening to a foreign news report is seemingly benign in light of these basic freedoms. But during the Nazi regime that restricted these rights, even that is a small freedom worth fighting for, for those strong enough to recognize it.

As Hitler comes to power, more and more individual freedoms are waived to "protect the Fatherland" from outside domination. Germans are strong-armed into waiving rights even further in the name of returning the Fatherland to its former glory and even punishing those responsible for its decline in part due to the Treaty of Versailles. However, it is human nature to seek freedom at the individual level. In the face of Nazi oppression, only a minority of German citizens sought to openly fight to regain their basic freedoms, such as freedom of speech and religious practice. Nazi influence and induced paranoia had such a stronghold over the country, that many were fearful of the negative impacts those freedoms might actually bring about.

Mutti is an example of a character who chose to forego freedom. She hides in a flat beside her parents. In most instances, children seek freedom from their parents at a mature age. Yet, Mutti seeks solace there, willingly giving up her freedom. At time, Helmuth notes she seems strained or bites her lip when talking about living there. But to protect herself - like most "good" German citizens at that time - she foregoes living freely and endures the consequences. Childlike, she does the same when she marries Hugo and follows his every command and whim.



Hitler is a character who seeks freedom, but at the cost of every other citizen's. His search for freedom involves his own personal desire to dominate. While he stamps out the individual freedoms of everyone around him, he intimidates and induces paranoia to further his agenda. In this sense, he abuses the right of freedom. It's a wholly-selfish act, and he lacks the moral baseline of a true leader to comprehend what he does is completely wrong. It's interesting that when Hitler first seeks power, he promises the Germans freedom from the oppression of the Treaty of Versailles. But in the end, he is the one who oppresses their freedom far beyond the restrictions of the war reparations.

Gerhard asserts his freedom in a different way. He leaves his home as soon as he is able, but only goes so far as to live at his grandparents. He takes small steps to seek freedom, but seems hesitant to fully establish himself. His military service offers further "freedom", however that is forced upon him and not based upon any personal decisions.

Helmuth is the only character who not only pursues freedom, but also incites others to pursue it, as well. While they are all punished in the end, he still fights even when sentenced to death. His final battle is facing The Blood Tribunal to fight for the freedom of his accomplices. Even if they received a reduced sentence, he would ensure that they would know freedom in some form, at some point in time.

Camaraderie

Helmuth and his two best friends, Rudi and Karl, shared a level of camaraderie that withstands persecution by the Nazis. It is that bonded friendship that entices Karl and Rudi to listen to Helmuth's radio, trusting their friend that it is okay to dissent from the injustice happening all around them. During their interrogations and trials, Helmuth only seeks to protect his friends as much as possible by assuming full blame for influencing his friends. It's his ultimate sacrifice for his friends, his Mormon brothers, his greatest allies in the pursuit of freedom (which is closest to his heart).

The camaraderie between Helmuth and his brothers is not as overt as with his friends. However, his specific bond with Gerhard is still strong. They share a camaraderie of practicality and intelligence. While Helmuth frequently mocks Gerhard's "know-it-all" personality and actions, he is quite similar to his older brother. The only difference between the two is Helmuth's courage and carelessness in using his practical and intelligent nature to devise tactics to overcome the evil occurring around him.

The camaraderie experienced by members of the Church of Latter Day Saints is an underlying theme throughout the novel. Helmuth feels some of his greatest joy attending church services. However, he speaks more of his Mormon brothers than any sermons shared. When he experiences his first taste of freedom living with his grandparents, he takes on a church secretary position and writes to his Mormon brothers at the front. He feels great anger that they are sacrificing their lives for the Nazis, and is unsettled by a deep desire to protect them.



The Jungvolk and Gestapo are other examples of camaraderie. However, their brotherly bonds are based upon thoughts that are the polar opposite of the other characters noted. Paranoia, fear, power and elitism bond these groups. While they first seek to protect their Fatherland, they become drunk on power and feed off each other's similar goals. A mob mentality ensues, leaving a path of destruction in the wake of their group actions.

Survival

Characters in the novel define their means for survival in different ways. While some remain silent to protect themselves like Mutti, others develop a fervent support of the Nazis like Hugo. Then there are characters like Helmuth, who are challenged by their constant internal struggle to fight for freedom, which they see as pivotal to their sense of personal survival. Unfortunately for the millions of victims of the Nazi regime, their survival was sacrificed to serve the existence of Hitler's twisted ideology. Fortunately, it wasn't able to survive itself, as the allies ensured that freedom prevailed.

