



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 12+; year 7 and up

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and creative thinking; Ethical understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Study how fairytales old and new are incorporated into the story.
- Consider how the author creates character, dramatic events and setting through evocative description and language.
- Explore ethical dilemmas in a fictional setting.
- Reflect on the historical context of the story and setting.

THEMES

- Grimm's Fairy Tales
- Secrets
- Life in Nazi Germany during WWII
- Identity
- Bravery and courage to stand against tyranny
- Moral and ethical dilemmas

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

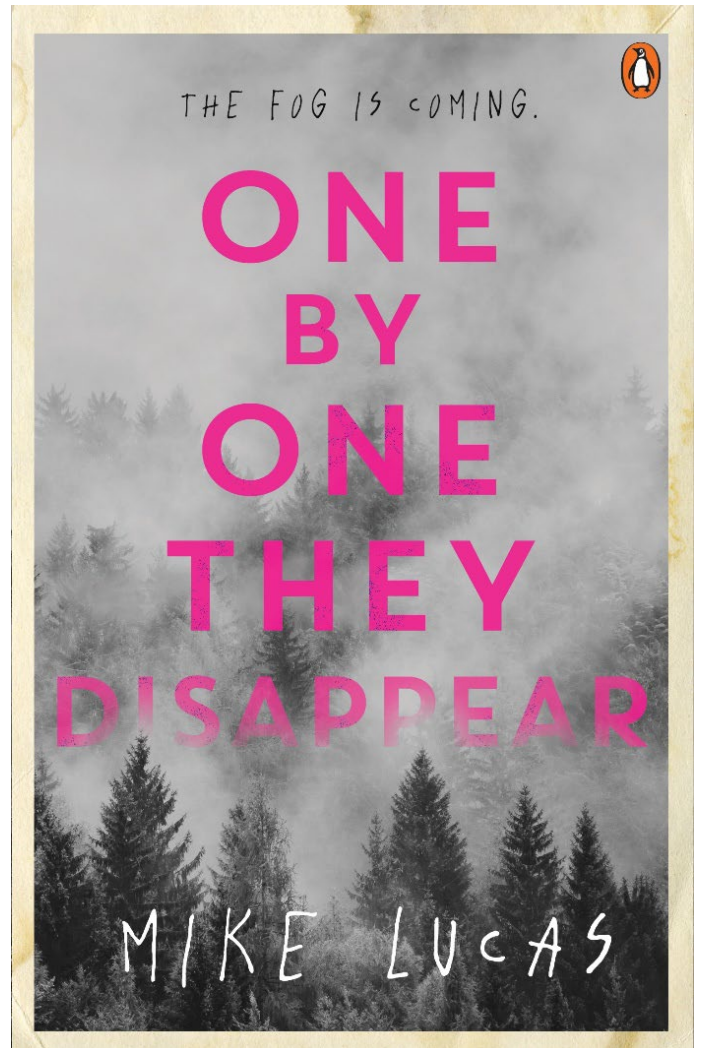
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One by One They Disappear Mike Lucas

PLOT SUMMARY

The fog is coming. And when it does, everything disappears . . .

One girl. Two identities. Three friends.

One disappears. One forgets. One remembers.

There is truth in every tale . . . Find it!

An unputdownable YA novel with elements of fairytale and the supernatural that chills to the bone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Lucas is the author of several picture books including CBCA Notable Book *Olivia's Voice*. He has also written and published several books of children's poetry, has had work highly commended in magazines and contributed to poetry anthologies. Mike is one of the main organisers of the Adelaide Festival of Children's Books and an Honorary Member of the CBCA (SA). He presents writing and poetry workshops at schools, owns a bookshop in Blackwood, South Australia, and works as a full-time engineer. He doesn't sleep much. In 2022, Mike's first YA novel *What We All Saw* was published and shortlisted for the Readings Book Prize – Young Adult 2022, CBCA Book of the Year Award – Older Readers 2023 and the Prime Minister's Literary Award – Young Adult 2023.

Find out more about Mike at: mikelucas.com.au



AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Mike says:

'I started writing *One by One They Disappeared* under the working title *Forgotten*. It all came about when I had a fairytale style idea of a small mountain village where, on a certain day of the year, it was said that any child who should leave their footprints in the snow would be stolen away from their home and disappear from the memory of their family, friends and the world forever. It soon became a tale based in World War II Germany and took on a more serious, sinister tone, requiring more extensive research and historical veracity.'

TEXTUAL ELEMENTS

Narrative structure

One by One They Disappear begins with a chapter set in 1811, telling the story of the Grimm brothers visiting an old woman on their mission to collect folk and fairytales.

