

Overview
Lois’s Story: A Young Girl’s Inspiration Helps Stop Hate and Fear
By Ed Edelson, Illustrated by Betty Ann Medeiros
EDUCATOR GUIDE

This guide was created for educators to support the implementation of *Lois’s Story: A Young Girl’s Inspiration Helps Stop Hate and Fear* by Ed Edelson and illustrated by Betty Ann Medeiros. Specifically, the guide includes 1) a section on alignment to standards, 2) a before reading section for activating as well as building background knowledge, 3) discussion questions and possible helpful language for during reading, laid out chapter by chapter, 4) some extension ideas, and 5) related resource links.

During the 2020-2021 school year, this educator guide was developed in partnership with author Ed Edelson, Rabbi Eric Polokoff of B’nai Israel in Southbury, and Erin Birden who is serving as Teacher in Residence for Diversity & Cultural Competency for Region 15 Public Schools. This guide was offered to grade 4 classroom teachers as one option for teachers to use in the context of their Grade 4 English Language Arts curricular unit on Historical Fiction. In this curricular unit, “children practice reading analytically, synthesizing complicated narratives, comparing and contrasting themes, and incorporating nonfiction research into their reading” (Heinemann, 2021).

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Grade 4 Common Core State Standards English Language Arts Standards Alignment:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3: Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Social Justice Standards Alignment:

- **Standards from grades 3-5 learning outcomes**

- **Justice 15 JU.3-5.15** I know about the actions of people and groups who have worked throughout history to bring more justice and fairness to the world.
- **Action 16 AC.3-5.16** I pay attention to how people (including myself) are treated, and I try to treat others how I like to be treated.
- **Action 17 AC.3-5.17** I know it's important for me to stand up for myself and for others, and I know how to get help if I need ideas on how to do this.
- **Action 18 AC.3-5.18** I know some ways to interfere if someone is being hurtful or unfair, and will do my part to show respect even if I disagree with someone's words or behavior.

Before Reading

- **Addressing students' level of background knowledge in a developmentally appropriate way for elementary level**

- From the [US Holocaust Museum section on Age Appropriateness](#): *"Elementary school can be an ideal place to begin discussing the value of diversity and the danger of bias and prejudice. These critical themes can be addressed through local and national historical events and can be reinforced during later study of the Holocaust."*
- The following includes language you might consider using with students, as it is anticipated that elementary-aged students' specific background knowledge about Hitler, Nazis, Germany, and the time period around 1937 in general are limited. The intention of this guide is to support student accessibility of this text in a developmentally appropriate manner. Importantly, this guide supports making use of this opportunity to foster critical consciousness and collectively consider a local example of the principles of social justice in action. To frame the use of this text, you may like to share:
 - In our (class/school/town), we believe that diversity makes us stronger and more beautiful as a community. Diversity simply means the presence of difference. Diversity usually refers to aspects of identity, parts of who people are, such as their religion, race, gender, ethnicity, social class, age, immigration status, and more. We believe all aspects of diversity are important and welcome in our town.
 - Not everyone in the world feels that our diversity as humans is what makes us beautiful and stronger as communities. Some people treat others unfairly, and even have created laws and systems--ways of doing things--in communities that are unfair. In fact, some people have historically been treated unfairly and harmfully because they were perceived to be different by people in power. This still happens today. The book we are going to read and discuss together, Lois's Story: A Young Girl's Inspiration Stops Hate and Fear

by Ed Edelson, is a fictionalized story based on the real events that happened in Southbury, Connecticut. It inspires us to consider the danger of bias (a preference either for or against an individual or group that affects fair judgment) and prejudice (judging or having an idea about someone or a group of people before you actually know them) as well as how all people, even and especially children, can take action against bias and prejudice.

- In this book, you'll learn the true story of ten-year-old Lois Lindsay, daughter of Reverend Lindsay, who led the South Britain Congregational Church, which is still in Southbury today. This book teaches us about how Lois, her father, and other community members in Southbury took action and stood strong against hate when a group of people known for treating others, such as Jewish people, unfairly and hurtfully wanted to spread their ideas here in Southbury in 1937.
- In introducing students to the text, you may encourage them to think about their relationship to time and place of this text in asking:
 - How long ago was 1937?
 - What do you know or wonder about this time period?
 - This book specifically takes place in Southbury. How long have you lived in Southbury? Is that the same as how long your family members have lived in Southbury?
- Throughout the text, each time you are introduced to a new setting, consider flipping to the back of the book to show students the photographs of the places being referenced. You could also show them images of these present-day buildings in Southbury. You also may distribute [this brochure](#), shared by Ed Edelson, to students.
- The question may arise: does the German American Bund still exist today?
 - In Lois's Story, it is not clear what happens to the organization after 1937. One possible answer is: Although the formal organization that existed in 1937 did disband several years later, its ideas are still promoted by groups around the world including in Germany and the United States. Sometimes they are referred to as neo-Nazi organizations. Here is a page on the SPLC website for background info for adults [Neo-Nazi | Southern Poverty Law Center \(splcenter.org\)](#)

