

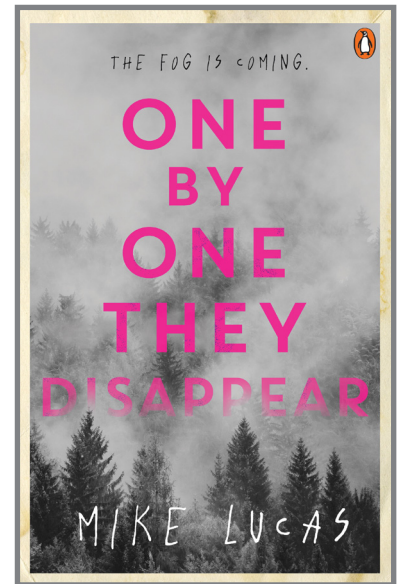
One By One They Disappear

AUTHOR
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Secondary
(Violence)



SYNOPSIS

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!

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.

THEMES

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

STUDY NOTES**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 fairy tales. 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 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 the 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, the author 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 the author 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, 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.

FAIRY TALES

- The author, Mike Lucas, was inspired to create his own fairy tales within this story, while also weaving into the novel the background of the Brothers Grimm travelling around to collect fairy tales 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*. Research the fairy tales that the Brothers Grimm wrote. Which fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm do you know?

- Did you know that the original Grimm fairy tales are much darker and more violent and gruesome than the Disney or other versions we know today? These fairy tales did not have happy endings and were often considered inappropriate for children. Choose a fairy tale 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 fairy tales do you think inspired *One by One They Disappear*? For instance, are there particular fairy tales 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 fairy tales 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 (pp 1–6)
 - Frau Lister's telling of the legend behind the village superstition known as 'The Old Man's Bones' (pp 198–207)
 - Oberstleutnant Kessler's telling of the tale of Edgar and Otto (pp 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? Eg. 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 the 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 fairy tales, 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.' (p 161). What does Hannah mean when she says Boris was Rumpelstiltskin?
- Who are the silent voices Pieter is referring to on p 54? 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'. Consider the conversation between Hannah and Frau Meinhardt on p 173. Do you agree with their opinions on fairy tales? Why do we like to read stories where wishes come true?

IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM

Wolves

- 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 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

- Find times fog is mentioned 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?