- Why do you think the author included this chapter? Did you find the end of this chapter chilling? At what point or points of the story does the relevance of this chapter become clear to you? What happens in the climax and ending of the story to make this chapter relevant?
- What other books have you read that feature a prologue or first chapter that is set at a different time or place to the rest of the story? Are there certain genres of story that use this technique more often? Do you think this is an effective way to start a story? Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of prologue.

Chapters Two to Thirteen then alternate back and forth in time between where Hannah is now (on a train to the mountains), and what has happened to her in her life up until now to get to this point.

- Why did the author choose this plot structure for the narrative rather than a linear chronology? What information is withheld and then revealed within this structure? How does it increase the tension to be fed information about Hannah's past interspersed among scenes set in the present?
- Why does the story settle down into the present time when Hannah arrives in the mountains at Aunt Maud's lodge?

Perspective

The story is written with a third-person narration but with a limited perspective – the narrator only knows the thoughts and motivations of main character Hannah, not the other characters in the story.

- What other narratives have you read that feature a third-person limited narration? Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of this point of view. What limits are placed on the story because of the limited perspective of only being able to see or know what the main character knows?
- In this story, Mike has employed an extra plot element where Hannah can leave her body when she is asleep, and is able to travel around and see and hear other people, without them seeing or hearing her. Why has Mike chosen to add this supernatural element to the story? Make a table noting the points at which Hannah leaves her body,



what she learns during each of these 'flights' that she would not have known otherwise, and how that information is relevant to the plot.

Character

Main characters in *One by One They Disappear* include Hannah, Aunt Maud, Josef, Elias, Frau Meinhardt, Oberstleutnant Kessler, and George.

- Consider who the protagonists and antagonists of the story are as you read. Does your opinion change at different points throughout the story? What actions or events change your mind?
- What is Hannah's character arc in this story? What struggles and setbacks and conflicts does she face? What does she learn during the story? How does she grow and change because of what she has learned or overcome?
- Hannah's opinion of Aunt Maud changes from when she meets her to the end of the story. Make a list of Aunt Maud's actions or dialogue that cause Hannah to re-evaluate her opinion. Does Aunt Maud's character come through more so in what she says, or what she does? Are there non-verbal cues that help Hannah to understand her new guardian better?
- Choose one of the three main child characters and make a mind map to list their characteristics. What do they wear? How do they act? How do they feel? What is their family background? What traits or words would you associate with that character? Include examples that support your word choices.

FAIRYTALES

Mike Lucas was inspired to create his own fairytales within this story, while also weaving into the novel the background of the Brothers Grimm travelling around to collect fairytales and folklore and then publish them.

The intertextuality of including the Brothers Grimm and their collection of fairy tales, both in a prologue featuring the brothers themselves, and as a book Hannah reads, adds layers of meaning to *One by One They Disappear*.

- Which fairytales by the Brothers Grimm do you know? For example:
 - Hansel and Gretel
 - Little Red Riding Hood
 - Cinderella
 - Rapunzel
 - Sleeping Beauty
 - Rumpelstiltskin

- The Frog Prince

- Did you know that the original Grimm fairytales are much darker and more violent and gruesome than the Disney or other versions we usually know today? These fairytales did not have happy endings and were often considered inappropriate for children. Choose a fairytale you know, and read the original Grimm version. Make a table to compare it with the version you know. What has changed? What is the same? What aspects of the original story would be considered unacceptable today, and why?
- What fairytales do you think most inspired *One by One They Disappear*? For instance, are there particular fairytales or story tropes that these story elements remind you of? Here are some examples to consider:
 - The red coat that Hannah wears
 - The dark forest
 - Mentions of wolves and bears
 - The castle
 - The woman who tells the story to the Brothers Grimm in the first chapter
- The story contains several original fairytales created by the author that are variations on a theme. Consider these stories-within-a-story:
 - The old woman's story she tells to the Brothers Grimm in Chapter One (pages 1–6)
 - Frau Lister's telling of the legend behind the village superstition known as 'The Old Man's Bones' (pages 198–207)
 - Oberstleutnant Kessler's telling of the tale of Edgar and Otto (pages 272–283).
- Now compare and contrast the stories. What themes are similar across the three? For instance: the aging process (and unnatural ways to prolong youth and beauty); and using magic to make people disappear or be forgotten. What do these themes say about human nature – for instance, emotions such as jealousy or envy, or a hunger for power or desire for revenge?
- Looking at these three stories, consider who is telling the story and what power they hold (if any). Why do they choose to tell this particular story to this particular audience? What are their motivations?
- After reading the novel, read Mike Lucas's Author Note at the end of the book and consider what he says about Hitler's view of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*.



Does this fact surprise you? Do you think fairytales, myths or legends can be used as political propaganda to make people think a certain way? Can you think of any other examples of fairytales or legends being used to influence people's behaviour or morals?