Discussion Question Educator Guide

- Chapter 1: The Black Car
 - What are your thoughts about the men in the black car?
 - What do you suppose is troubling Reverend Lindsay about their visit to his house?
 - Why do you think Lois's dad, Reverend Lindsay, didn't answer her question right away about who the men in the black car were?
 - On page 2, in the picture of the "long, black fancy car," there is a flag attached to the car with a symbol on it. Before discussing this picture, perhaps frame this important conversation in the following way:
 - Symbols are very important and can be very powerful. What is a symbol?
 - You could take a moment to show students symbols they may be familiar with: logos for brands might be good, a 4-leaf clover, peace, poison, American Red Cross, emojis!
 - Ask them what feelings they have about these symbols
 - Then transition to symbols whose significance can create different feelings in different groups of people. Maybe something like sports teams (e.g. Boston Red Sox, New York Yankees, or other baseball teams or football teams, etc). Many people feel strongly about these symbols - they either love the Red Sox or Yankees or hate them! Symbols can generate these feelings

- Flags during a war also create different emotions depending on which side you are on e.g. British Red Coats in American Revolution, or something else that has multiple meanings.
 - So what makes for a good symbol? What makes for a bad symbol?
 - [Important background information for teachers on swastika from the ADL](#)
 - [And from the US Holocaust Museum](#)
 - Note: You can then say that on p. 2, the symbol on the flag on the car is a bad symbol, and one that is associated with hate, specifically towards Jewish people. It is a symbol that represents prejudice and discrimination. Seeing this symbol is alarming because it is a visual image that represents hate and danger and just seeing this symbol is hurtful and is never, ever okay. Seeing this symbol communicates that people are unsafe. This symbol is unacceptable. Perhaps like many students, Lois did not know the meaning of this symbol when she saw the black car. As young people, it is important that we think and talk about issues related to justice, just like Lois asked her father to talk to her about his concerns with the men in the black car. We also want you to think about how it is important for you to understand that some symbols can create different emotions (hate, love, fear, empathy) for different people and it is important to be aware of that when living in a diverse society.
- Chapter 2: A Meeting at Town Hall
 - In this chapter, we are introduced to a new character, Ed Coer, who was the Town First Selectman of Southbury at the time in 1937. What kind of leader do you expect a Town First Selectman to be? What does it mean to be a good leader? (p. 6)
 - (Pp. 6-7 - before you get to the part where Lois suggests her idea): We learned that the men in the black car were members of a group called the “German American Bund,” and that they purchased land in Southbury to build a training camp to teach the ideas of a hateful group called the Nazis, who followed a man from Germany named Adolf Hitler. Hitler and the Nazis were a group in the early-mid 1900s that rose to power and were responsible for terror and evil. Reverend Lindsay and Mr. Coer are not sure how to tell the German American Bund that they cannot use the land they bought in Southbury to train young people to hate and fear others. What would you suggest Reverend Lindsay and Mr. Coer do?
 - “The German American Bund” tried with its name to mean that ALL German Americans supported Adolf Hitler, the leader in Germany and his Nazis. That was untrue. Names and terms can sometimes mislead.
 - (p. 7) What does it mean to be “un-American?”
 - Young people are often the inspiration and drivers of social justice. What are your thoughts about Lois’s idea? What do you wonder/have questions about?
 - Social justice definition: sharing resources in fair ways, to benefit all people, including sharing of wealth, opportunities, and privileges
 - (p.8) After hearing Lois’s idea, about writing a sermon, Reverend Lindsay had a choice, and he chose to act. By agreeing to write a sermon and speak to the congregation about stopping the German American Bund from building a training camp for Nazi ideas on the land they bought in Southbury, Reverend Lindsay was challenging a norm. A norm is a situation that is usual or typical. It was not the norm for Reverend Lindsay to speak on the building of a Nazi training camp or to take action against injustice in this way in his community. For some people, challenging norms can be uncomfortable. For others, it can be unsafe. There is a difference between being uncomfortable and being unsafe. Do you think Reverend Lindsay was putting himself and his family in an uncomfortable situation or an unsafe situation by agreeing to preach about the need to stop the German American Bund in Southbury?

