

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

The Hiding Place

by Corrie ten Boom

written by Lori W. White

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Preface

1. In the preface, John and Elizabeth Sherrill speak of how practical Corrie ten Boom's memories have been, how they helped them deal with real problems and events in their own lives. Corrie's response to this was that "...this is what the past is for! Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see." Do you agree or disagree with Corrie's philosophy concerning the past? Write a letter to someone close to you that discusses a time in the past that has helped you deal with something in your present.
2. The preface tells the reader that *The Hiding Place* is the tale of Corrie ten Boom, a woman who exhibited incredible faith and courage amidst the suffering of the Holocaust. In a paragraph or two, write down everything you already know about the Holocaust. As you read *The Hiding Place*, refer to your list for confirmation of known facts and to add information that you learn.
3. There are several historical and social references in the preface: the Iron Curtain, Vietnam, communism, and Nazism. Look up these terms online or in an encyclopedia and jot down a few significant facts about each. As you read about these references, other terms may crop up that have similar themes—*anti-semitism*, for example, or *genocide*. Develop your own vocabulary list from these terms based on things you would like to know about the Holocaust and similar events.

Chapter 1

4. In Chapter 1, Corrie describes one particular day as “...a day for memories. A day for calling up the past. How could we have guessed as we sat there—two middle-aged spinsters and an old man—that in place of memories we were about to be given adventure such as we had never dreamed of? Adventure and anguish, horror and heaven were just around the corner, and we did not know.”

Reflect back on a time that turned out to be one of those “if I had only known then what I know now” moments. This could be a time when you made a decision that later had bad effects or simply a time in your life that was later marked by contrast with a change in circumstances. Use this memory to offer advice to someone else. If there was something you could have done differently, what was it? Do you have any regrets? Write a couple of paragraphs explaining this situation.

5. Corrie describes the oddities of her house with affection. It is obvious that the Beje is her home, and despite its age and its tilting floors, she loves it. Pretend your own house is on the market for sale. The real estate agent has asked you to describe, in writing, what things you love most about the house. What things about it make it special and make it home? This information will appear in the listing that the real estate agent is creating.
6. Pickwick is introduced in this chapter, and Corrie describes how, while children are drawn to her father, they tend to shy away from Pickwick because of his appearance. He is described by Corrie as “dear ugly Pickwick.”

Our society, sadly enough, is very caught up in appearances. We tend to make judgments about people based on what they look like. Models in fashion magazines, for example, tend to represent unrealistic and, at times, unhealthy ideals for beauty. Write a letter to the editor of a teen fashion magazine and discuss the importance of looking beyond appearance to who a person really is underneath. Ask the editor to consider using “real” people as models, instead of the fashionably stick-thin, airbrushed beauty.

Chapter 2

7. We see some sibling rivalry in Chapter 2 when Corrie comments that “...Nollie was different from me; she was pretty and well-behaved and always had her handkerchief.” In a few paragraphs, discuss an instance or instances of sibling rivalry in your own life. After doing so, switch your perspective and discuss the same instance(s) from your sibling’s point of view. How did the telling of the event or the emotions involved change?
8. Corrie tells us that Tante Bep “with her perpetual, disapproving scowl, was the oldest of the aunts and the one we children liked least. For thirty years she had worked as a governess in wealthy families and she continually compared [their] behavior with that of the young ladies and gentlemen she was used to.” This is a fairly unflattering description, although obvious love for her family radiates from Corrie’s recollections. Consider your own family and select a member who, while dearly loved, has some obvious and sometimes entertaining character traits or flaws. Create, as Corrie did, a written caricature of this relative in a paragraph or two.
9. Corrie’s father places a high value on education. Although he had had to quit school early to go to work in the watch shop, he was self-taught in such subjects as theology, history, and literature—in five languages, no less. Discuss your own theories regarding education. Do you feel it is as important as Mr. ten Boom did? Do you think it is more important for some people than for others? Are there any reforms you feel would benefit our educational system today? Explain your ideas in a petition you write for educational reform that is addressed to your school Principal.
10. When Corrie innocently asks her father about “sexsin” he provides an analogy for the burden of knowledge by asking young Corrie to carry his traveling case, packed heavily with his watches and spare parts, off of the train. When Corrie attempts to do so and learns that it is simply too heavy a load for her to bear, her father tells her that knowledge is much the same—that there are some things that would prove burdensome in their clarity. How can knowledge be a burden?