- *Grimms' Fairy Tales* by the Brothers Grimm is still in print today. Why has this collection of tales resonated through the centuries?
- *It had worked. She had stolen his power. He was Rumpelstiltskin, and she had guessed his name.* (page 161) What does Hannah mean when she says Boris was Rumpelstiltskin?
- *'You know,' said Pieter, as they entered a cluster of trees, 'there is no such thing as just fairytales.'*
'What do you mean?'
'What I mean is there is truth in every tale.'
Hannah frowned. 'A frog never turned into a prince when he was kissed.'
'Perhaps not. But maybe that prince felt like a frog until the princess kissed him.'
She had never thought of it like that. It put a whole new meaning into the stories she had read.
'You realise those stories weren't meant for children?'
asked Pieter.
'Why not?'
'Many of them were considered too frightening. And do you know the most amazing thing about them?'
The two looked eyes, and she noticed how one of his pupils was larger than the other, as though he were half in darkness. She shook her head.
'No matter how thick that book is, those brothers collected many more stories that aren't in there. And there are a whole lot more they never got to hear, that have by now been lost forever in the silent voices of those who are gone.' (page 54) Who are the silent voices Pieter is referring to? What kind of people's voices and stories were historically silenced or not considered important or of literary value? Has this changed, or is there more work to do to make sure all voices and stories can be heard?
- *But wishes only came true in fairytales.* (page 173) Consider the conversation between Hannah and Frau Meinhardt on page 173. Do you agree with their opinions on fairytales? Why do we like to read stories where wishes come true?

IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM

One by One They Disappear is layered with metaphor, symbolism and imagery. Here are two examples, but there are many more symbols and recurring images to be found within the book.

Wolves

There are many mentions of wolves in the story – both literal and metaphorical. Here are some quotes and scenes you could analyse for their deeper meanings and subtext.

'And stay within the village. Wolves love a child who cannot run.' (Aunt Maud to Hannah on page 146)

'Are you afraid of the wolves, Elias?' asked Josef.
Elias shook his head. 'No. The soldiers.' (page 152)

And then the first wolf's gaze shifted. It had spotted her. Hannah was no longer feeling the cold, only those hungry eyes upon her.

'Stay still, Sofia,' pleaded Josef.

'What?' Every piece of her wanted to run.

'Trust me. We get taught. In school.' (page 257)

'And he told me to give you a message, Sofia . . . He said to tell you he would see you at the castle. And the wolves were waiting.' (Josef to Hannah, page 368)

Wolves are also a key element in the Oberstleutnant's tale of Edgar and Otto (pages 276–281).

- The wolves in the story are real, but the author also uses their presence and threat metaphorically. Who else could be the 'wolves' in the story, and why?
- What other wolf-related metaphors or sayings can you think of? Does your knowledge of these metaphors add to your understanding of how wolves are seen in this story? For example, consider the saying: 'wolf in sheep's clothing' – could this apply to a character or characters in the story? If so, who, and why?
- What other stories featuring wolves have you read or seen? For instance, there are many stories about werewolves. Why do humans consider wolves such a ripe subject for storytelling? What does our interest in wolves tell us about humanity?

Fog

'The fog is coming,' said Elias, and Hannah tore her thoughts away to look at where he was pointing.

'That's odd,' she said.

'That's normal,' replied Josef.

As Hannah watched, the little that remained of the mountain began to disappear. It unrolled itself down the mountain, metre by metre, eating whatever was in its path, as though the world were slowly closing its eyes. Hannah felt a sense of foreboding as all that she could see shrank. She turned to face the mountains behind her, and they, too, were vanishing little by little.

'There's nothing normal about that,' she said, buttoning up her coat. Elias moved in between her and Josef.

'Maybe not in the city,' explained Josef. 'But it comes in like that around this time every year. And when it comes,



it stays.'

The trees and houses on the edge of the village were beginning to fade. The church steeple had lost its red hue.

Everything was turning grey and washed out.

Hannah had never seen anything like it. An irrational part of her feared that the world was being wiped out for good and that, when the fog reached them, they would be snuffed out like candles.

Fog is a naturally occurring weather event in many places – especially high in the mountains, where this story is set. However, Mike Lucas has almost made the fog a character in the story, as it becomes so significant to events and adds such an ominous pall over the atmosphere in the village.

- Find other mentions of the fog in the story. Are they neutral descriptions or do they add to the mood or tone of the scene?
- Does the fog ever help or hinder the characters? In what ways?
- What does the fog obscure or hide?
- Could the fog be a metaphor for other themes of the story – for instance, the way secrets are kept or the way the terrifying plans of the Nazi soldiers are obscured or hidden?