- Note: The difference between **comfort** and **safety** largely depends on a person's positionality in terms of their social identities. This discussion question prompts students to reflect on their conceptions around this idea. When acting in the face of injustice, power, privilege, identity, and diversity are always at play, and students can begin to think critically about these ideas. Reverend Lindsay in many ways is leaning into **discomfort** here, because he is in a position of privilege in many ways as a white, Christian, male, established spiritual leader in Southbury. He is not risking his safety as much as he would be if he were part of a group/s that has been marginalized, in other words, if he were Jewish.
 - (p. 9) At the end of the chapter, Reverend Lindsay says: "Never forget, Lois, words are very important." Why does Reverend Lindsay say this?
 - It is important to emphasize that while Reverend Lindsay is talking about the power of words, you can also encourage students to consider the power of silence: the decision to speak at all or to remain silent in the face of injustice.
 - Additionally, the end of this chapter presents an opportunity to discuss the ways in which words and actions must match. It is a "both/and" situation - not an either/or. Reverend Lindsay is talking about the power of words, and he is also going to couple that with action.
- Chapter 3: The Sermon
 - (p. 12-13) This page says that some people disagreed with Reverend Lindsay, and it also says that Lois heard some students at school say they hated Jews, even though they didn't know anyone who was Jewish.
 - Why do you think people disagreed with Reverend Lindsay?
 - Some possible responses may include that people wanted to be able to do what they wanted on their land; people might have believed that the building of the training camp may bring business to Southbury. Some students have also shared that there are some people that might have agreed with the hateful ideas of the German American Bund.
 - Why do you think some kids at school said those hurtful words about Jews, when they didn't even know anyone who was Jewish?
 - Where do you think people get the hurtful ideas of being biased and prejudiced towards whole groups of people?
 - You could examine this question in the context of 1937, and then today. Some of the responses that have come out of this question with students include with parents/families, from the news, from someone they see as a role model. You may also share that people may get hateful ideas from the media - like on the radio. You could compare the widespread use of radio to social media today, and that radio was a dominant force then, just as social media is.
 - (p.12-13) Now think about folks who remained silent. The book doesn't mention that, but notice that in any situation that involves injustice, there are choices: we can speak out against hate, we can say or do nothing and remain silent, or we can side with those saying/doing hurtful things. Why do you think people remain silent in the face of injustices? What is it that they can do to overcome that silence?
 - (p. 13) How do you suppose people truly love and honor one another's differences? How can you learn more about people who are different from you in terms of their religion, or race, etc. if you don't know many people different from you in these ways?
 - (p. 15) Reverend Lindsay and Mr. Coer's idea for the town meeting is to get the residents of Southbury to agree to new rules in town that say what kinds of buildings and businesses would

be allowed in Southbury, called Zoning. Summarize how Reverend Lindsay explains people may feel differently about this proposal. What are your ideas about this solution that Reverend Lindsay will propose to the citizens of Southbury?

- Chapter 4: The Town Vote

- (p.17) Lots of people came to the Town Meeting, so many that they couldn't fit in the Town Hall. They had to wait in line for a long time. On page 17, it says "they wanted their voice to be heard." What is an issue that has to do with how people are treated that you want your voice to be heard about? How might you go about making sure your voice is heard?
- (p. 18) (Pictures a long line outside of the church) Have you been in a crowd or long line for a long time, but it felt really important? Tell about that time. How was it important? Why would the people pictured here remain in line for a long time?
- (p. 21) Remember that a norm is a situation that is usual or typical. What people think is normal, though, may not be best for everyone. At the Town Meeting, Mr. Coer and Reverend Lindsay were asking people to challenge a norm by passing Zoning laws. Some people at the meeting did disagree with them and voted no. What do you think is hard about challenging the norm?
- (p. 22) What do you think the message/lesson of this chapter is that we may apply in our own lives today?