The pride of the German people is also something that survives. However, over time, this has evolved into something more understanding and inclusive. After World War I, German prosperity and European respect suffered as a result of the Treaty of Versailles. However, their innate sense of national pride in the Fatherland endured. It was this survival of pride that ultimately led to the temporary demise of Germany, dividing in the heart - east and west separated until decades later. It was this survival instinct that contributed to Hitler's rapid ascent to power, as he promised Germany would not only survive but thrive.

The Nazis threatened the survival of not only their own people, but many of the countries around them. They altered the survival of Poland, France, Greece and Italy to name just a few. They dictated that only those who followed would survive. And so, many countries had no other choice but to follow.

One of the most profound acts of survival in the novel - and more-so in this era - is that of the Jewish people. Hitler was bent on their extinction, citing the Jews as the cause of hardship and lack of prosperity in Germany. He cultivated such a deep dislike of the Jews and all they represented, that it was easy for him to facilitate their deaths. While many Germans were not aware of the total atrocities committed within the "work camps", many did and actively participated. And yet, the proud Jewish people endured in what is perhaps the most astonishing acts of survival in history.

Styles

Point of View

In *The Boy Who Dared*, the author presents the story in third person omniscient point-of-view. There is no first-person account by Helmuth Hubener, so the author relied on eyewitness interviews and historical accounts. These were quite detailed, as she was able to interview many survivors, including Helmuth's brother Gerhard, and his friends, Rudi and Karl. Her third-person depiction is the perfect presentation, in that by all accounts, it seems to capture quite well the personality and determination of Helmuth.

Whether the action occurs in Plotzensee Prison or in various flashbacks to different pivotal moments throughout Helmuth's life, the point-of-view is seamless and appropriate. Readers are indirectly afforded glimpses, however, of some of Helmuth's first-person point-of-view. Through the sharing of the content of some of Helmuth's school essays, the pamphlets and even his final note to Gerhard from Plotzensee Prison, it enhances the reader's understanding of his internal struggle to establish personal freedom and overcome the Nazi tyranny.

Language and Meaning

The vocabulary and language presentation of *The Boy Who Dared* is very understandable and appropriate for the high school level. It might also be appropriate for middle school readers, as the writing is fairly straightforward, using less sophisticated vocabulary and containing minimal objective language or violence. There is no deep, descriptive language. In fact, the telling is quite clipped and even rather formal. The overall presentation might even be compared to the stereotypical image and tone of a German citizen, especially at this point in history. Organized, to the point and absent of extensive, emotional introspection.

It is unknown if the author intended to mirror language with these perceptions. However, the piece reads more like a newspaper account than similar yet more emotionally-embellished works of historical fiction. The most descriptive language comes at the end of the novel, as Helmuth faces imminent death in the form of execution. At the time of his death, he will finally "earn" the freedoms he so desperately tried to attain in life, but in Heaven.

Structure

The story is structured within two points of action - the present of 1942 within Helmuth's prison cell, and the other in a long series of flashbacks. However, all is theoretically set in the present, as Helmuth is reliving his life in 1942, during the final hours of that life. Perhaps as a tribute to the rationale behind his defiance, Helmuth thinks about the pivotal moments that defined his motivations. While events occur in quick succession at

the end of the novel, they are more sporadic in the beginning: Helmuth's first encounter with Nazi soldiers at the parade; the patriotic yet misguided lessons at the Oberbau; the introduction of Hugo Hubener.

It should also be noted that Bartoletti added a timeline and photo section to the end of the novel. These might also be considered a part of the structural storytelling, in that they present the most fact-based account of events at that time. It is critical to refer to the Third Reich Timeline to understand concurrent world events that shaped the real life occurrences within Helmuth's life. The photos allow readers to look into the eyes of Helmuth, his friends and family - and even the prison in which he perished.



Quotes

A smart boy! And brave! Already he wants to fight for the Fatherland...
-- Nazi soldier (Chapter 1928 paragraph 5)

Importance: This is the first time in the novel Helmuth receives praise from his society - and it's in the form of potential to serve it. After a day of feeling inferior to his brothers, he is validated with self-worth.

