**About Anne Holm**

Anne Holm was born on September 10, 1922 in Denmark. Educated in Denmark, she began her training as a journalist upon completing school. Her first book was published in 1956. Two other Danish titles followed before Holm had *I Am David* published in 1963 in Danish, and in English the same year. It was formerly known as *North to Freedom* in the U.S. It has since been re-titled *I Am David* in its latest published edition by Harcourt, Inc.

The novel has been in print continuously since its original publication. This is significant because it indicates that the book is considered a classic. *I Am David* has been televised, radio broadcast, and successfully translated in sixteen countries and on four continents.

A member of the Danish Authors’ Society, Anne Holm traveled extensively throughout Europe, acquiring a modest proficiency in German, Italian, French, and English. She was married to Johan Christian Holm in 1949 and they had one child. Not shy about her politics, Holm once said, “No secret about it – I am all for king and parliament, and against dictatorships…” Anne Holm died in 1998.

*I Am David* has won numerous awards, including the Prize for the Best Scandinavian Children’s Book in 1963, ALA Notable Book in 1965, and Boys Club of America Junior Book Award Gold Medal.

***Read this account of what life was like in Europe after World War II. It will help you understand the world David travels through in order to find his way home.***

After World War II ended in 1945, much of Europe lay in ruins. Cities, rural areas, communications, and transportation systems were destroyed. Over fifty million people were dead, including over six million Jews, many of whom had been murdered in Nazi concentration camps. Led by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, the Allied forces had worked together to defeat dictator Adolph Hitler’s Germany and Germany’s ally, Japan, along with other Axis countries in their bid to take over the world. But almost immediately after the War, relations between Allied countries began to fall apart.

By the end of World War II the Soviet Union had driven German soldiers back to Germany. However, Soviet soldiers were still in many Eastern European countries. The leader of the Soviet Union, Dictator Joseph Stalin, had promised the Allies that as soon as possible he would allow free elections in these Eastern European nations and withdraw his soldiers. But right after the War, Joseph Stalin broke his promise. The Soviet soldiers did not withdraw, and by 1948, every Eastern European country was under the control of the Soviet Union.

The government of the Soviet Union was *communist*, which comes from the word “communal,” meaning “of the group.” Communists believe that practicing religion and holding private property should be forbidden. The communist government of the Soviet Union did not believe in a free press. Disagreement by citizens with the government was against the law, and people could be put in prison if their beliefs were different from what the government wanted people to believe. The rights of individuals did not matter. In practice, the government of the Soviet Union was a dictatorship of the proletariat (*proletariat* means “the poorest class of working people”). A very small group of leaders controlled the lives of all citizens. In countries with Communist governments, the government owned all factories and workplaces. There was no independent economy, no independent newspapers, no independent courts, and no independent legislature.

But now, after World War II, on one side was the United States and Great Britain and on the other was the Soviet Union. In fact, on March 5, 1946 the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill, made a famous speech at Westminster College, in Fulton, Missouri. With United States President Harry Truman in the audience, Winston Churchill warned about Eastern Europe becoming separated from the rest of Europe because of what the Soviet Union was doing. To make his point more forcefully, Churchill used the image of a giant iron curtain coming down on Eastern European countries, separating them from the rest of Europe:

***“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Vienna, and Sofia; all these famous cities lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere.”***

Behind the “iron curtain,” the Soviet Union was establishing repressive governments and labor camps. In labor camps, people who were thought to disagree with the government were imprisoned, forced to do hard work, tortured, and sometimes even put to death for their beliefs. In the year 1952, the year in which I *Am David* take place, over two and a half million people were in labor camps in the Soviet Union. In Bulgaria alone, between 1948-1954 there were 99 forced labor camps. This is the backdrop against which the story *I Am David* takes place.

# Chapter 1

**Vocabulary Definition Illustration**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| imperceptible |  |  |
| catastrophe |  |  |
| repulsive |  |  |
| dictator |  |  |
| Salonica | is the second largest city in Greece. Today the metropolitan area of the city has a population of over one million people. It is  considered as the cultural center of the country. One of the books of the Bible is  addressed to the church in Thessalonica. |  |

1. Why is “I am David considered a “Classic”?
2. What was the original title?
3. What promise did Joseph Stalin break with the Allied leaders?
4. What are some of the main beliefs of the communist party?
5. What was the iron curtain?
6. What happened to people behind the iron curtain who seemed to disagree with the communist government?