- Chapter 5: The Morning After

- (p. 23) Earlier we talked about the difference between being uncomfortable and being unsafe when people stand up to injustice. When Reverend Lindsay reads the newspaper after he acted **in solidarity** with Jews at the Town Meeting the day before, do you think he is feeling discomfort or feeling unsafe? Why?
 - Solidarity: when people with different identities come together to work towards the same goal. We're always stronger together.
- (p. 24) Introduce students to the term **ally**. The ADL defines being an ally as "someone who speaks out on behalf of, or takes actions that are supportive of, someone who is targeted by bias" [or prejudice]. We can also think of an ally as an **upstander** (one who speaks up/acts when faced with dilemma), **rather than a bystander** (someone who witnesses unfairness/injustice and does not say or do anything). How do (most of) the letters Reverend Lindsay received connect to his allyship, his acting in solidarity with Jews?
 - Note: There are many definitions of ally. Some people in the space of social justice, particularly racial justice, have called for a move away from ally and towards accomplice or co-conspirator. Being an accomplice or co-conspirator encompasses the action of rejecting the benefits one receives from being (e.g. white, Christian, etc.) and then actively working to fight against that system. For the purposes of this text, we will use the term ally, but if interested, there are articles below about this topic.
- (p. 24) What questions, wonderings, and concerns do you have after reading that some people's letters were very angry, and that others asked Reverend Lindsay to remove their names because they were fearful of what would happen to them from the German American Bund?
- (p. 25) Why was it so important to hide the letters?
- (p. 25) What do you make of the Lindsays house being broken into?
 - The Lindsay's house was broken into. This is one example of a consequence that Reverend Lindsay (and his family) faced in acting in solidarity with Jews, and in standing up for others--and for themselves in the kind of town they wanted to live in. The reality is that often in situations where there is injustice, things don't work out perfectly, and that there are consequences. What is it, then, that makes it worth it to do so?

- (p. 25) What does it take for a person to stand up to be courageous, like Reverend Lindsay, or most of the people who wrote him letters?
- (p. 26) How did the zoning laws effectively put a stop to the German American Bund's plans in Southbury?
- (p. 27) Lois was involved in preventing a change that would make things worse in their community. What are some issues in our community today, or our country today that affect our community? Just like Lois had an important idea that sparked positive action, what are your ideas for taking action?
- Chapter 6: Legacy
 - This chapter is called legacy. What do you know about that word, legacy? Why do you think this chapter is called "Legacy?"
 - A legacy is when something is passed down from those that came before us.
 - How does it make you feel that this history happened so near to where you live?
 - (p. 29) On p. 29, 75 years later, Lois Lindsay quoted Edmund Burke, saying "the only thing necessary for evil to exist is for good people to do nothing. And the people of Southbury did something." *Embed film clip from documentary (around minute 50) "Home of the Brave: When Southbury Said NO! To Nazis"*
 - What does this quote mean?
 - What is a cause that you believe is worth speaking and standing up for? What are some ways you can take a stand? What does support look like from me, as your teacher? From your classmates?
 - You can revisit the conversation about the power of silence here, too, if you'd like.
 - What are some strategies you can use to muster the courage you need to say/do something rather than remain silent when you witness unfairness?
- Epilogue
 - Be sure to share the epilogue! It is encouraging to read about how this story has lived on through a documentary film, shared with residents, cited in another text, included in an exhibition at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, at the Capitol of the United States, etc. as well as to see an image of the resolution passed at the Town Meeting.
 - It is also important to share the images of the buildings in Southbury (South Britain) that are named in this book. Many students will likely be familiar with these buildings!
 - You may like to pose the question to the students: How do people go about saying thank you after people have stood in solidarity with one another? In this case, Southbury's Jewish community did so, many years later, since there hadn't been a Jewish community in Southbury at the time to do so. Do good deeds, acts of allyship and solidarity, need to be recognized? What does it mean when they are, and what does it mean when they aren't?
 - Rabbi Eric Polokoff, spiritual leader of the B'nai Israel synagogue in Southbury, and some of his congregants organized and carried out a ceremony to express gratitude to the Town of Southbury, South Britain Congregational Church and the United Church of Christ in Southbury for their allyship in being upstanders in the events described in Lois's Story. It included proclamations of support from the Governor and Congressman. Rabbi Polokoff and B'nai Israel later also honored the Lindsay family in November 2012. The certificate had the Biblical inscription "Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue" and stated in part: His faithful and learned presence, wise strategizing and organizing and his powerful, inspiring words helped to galvanize a community into collective action."