Write a fable illustrating the burden of knowledge. Fables should be brief, should include animal characters, and should relate a moral lesson.

Chapter 3

11. In Chapter 3, we learn a bit about love and infatuation in Holland during the time period described in the book. Karel, the object of Corrie's devotion, appears in this chapter, and although he is quite a bit older and appears unaware of her, it is enough, Corrie tells us, to merely be in the same room as he is. Her sister Nollie, rather, is the one used to getting attention from males. A standard method of declaring affection at this time was for a boy to request a lock of hair from the girl of his dreams. Unimpressed, Nollie's usual response to such a request was to "...pull a few strands from the ancient gray carpet in [their] bedroom, tie them with a sentimental blue ribbon, and make [Corrie] the messenger."

Reflect on how courtship methods in the decades since have changed and write a newspaper or magazine column offering advice on gaining someone's attention and declaring your affection.

12. The ten Boom household changes significantly when it is discovered that Tante Bep has tuberculosis. Look up the disease in an encyclopedia or online and familiarize yourself with its symptoms.

Then, take on the persona of the doctor who has had the bad fortune to diagnose Tante Bep. Write a letter to the ten Boom family, explaining carefully how Tante Bep's illness might progress and expressing your condolences for the loss they are certain to suffer.

13. When Corrie comments on Tante Bep's seeming unhappiness with her situation, Mama reveals that Bep has always expressed dissatisfaction with her current lot in life, whatever it may be. She says, "Happiness isn't something that depends on our surroundings, Corrie. It's something we make inside ourselves." Respond to this statement in writing by discussing examples that either prove or disprove it.

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14. Tante Jans, when faced with the knowledge that she has approximately three weeks to live, demonstrates remarkable strength and graciousness of spirit. Despite her preoccupation with death during much of her life, she looks to her own death with courage and practicality, stating, “I’m not going to leave an untidy desk behind for someone else to clean up,” Write a eulogy for Tante Jans as one of her family members might have done.
15. Upon observing the beginning of a romance between Corrie and Karel, Willem reveals to Corrie that Karel’s parents have long since decided that he must marry well, and tells her that she should not expect a proposal. Although Corrie is crushed, she has difficulty believing that Karel, a grown man, could deny his own feelings in favor of his mother’s plans. Even though he ultimately does exactly that, pretend that the opposite is true.

Imagine that you are Karel, and you have decided that you must follow your heart and propose to Corrie. First, however, you must overcome the hurdle that is your mother. Naturally, you are a bit nervous at the prospect of facing her with your decision, and so you decide to write a practice speech ahead of time. In your practice speech, list the reasons you have decided to go against your mother’s plan for your future and anticipate whatever arguments she might raise in return.

16. Toward the end of Chapter 3, Karel brings his fiancée to meet the ten Booms, and although Corrie valiantly manages to stifle her true feelings, she is bitterly disappointed. Read back over pages 44-45, which reveal Corrie’s heartbreak and the manner in which she triumphs over it. Then choose one of the following prompts.
 - A. Compose a diary entry that Corrie might have written at this time, including her father’s wise advice and Corrie’s resulting prayer.
 - B. Although Corrie shows remarkable dignity in her acceptance of Karel’s decision, she is still suffering. Write a letter to Karel from Corrie expressing her disillusionment. This letter should convey Corrie’s dignified, gentle spirit and her acceptance of the way things are, but should also provide a release for her feelings.