Come to the parade. Watch Germany awaken. Germany needs soldiers like you, to fight for the Fatherland.
-- Nazi soldier (Chapter 1933 paragraph 3)

Importance: This is the second time a soldier compliments Helmuth with the added request of him serving the Fatherland. This is considered the highest praise. And at this point in Helmuth's young life, he is giddy over the idea of being recognized as an outstanding prospect.

...if that lunatic Hitler comes to power ... That will mean only one thing, War. That warmonger wants to make his mark on history.
-- Opa (Chapter 1932 paragraph 6)

Importance: Opa's quote represents the free-thinking and honesty in the environment in which he grew up. His grandfather is quite vocal within the confines of his own small flat. However, he is protective of his family and urges them to be silent and smart in the community.

Hitler will get Germany out of this mess! No more unemployment! No more inflation! He will bring jobs! Food for our tables!
-- A teacher (Chapter 1933 paragraph 5)

Importance: This quotes represents the general thinking of many German citizens when Hitler was voted Chancellor of the Reich. His campaign was built upon promises of better living conditions and regained respect for the Fatherland. It isn't until later that his personal agenda of mass domination destroy the very thing he claimed to fight for.

If you choose to break the law to help someone else or keep someone from harm, then it's justified.
-- Gerhard (Chapter 1933 paragraph 1)

Importance: Gerhard is Helmuth's practical voice of reason. Here, they discuss the Mormon Articles of Faith, specifically their duty to honor their leaders and country, obeying all laws. Helmuth questions following laws that are unjust, and if it's ever okay to break the law. Gerhard's answer motivates Helmuth to consider the possibility that sometimes it is the more righteous path to disobey.



Hugo bought me the shirt and paid the dues. I couldn't refuse. But don't mistake me for a Nazi. I'm nothing like Hugo.

-- Helmuth (Chapter 1938 paragraph 4)

Importance: Helmuth's disdain for the Nazis begins to occur almost at the same time Hugo Hubener enters his life. When Hugo presents him with his first Jungvolk uniform shirt, for the first time publicly, he clearly defines himself as opposed to what it stands for - as well as what Hugo stands for.

How can you? You heard the news. How can you not say anything?

-- Helmuth (Chapter 1938 paragraph 5)

Importance: Helmuth finally confronts Mutti about her longstanding silence, even though she sees all the events around her. When Hugo participates in the Nazi raids on the Jewish neighborhoods, Helmuth cannot fathom her silence. She replies that she doesn't expect him to understand, but that "silence is how people get on sometimes." This is a final and decisive division between Helmuth and Mutti.

He's not deranged or dead. He's sitting in a British jail.

-- Helmuth (Chapter 1941 paragraph 4)

Importance: Helmuth tells Rudi and Karl that missing Rudolf Hess, third-highest Nazi officer and Hitler's closest friend, has deserted. German news reports that Hess had an accident over the North Sea, which is a lie. Helmuth learned the truth from his Rola radio, a fact he inadvertently lets slip to his friends here.

Of course I trust you! It was for your own protection, your own safety-

-- Helmuth (Chapter 1941 paragraph 6)

Importance: Helmuth defends his actions in not telling Rudi and Karl about the listening to the radio individually. He does all he can to avoid raising Gestapo suspicion, and appeals to his best friends that he acted in their interests. Helmuth continues to fight on their behalf, even after they are caught distributing the leaflets later in the book.

We're all under eighteen. Even if we are caught, we won't be tried as adults.

-- Helmuth (Chapter 1941 paragraph 5)

Importance: Helmuth, Rudi and Karl discuss the potential consequences of being caught by the Gestapo for distributing leaflets. In the end, Helmuth is tried as an adult, based upon his maturity beyond his years, as proven by The Blood Tribunal.

When the Gestapo question you, you'll admit to anything just to get the pain to stop.

-- Brother Worbs (Chapter 1941 paragraph 4)

Importance: Brother Worbs tells Helmuth very little about his incarceration or interrogation. However, his words stay with Helmuth. When he, himself, is interrogated by the Gestapo, he fully realizes that Brother Worbs spoke the truth.



This is the work of a person far above eighteen years. This is no immature youth! The people must be protected from traitors like him! The Fatherland is at stake!
-- Justice Fikeis (Chapter 1942 paragraph 4)

Importance: This quote represents all the paranoia and injustice of the Nazi regime. A 17-year-old who distributes fliers faces the death penalty, as it is considered an act of high treason.