

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

The Hiding Place

by

Corrie TenBoom

Book Information

Corrie TenBoom, The Hiding Place
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This true story of two sisters sent to a Nazi concentration camp for helping Jews tells how their faith helped them to overcome its horrors.

Award: NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts

Topics: Adventure, Survival; Community Life, Helping Others; Community Life, Prejudice; Countries/Regions, Germany; Family Life, Death; History, Holocaust; People, Communists; People, Jewish; People, Nazis; Popular Groupings, College Bound; Wars, World War II

Main Characters

Betsie ten Boom a single, middle-aged woman who lives with her father and sister

Casper ten Boom the elderly patriarch of the ten Boom family, who runs a watch shop

Corrie ten Boom a single, middle-aged woman who lives with her father and sister and becomes the coordinator of underground activities in Haarlem, Holland

Herman Sluring/ "Pickwick" a wealthy customer of the ten Booms who helps organize the national underground network

Kik ten Boom Willem's son, who becomes a messenger in the underground

Nollie van Woerden Father ten Boom's daughter, who also becomes involved in the underground activities

Peter van Woerden Nollie's musically talented son, who joins the underground activities

Rolf van Vliet a local policeman who helps warn and inform the underground of Gestapo plans

Tante Anna, Tante Bep, and Tante Jans Mrs. ten Boom's sisters who live at the Beje with the ten Booms

Tine ten Boom the wife of Willem ten Boom and former nurse of Tante Jans

Willem ten Boom a minister who predicts the coming atrocities of Germany and is the first ten Boom to be involved in the underground activities

Vocabulary

ignominy conduct or action that is considered disgraceful or dishonorable

itinerant wandering

quisling a traitorous person who works against his own government from within

talisman an object that is believed to hold a power or charm

ubiquitous being in many places at one time

Synopsis

Corrie ten Boom is the daughter of a well-respected watchmaker in the city of Haarlem, Holland. She grows up in an oddly constructed house, known as the Beje, with her parents, two sisters, a brother, and three aunts.

As she matures Corrie falls in love with Karel, the friend of her brother, only to find out that Karel will not marry her. Karel cannot fight his family's wish that he marry into a wealthy family. This, of course, hurts Corrie deeply, but her father teaches her how to keep love alive in herself. Corrie then settles into a lifetime of taking care of her family. As her mother and aunts die, Corrie finds herself more and more responsible for running the household, until one day her older sister, Betsie, becomes ill. To help out her father and Betsie, Corrie takes over the watch shop bookwork and finds that she enjoys it. Betsie gladly takes over the housework, and life at the Beje goes on peacefully. Corrie even learns the art of watchmaking. The ten Booms celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of the watch shop. The large number of people who attend the celebration indicates just how much Mr. ten Boom and his family are loved.

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Meanwhile, the Nazi Party is gaining strength and influence in neighboring Germany, and the ten Booms fear the evil it is generating. Within a few years, Germany invades Holland and takes over the government. Life under German occupation is not especially severe at first. Gradually, though, attacks on Jewish citizens increase, and Jewish people begin seeking refuge among their non-Jewish neighbors. Thus begins the "underground" activities of Holland, and the ten Booms eventually find themselves involved. The Beje gradually becomes the regional headquarters for the underground. Participants establish coded messages to obtain illegal phones and ration cards, and install alarm systems in homes or buildings where Jewish people are being hidden. The ten Booms become more deeply involved in the underground by deciding they must become the permanent hideout for some people who are particularly difficult to hide. They practice hiding drills and become adept at dealing with the German soldiers who interrogate them. Inevitably, the ten Booms' home is raided, and those who are found inside are arrested and taken to jail. The Gestapo, or German secret police, have determined that Corrie is the ringleader of the activities. While most of her family and friends are released, Corrie and her sister Betsie spend months in a Dutch prison at Scheveningen.

As rumors that the Allies are invading Holland fly about the prison, Corrie and Betsie are sent to a concentration camp at Vught. After some months at Vught, Corrie and Betsie are moved to the well-known extermination camp called Ravensbruck. Here they find themselves crammed into a drastically overcrowded dormitory. The dorm consists of three layers of bunk platforms covered with flea-infested straw. Corrie and Betsie find a place to hold daily Bible readings despite the conditions. They help bring peace among the overcrowded and distraught women through prayer. Eventually Betsie, who has had a lifetime of health problems, becomes too ill even to walk. As she becomes sicker and sicker, she tells Corrie of her vision for the future. Betsie envisions a home for war-damaged people and a camp that she repaints

a beautiful green. Before Betsie dies, she tells Corrie that they must tell people what they have learned.