MORE BOOKS SET DURING WWII

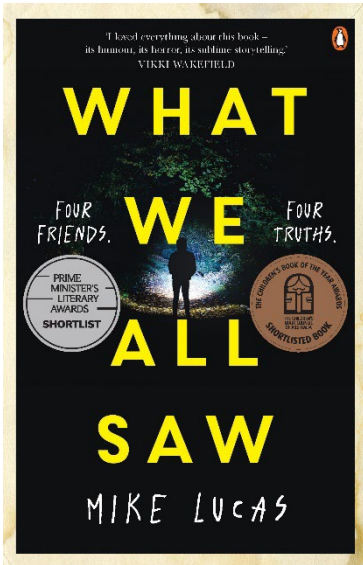
You might like to read and study other books set during WWII and the Holocaust, to deepen your understanding of this period of modern history, and further explore themes of bravery and courage, what life was like during wartime, and standing up against tyranny, discrimination and injustice.

Here are some books you could read:

- *Once* by Morris Gleitzman
- *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank
- *The Forgotten Pearl* by Belinda Murrell
- *Goodnight Mister Tom* by Michelle Magorian
- *White Bird* by R. J. Palacio
- *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* by Judith Kerr
- *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne
- *Between Shades of Grey* by Ruta Sepetys
- *The Boy and the Spy* by Felice Arena



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



What We All Saw
by Mike Lucas

Mike's first YA novel also has a theme of storytelling and how stories can be twisted by the teller.

Witches only exist in stories. Everyone knows that. But what if the stories are real?

FOUR FRIENDS. FOUR TRUTHS. ONE NIGHTMARE.

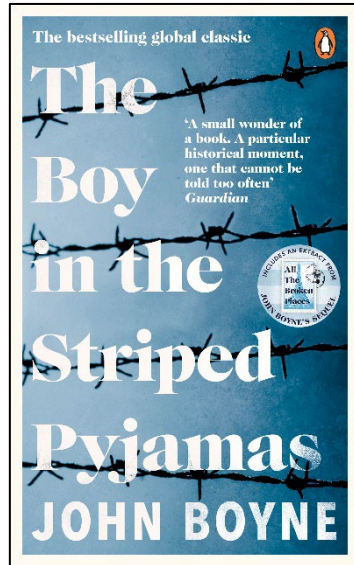
If you wander into the wood ...

If you hear scratching sounds from the Old Quarry ...

If you go too close to the edge ...

WATCH. OUT.

Teachers' notes available.



The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas
by John Boyne

Nine-year-old Bruno knows nothing of the Final Solution and the Holocaust. He is oblivious to the appalling cruelties being inflicted on the people of Europe by his country. All he knows is that he has been moved from a comfortable home in Berlin to a house in a desolate area where there is nothing to do and no one to play with. Until he meets Shmuel, a boy who lives a strange parallel existence on the other side of the adjoining wire fence and who, like the other people there, wears a uniform of striped pyjamas.

Bruno's friendship with Shmuel will take him from innocence to revelation. And in exploring what he is unwittingly a part of, he will inevitably become subsumed by the terrible process.

Teachers' notes available.



Grimms' Fairy Tales
by The Brothers Grimm

From the land of fantastical castles, vast lakes and deep forests, the Brothers Grimm collected a treasury of enchanting folk and fairy stories full of giants and dwarfs, witches and princesses, magical beasts and cunning children. From classics such as 'The Frog-Prince' and 'Hansel and Grettel' to the delights of 'Ashputtel' or 'Old Sultan', all hold a timeless magic which has enthralled children for centuries.



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
<i>One By One They Disappear</i>	Mike Lucas	9781761049866	7+	\$19.99		
<i>What We All Saw</i>	Mike Lucas	9781761045936	7+	\$19.99		
<i>The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas</i>	John Boyne	9780552773805	7+	\$22.99		
<i>Grimms' Fairy Tales</i>	Brothers Grimm, Jacob Grimm	9780241621196	5+	\$32.99		
<i>Once</i>	Morris Gleitzman	9780143301950	5+	\$16.99		
<i>The Diary of a Young Girl</i>	Anne Frank	9780141315188	7+	\$22.99		
<i>The Forgotten Pearl</i>	Belinda Murrell	9780857986962	5+	\$17.99		
<i>Goodnight Mister Tom</i>	Michelle Magorian	9780141354804	7+	\$14.99		
<i>White Bird</i>	R. J. Palacio	9780241399699	7+	\$27.99		
<i>When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit</i>	Judith Kerr	9780142414088	7+	\$17.99		
<i>Between Shades of Gray</i>	Ruta Sepetys	9780593404850	7+	\$29.99		
<i>The Boy and the Spy</i>	Felice Arena	9780143309284	5+	\$16.99		
TOTAL						

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