Extension Ideas

****These ideas are a work in progress and I welcome your collaboration or working on this doc at any point to develop them****

- Tour of buildings
- Essay/writing extension
 - Social action oriented option
 - Cause you care about and action plan for affecting change
 - Research a young person who is making a difference in people's lives when it comes to social justice and analyze strategies used: How did they begin their work? What sorts of action did they take? What can you learn from them to apply in your own life?
 - Creative writing option?
 - Research/expository option
- Possible zoom meeting with author
- Art activity based on scenes in the book or from a field trip.
- Brochure from South Britain Historic District - provide for each student

Other notes:

- Idea to keep in our mind for the future - use of this text in Tribury Reads Together project
- Ask about research with Southbury Historical Society - to talk about the process?
- Tour of Museum in South Britain, followed by walk to South Britain Congregational Church. Talk about role of South Britain in Southbury in 1937 for context.
- Invite First Selectman to come to class to talk about the role of the First Selectman
- Use of documentary from 2012 for families/teachers

Related Resources

- [ADL Definitions Related to Bias, Injustice, and Bullying](#)
- [ADL Information on Swastika](#)
- [This file offers helpful background information for teachers, ADL](#)
- [Article: We need co-conspirators, not allies](#) (Jun 26, 2015)
- [Article and guide: From allies to accomplices and co-conspirators](#)

Dear Families,

We are happy to share that your student participated in reading and discussing the text Lois's Story: A Young Girl's Inspiration Helps Stop Hate and Fear by Ed Edelson, Southbury resident and former First Selectman. Lois's Story is a fictionalized story based on the real events of 1937 right here in our Region 15 community, in Southbury, when a group called the German-American Bund tried to build a youth training camp based on the Nazi philosophy of Adolf Hitler on land they purchased. The story chronicles the Southbury community's action in response in a developmentally appropriate manner. In this book, students learned that the catalyst of the community's action was ten-year-old Lois Lindsay, daughter of Reverend Lindsay, who led the South Britain Congregational Church, which is still in Southbury today.

In framing our focus on this book in the context of our [name of Region 15 curricular unit], the following language was offered to your student, which we wanted to share with you should it be helpful: "In our class, school, and town, we believe that diversity makes us stronger and more beautiful as a community. Diversity simply means the presence of difference. Diversity usually refers to aspects of identity--parts of who people are--such as their religion, race, gender, ethnicity, social class, age, and more. Not everyone in the world feels that our diversity as humans is what makes us beautiful and stronger as communities. Some people treat others unfairly, and even have created laws and systems--ways of doing things--in communities that are unfair, based on people's differences. In fact, some people have historically been treated unfairly and harmfully simply because they were perceived to be different by people in power. This still happens today. The book we are going to read and discuss together is a fictionalized story based on real events and inspires us to consider the danger of bias (a preference either for or against an individual or group that affects fair judgment) and prejudice (judging or having an idea about someone or a group of people before you actually know them) as well as how all people, even and especially children, can take action against bias and prejudice."

In the course of our book study, the following grade-level standards were addressed:

Social Justice Standards Alignment: Grades 3-5 Learning Outcomes

- **Justice 15: JU.3-5.15:** I know about the actions of people and groups who have worked throughout history to bring more justice and fairness to the world.
- **Action 16: AC.3-5.16:** I pay attention to how people (including myself) are treated, and I try to treat others how I like to be treated.
- **Action 17: AC.3-5.17:** I know it's important for me to stand up for myself and for others, and I know how to get help if I need ideas on how to do this.
- **Action 18: AC.3-5.18:** I know some ways to interfere if someone is being hurtful or unfair, and will do my part to show respect even if I disagree with someone's words or behavior.

In 2012, a documentary was released for the 75th anniversary of these events in Southbury called "Home of the Brave: When Southbury Said NO! To Nazis." It premiered in the Pomperaug High School Auditorium to over 1,000 residents and went on to be shown across the state, on Connecticut Public Television, at the Capitol in Hartford and even at the United States Senate in Washington, DC. Then, in April 2018, the Southbury story was included in a major new exhibit at the US Holocaust Museum called "America and the Holocaust." If you are interested in viewing the film, you may contact the Southbury Historical Society. If you are interested in the book we read with your students, you may purchase it on [Amazon](#) or borrow it from the Southbury Public Library.

We sincerely hope your student enjoyed this instructional experience and that you consider continuing this conversation at home. Please feel free to reach out to us to discuss further!

Sincerely,

Dr. Erin Birden

Classroom Teacher

Teacher in Residence for Diversity & Cultural Competency