Corrie is approved for release two days after Betsie's death but her release is delayed until the swelling in her legs subsides. Before her release she is given her jewelry and money, food ration coupons, and a train pass. Although Corrie loses her food ration coupons and the train tracks have been destroyed in many places, she manages to make her way back to Holland. She is taken in by a kind group of nurses in a hospital who feed her and bed her down in their own quarters. The nurses also arrange for Corrie to reach her brother Willem's home. Corrie reaches her brother's and eventually her own home, the Beje, despite a travel ban in Holland.

Once home, Corrie reopens the watch shop and takes in the unwanted feeble-minded people of the city. However, Corrie still finds that something is missing in her life. She eventually realizes that God has called her to do what Betsie had envisioned. Corrie then creates a home where "war-damaged" people can come to heal their shattered lives. Corrie also begins speaking to groups about what she and Betsie learned in their months of imprisonment; "there is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still." In the midst of her travelling and speaking, Corrie helps renovate a former concentration camp to be used for her rehabilitative work.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Why does it take only a few young guards to watch over the thousand women prisoners on the march to Ravensbruck?

The prisoners are weak from the long trip in which they received very little food and, in many cases, no water. The women are in a strange land and would be unable to escape or hide from their captors.

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Literary Analysis

The antagonist of a story is the person or character who causes the main character or characters a problem. Who is the antagonist of this story?

The antagonist is Hitler and the Nazi Party. Hitler is the person who leads the assault on the Jewish people and controls what the Gestapo does. While he is only mentioned and does not appear as a character in the story, he definitely causes problems for the ten Booms and the people they were trying to help. Hitler is also supported by the other members of the Nazi Party who believe Jewish people should be destroyed.

Inferential Comprehension

Corrie prepares herself for her inevitable arrest by packing a bag with things she believes she will need in prison. When she is arrested, she leaves the bag behind. Do you think she would have been able to keep the bag and its contents once she reached prison? What difference would the contents of the bag have made in her imprisonment?

She might have been allowed to keep the things since the prison delivered packages and mail to the prisoners. On the other hand, the bag might have been confiscated at the same time her jewelry and money was taken. The contents could have helped her greatly. The aspirin would have brought down her fever sooner, and the vitamins would have kept her healthier. The needle and thread would have helped take her mind off her boredom. The extra clothes may have prevented her from getting so sick.

Constructing Meaning

At one point during Corrie's imprisonment, she realizes she is becoming selfish. She refers to this as a cancer. Explain how selfishness is like a cancer.

Cancer and selfishness both have the ability to infect a person without warning. If left untreated, each can eventually spread throughout the body and kill its host. Selfishness can kill the person's spirit, while cancer can kill the body. While there is hope that both can be cured, it is still true that not everyone who has either disease will be cured.

Teachable Skills

Understanding the Author's Craft Corrie's family members rely heavily on Bible stories and quotes to guide them in their lives. These quotes and stories serve as inspiration during their hardest and lowest times. Ask the students to write down one quote, song, or story that has served as an inspiration in their own lives. These inspirational thoughts may or may not be of a religious nature. Have the students record how and why the quotes are helpful to them.

Recognizing Cause and Effect There is a great deal of evidence in this story that the actions and attitudes of Corrie's parents had a profound effect on her future. Among the things Corrie's parents showed their children are the principles of treating people with kindness, overcoming adversity, and standing up for their beliefs. Have a class discussion or ask students to write about what effect their own parents, grandparents, foster parents, teachers, or neighbors have had on their lives. Remind students that although not everything they learn from these people may be good, they should try to focus on the positive lessons they have been taught.

Describing Actions or Events Most high school and even junior high school students are familiar with the history of Germany's actions against the Jewish population during World War II. Have the students choose and research what happened in another country neighboring Germany. Have the

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students write a report or make a presentation about what they learned from their research.

Responding to Literature When the German soldiers burst into Nollie's home looking for Peter and Bob, Cocky almost reveals their hiding place because she does not believe she should tell a lie. Cocky has been raised to tell the truth always but, if she had, the officers would have found and taken Peter and Bob. Discuss with the students how they would have reacted and what they would have said. Ask them whether they believe honesty is the best policy in this case.