

From the Author's Desk:

Hello Parents and Teachers! Thank you for sharing "Stalked: Danger and Fury on Ellis Island 1912" with your students. This thriller is set in the New York tenements during the year the passenger liner, Titanic, struck an iceberg and sunk in the North Atlantic. I hope this discussion guide will help readers reflect on the novel and enjoy it on a deeper level. I've added a recipe and some activities that might be fun for them; also background on the story, which is based in part on my Danish great-grandparents.

*Best regards,
Kristi*

Stalked: Danger and Fury on Ellis Island 1912 -- *Literary Classics*

GOLD MEDAL AWARD for Young Adult Mystery

About this book: When Rikke Svendsen, a 15-year-old Danish servant arrives at Ellis Island in 1912, she realizes that a fellow passenger on her voyage across the Atlantic -- whose advances she had spurned -- is stalking her. In the chaos of immigration and trying to flee him, she gets stranded in New York City instead of being able to meet family in Racine, Wisconsin. Relieved to have eluded the man, she finds work in the tenements as a seamstress and struggles to earn money for a train ticket north.

Meanwhile, through letters and telegrams, she learns that mysterious accidents are befalling her loved ones in Racine with deadly results. As Rikke pieces together clues, frantic for her beloved Viggo, she seeks to unravel what and who is behind the terror.

Illustrations by Cody Ruddy. For readers 10 up.
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Discussion ideas:

<> Part I [Chapter 1-15]:

1. On the ship Rikke tells Ulla, "In America we can be anything." What passion or occupation would you like to pursue, and why?
2. Why was good health and a willingness to work so important for immigrants coming through Ellis Island? If things are different today, explain.
3. What do you think of Rikke taking little Zipporah away from her father? What would you have done?
4. The sinking of the Titanic was one of the most momentous events of 1912. What recent news story has surprised or upset you?

<> Part II [Chapter 16-30]:

1. If someone owed you wages but refused to pay you, what would you do?
2. Why did the men on the rooftop movie set smile when Rikke slapped Cedric Livingston?
3. What would you do if someone deliberately harmed a friend or tried to harm you?

Activity suggestions:

<> **Write** -- These can be a brief paragraph or several pages:

1. "If I moved to a foreign country and did not know the language, I would ..."
2. What you would do if your wallet or purse with all your money was lost.
3. Describe a new friend.

<> **Draw**

1. A map of the New York Harbor with Ellis Island
2. A sailing ship
3. The view from one of the windows where you live

<> **Make**

1. Diorama of the Solomon's one-room tenement
2. A doll from scraps of cloth and yarn

<> **Read** -- *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* by Jacob A. Riis. This author immigrated from Denmark at the age of 21. He became a social reformer by using his photographs to expose the deplorable slums on New York's Lower East Side.

<> **Cook**

"Mandelkager"--Almond Cookies: This is from my great-grandmother's cookbook. Maren Kristine Sorensen Nielsen was a 26-year-old servant when she sailed from Copenhagen to Ellis Island. After settling in Racine, Wisconsin she ran a boardinghouse for Danish bachelors who had just arrived in America. She was first up in the morning to light a fire in her stove and to start a pot of coffee. I like to imagine the good aroma in her kitchen then her setting a plate of these cookies on the table.

Ingredients:

1 cup butter

1 cup sugar

4 eggs

2 cups flour

Pinch of salt

Blanched almonds

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Cream butter and sugar thoroughly. Add eggs two at a time then flour sifted with salt. Drop on buttered baking sheet with teaspoon. Do not place cookies too close together; leave room to spread.

Place half almond on each.

Bake in 375 to 400 degree oven. Watch carefully while baking.

**Behind the scenes of this story:**

When I learned that my Danish great-grandfather spent much of his life in an insane asylum in Wisconsin, my mind raced. How did this young man hoping for a new beginning in America end up “criminally insane?” What was he like when he stepped off the ship from Copenhagen and how did he get by the strict medical examiners on Ellis Island?

After visits to this Island of Tears and several years of research and writing, my young adult novel didn’t turn out as I had originally planned, but it was birthed by those questions of *how* and *why*. Family lore added to the plot: my great-grandmother may have worked in the Danish royal palace before sailing to America.

**A secret about the author:**

My sons and I love to work together researching and brainstorming plots and characters. Greg and I toured Ellis Island and explored the Tenement Museum on the Lower East Side, which gave me strong visuals for what Rikke might have experienced. Cody designed the cover of this book and added interior illustrations. They and their dad help edit all my manuscripts and are not afraid to hurt my feelings: if something stinks, they tell me!

**Contact:** I would love to hear about your discussion. Just click the Contact button on my website, [kristianagregory.com](http://kristianagregory.com), and I’ll answer you!