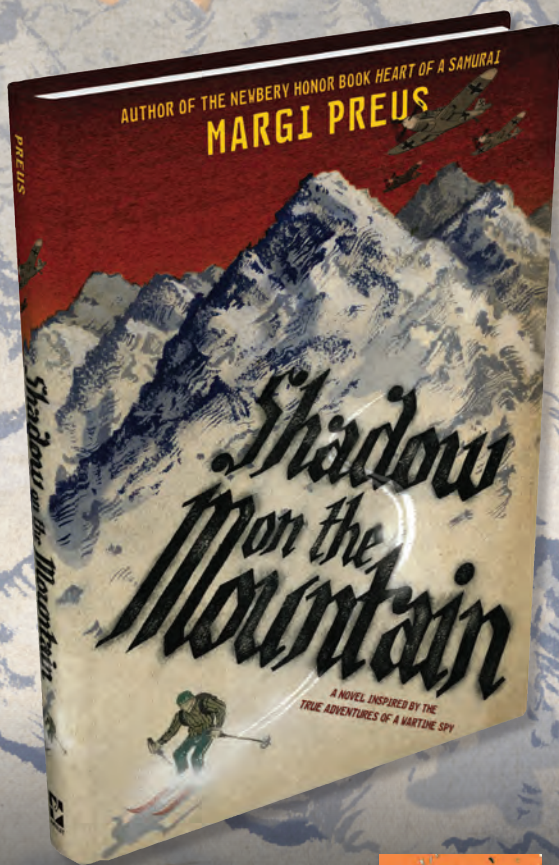


# Shadow on the Mountain

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## SHADOW ON THE MOUNTAIN

### Reader's Guide

The story of *Shadow on the Mountain* was inspired by the real-life experiences of Erling Storrusten, who was a teenager in Lillehammer, Norway, in 1940, when Nazi Germany invaded and occupied Norway. Like the real Erling, the fictional hero of the novel, Espen, gets involved in the Resistance, first by delivering illegal underground newspapers, then by becoming a courier, and finally by working as a spy. Eventually, he has to escape on skis over the mountains to neutral Sweden.

The backdrop to *Shadow on the Mountain*: In September, 1939, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia attacked Poland. In November of 1939 the Soviets invaded Finland. Finland fought back in what was known as the Winter War. Many Norwegians went to Finland to help fight against the Soviets. Norway and Finland share a border in the far north of their countries; the Norwegians were worried that the Soviets would also invade their country. When Germany invaded Norway and Denmark in April, 1940, Germany tried to capitalize on that fear by offering to protect the Norwegians from the Soviet Bolsheviks.

Sweden, sandwiched between Norway and Finland, remained neutral throughout the war. Sweden sold iron ore to Germany and German soldiers were permitted to travel through the country. But Sweden also harbored thousands of Danish and Norwegian Jews and offered a safe haven to those who worked in Resistance organizations of those countries.

Germany went on to invade and occupy France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. That was only the beginning of a war that eventually involved virtually the whole world. The principal belligerents were the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan. The Allies included France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser extent, China. The war ended in 1945 when the Axis powers surrendered to the Allies.

### CURRENT EVENTS

Research other places in the world where citizens are resisting or have recently resisted and even successfully overthrown repressive governments. What kind of actions did they take or are they taking to make their voices heard?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Tante Marie tell Espen the story of Odin and the well of wisdom? Later, Tante Marie tells Espen to “watch with both eyes.” What does she mean by that? After the episode at the shoe repair shop, why does Espen think that he has “not been watching with both eyes?”
2. Why doesn't Espen try to find out who is in Tante Marie's barn?
3. Ingrid writes in her diary that she “had once believed that words were powerful.” The Nazis must have believed that words were powerful since they made it illegal to listen to British radio broadcasts or read unsanctioned newspapers. What did they hope to accomplish by this? There are still countries that censor

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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

news or prevent people from reading or listening to news other than government-sponsored stations or newspapers. Why do some governments want to control what people hear or read?

In what other ways are people's access to news, ideas, or conflicting viewpoints controlled or constricted?

4. Why do the characters in the novel make the choices they do?
  - What are Aksel's reasons for joining the Nazis? Why is he so bitter? Is his bitterness justified?
  - What are Kjell's reasons for joining the *hird* and the Norwegian Nazis?
  - Why does Espen join the Resistance?

5. When Ingrid steals the ration cards, she wonders if "it's good or bad, right or wrong." Later, she steals a ration card stamp but doesn't seem to pause to think about it—at least, we never hear about it.

In her book *Sky*, about her involvement in the Dutch Resistance, Hanneke Ippisch, writes, "When we first became active Resistance workers, we were law-abiding citizens. . . . as it became harder to help, we became less law-abiding." Is it ever right to break the law? If so, under what circumstances?

6. Why does Espen think that Ingrid's feeding of the prisoners is a powerful act of resistance? Why does he think that "over time, ordinary acts of kindness could turn the Nazi ideology to dust?"
7. Norwegians who collaborated with the Germans were given the "ice treatment" by their countrymen who were opposed to the Occupation. Ingrid thought it was mean. What reasons does Espen give as justification for these actions? Do you feel the "ice treatment" was justified?
8. Why does Tante Marie tell Espen the story about Hunin and Munin?
9. Aksel's mother says, "You can't be compassionate toward some people but not others. That is not compassion." What is compassion?
10. Why does Espen decide not to hide the incriminating documents in Kjell's house?
11. Why does Espen take Ingrid's diary instead of burning it?
12. Once while in a rowboat with Kjell and Ingrid, Espen sees a *draug*. Why does Kjell tell Espen that he saw the *draug* but tries to make Ingrid believe he didn't?
13. In his last encounter with Kjell, Espen wonders if he really saw the *draug* or if he had only imagined it. Then he wonders if Kjell is really there with him or if he is only imagining him. What do you think?

14. When Kjell drinks the last of the liquid, Espen thinks of how Odin drank from the well of wisdom and saw how humankind could conquer the sorrow and desolation that would befall all people—but he can't remember how. What do you think Odin might have seen as the way to conquer "the evil that brought sorrow and desolation to humankind"?

15. What is the shadow on the mountain?

### FURTHER RESEARCH

What countries were involved in the war? Who was fighting against whom?

What events led up to the war? How did the United States eventually get involved? What countries were our (two major) allies? What (three major) countries were our enemies?

Find these countries on a map of the world to get a sense of the scope of the war.

Hitler was convinced the British would attack Germany by invading through Norway. Therefore, he fortified Norway with (eventually) 400,000 soldiers. Examine a map of Norway—take a look at the coast to see why Hitler needed so many troops there!

Most of the countries occupied by the Nazis had active resistance groups. Students may want to research the resistance efforts.

**DENMARK** *Bright Candles: A Novel of the Danish Resistance*, Nathaniel Benchley  
*Darkness over Denmark: The Danish Resistance and the Rescue of the Jews*, Ellen Levine  
*Number the Stars*, Lois Lowry

**FRANCE** *Resistance: Book 1*, Carla Jablonski and Leland Purvis (a YA graphic novel)

**HOLLAND** *Sky*, Hanneke Ippisch  
*A Traitor Among Us*, Elizabeth Van Steenwyk

**KOREA** *When My Name Was Keoko*, Linda Sue Park (Japanese occupation)

**GERMANY** *Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler's Shadow*, Susan Campbell Bartoletti  
*When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, Judith Kerr

**AUSTRIA** *The Devil in Vienna*, Doris Orgel

**EUROPE** *Resistance to the Nazis*, Jane Shuter