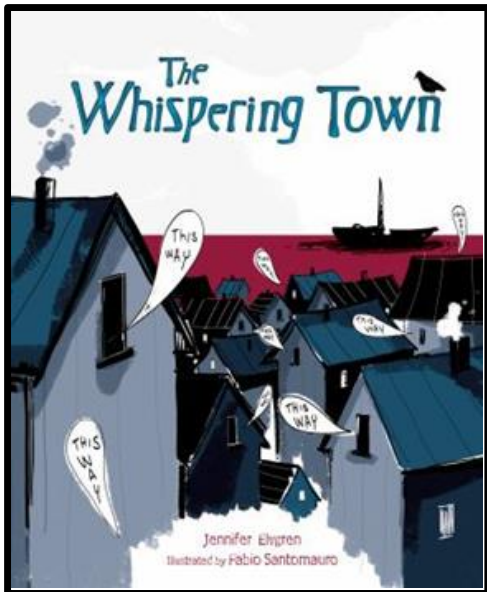


**Exploring Perspective Taking and
Empathy**
***“The Whispering Town”* by Jennifer Elgren**
and illustrated by Fabio Santomauro

Prior to reading the book, *“The Whispering Town,”* discuss with a group or partner the definitions of perspective, perspective taking, and empathy below, and what they mean to you.

1. What is perspective?
A way of thinking about something based on a personal point of view.
2. What is perspective taking?
When we look at a situation from someone else’s point of view, or we “put ourselves in their shoes.”
3. What is empathy?
The ability to share in someone else’s feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person’s situation.



Read the title of the story *The Whispering Town*.

Does the title provide additional clues to the story?

How does the title support the illustration on the book cover?

Describe what you see in the illustration on the book cover?

By reading the title and observing the illustration, can you make a prediction about the story?

How does the illustration provide clues to the topic of the story?

As a class - Read *The Whispering Town* together

Below are five sets of discussion questions—A through D. Prior to each set of questions, read, and explain the bolded paragraph. The bolded paragraph emphasizes an aspect of perspective, perspective taking, and empathy. The discussion questions that follow pertain to the bolded paragraph. This allows children to discuss the story in relation to learning about the skill set necessary in perspective taking and developing empathy. This skill set leads to creating safer spaces that are inclusive of different points of view.

NOTE: Set E discussion questions are related to the story and the images in the exhibition, *Resistance and Rescue: Denmark and the Holocaust*.

Read/Explain:

A. The social skills of perspective taking and the ability to empathize help us to create support systems. A support system could be a network of family, friends, or peers that allows us to seek understanding, perceive differences, and gain awareness in various situations.

Discuss these questions after reading the book together as a class.

A. Discussion Questions

Think about Anett and Carl's perspective on the situation.

How would you describe Anett's perspective of the situation?

How would you describe Carl's perspective of the situation?

Are there other characters' perspectives that were significant?

If so, which character(s)?

How did their perspective(s) have an impact on you?

Describe the support systems in *The Whispering Town*.

How do you think Anett would describe her support system?

How do you think Carl would describe his support system?

How did the characters display empathy toward each other in the beginning of the story?

Read/Explain:

B. When we seek understanding, we listen to one another. Often it is helpful to respond, “What I heard you say was...”. That way, we can check our understanding of what we heard and acknowledge the other person’s perspective of the situation.

B. Discussion Questions

Describe the ways the characters listened to each other.

What skills are necessary to listen to the concerns of others?

How did you develop your listening skills?

How does listening to each other create a more empathic space?

How does listening to someone contribute to your understanding of their situation?

How do you think empathy helps to create solutions to serious problems?

Read/Explain:

C. When we perceive differences, we realize that our lived experience is different from someone else’s lived experience. To avoid assumptions from our perspective, consider the circumstances, preferences, and cultural influences of another person.

C. Discussion Questions

What differences did you notice between Anett and Carl?

How did those differences make you feel?

What other differences did you notice in the story? How did those differences impact you?

How did Anett’s family consider the circumstances of Carl’s family?

How did Carl’s family consider the circumstances of Anett’s family?

Why is it important to be considerate?

How does consideration help us understand each other’s lived experiences?

Read/Explain:

D. When we gain awareness, we gather information related to the situation. That knowledge informs our understanding and allows us to respond, ideally moving toward a positive outcome inclusive of different perspectives.

D. Discussion Questions

In your opinion, how did Anett gather information related to the situation?

How did Carl gain awareness of Anett's situation?

In your opinion, how did Anett and Carl demonstrate understanding towards each other?

Why is it important to seek understanding in difficult situations?

A response is the consideration of a positive outcome. By responding, one thinks through the steps to move forward to positive resolution.

How do you think Anett, and her family felt about the results of their efforts?

What feelings do you think Carl and his mother experienced as they made their way to the harbor?

What about their feelings on the boat to Sweden?

How do you think Carl and his mother felt when they reached the safety of Sweden? How do you think Carl, and his family felt about the results of Anett's efforts?

How do you think Carl, and his family felt about the results of their neighbor's efforts?

Explain:

E. As you explore the images in the exhibition, think about what you learned in the story, *The Whispering Town*. As you look at the portraits, focus on understanding the reality of differences, and the insight that awareness provides.

E. Discussion Questions

What do you think their perspective of the situation was?

How did empathy play a role in their decisions to help the Danish Jews?

Why is it important to be considerate, caring, and to collaborate when people need help?

Why is it vital that we remember the story of *The Whispering Town*?