

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Hiding Place

by Corrie ten Boom

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The Hiding Place

Introduction

This is the life story of a courageous Christian woman, Corrie ten Boom, and her experiences during the Second World War. Her faith sustains her even though she, like so many millions during that time, suffers deeply.

Corrie's life until the war is one of a spinster quietly living out her life as she works in her family's watch shop. The reader learns of her mother, who cares for the ill and poor of Haarlem, and of her deeply religious father, who feels it an honor to work on watches but forgets to charge his customers. It is from her father that Corrie learns many of life's most valuable lessons.

The peace and comfort of their lives are gradually eroded after Germany invades Holland and Nazi rule dominates everyday life. Corrie notes that, all too willingly, many of her countrymen embrace the anti-Semitic views promulgated by the Nazis, and she is drawn to the Dutch Underground movement to try to help save the lives of the Jews of Holland. Eventually, a secret room, a hiding place, is installed in her home, and the ten Booms harbor seven fugitive Jews.

An informer ultimately betrays the family; Corrie, her sister Betsie, and her Father are sent to prison. Her elderly father survives the harsh conditions for only ten days, but Corrie and Betsie persevere, strengthened by their faith and by the knowledge they are able to aid and comfort many of their fellow prisoners.

As the war gradually draws to an end, the conditions the prisoners endure become intolerable. Eventually Betsie succumbs, and Corrie is left to carry on. She is eventually released and begins a new phase of her life based on visions that her sister had during her final days in the concentration camp. Corrie begins a life of healing and forgiveness, vowing to spread the word of the lessons of love she has learned in the camps.

Much of the story centers on the deeply held Christian faith of the ten Boom family and how that faith can sustain one, even in times of great adversity. Their faith never wavers, nor do they question the will of God. Of great importance is the challenge a Christian faces when great evil is in power, and how a Christian should act in these circumstances

Topics for general class discussion peripheral to the story might include:

- Anti-Semitism and some of the historical reasons for its existence
- Some of the history leading up to the Second World War
- The nature of evil and how one acts when evil is in power
- Forgiveness and acceptance
- The possibility of miracles or of divine intervention

All references come from the Bantam Books edition of *The Hiding Place*, published 1974.

The Hiding Place

Objectives

By the end of the Unit, the student will be able to:

1. define the term “symbolism” and point out its use in *The Hiding Place*.
2. discuss some of the reasons why the authors chose to employ a non-chronological arrangement of events in the opening chapters of *The Hiding Place*.
3. define the term “flashback,” and identify passages in the book that are flashbacks; discuss how the effective use of flashbacks advances the storyline of *The Hiding Place*.
4. define the term “foreshadowing,” and identify passages in the book that use foreshadowing; discuss how the effective use of foreshadowing advances the storyline of *The Hiding Place*.
5. tell why the narrative in this story is described as a first-person narrative told by someone reflecting on past action.
6. discuss some of the historical forces that affect the narrator of the story.
7. discuss the concept of anti-Semitism and point out how this concept relates to the Holocaust.
8. cite incidents from the text to support the following motifs.
 - handling grief and separation from loved ones
 - getting along with less
 - finding security in the midst of insecurity
 - forgiving one’s enemies
 - facing death
 - dealing with difficult people
 - what to do when evil wins
9. define and cite examples of theme, conflict, and allusion from *The Hiding Place*.

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Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. The most common order of action in a story is chronological. When events are arranged in an order that is other than chronological, the author must have a special purpose or reason for doing so. What reason can you cite for the out-of-order arrangement of the opening chapters of *The Hiding Place*?
2. Define “foreshadowing” and explain how that technique is used in *The Hiding Place*. Give specific examples in your answer.
3. Discuss the symbolism and allusion of the title of *The Hiding Place*.
4. In the preface to the book, the authors tell of attending a church service during which two speakers tell of similar experiences they had while interred in concentration camps. The man is described as “pain haunted” with “shaking hands that could not forget.” The woman, Corrie ten Boom, is described as having a “face that radiated love, peace, joy.” How would you explain the difference in the two responses?
5. The German Lieutenant Rahms, who interrogates Corrie for several days while she is in Scheveningen federal penitentiary, tells Corrie, “I am in a prison...a prison stronger than this one.” Explain what Lieutenant Rahms means.
6. Discuss how the lives of the citizens of Haarlem change during the German occupation.
7. One of the central concerns of *The Hiding Place* is, “How should a Christian act when evil is in power?” Discuss some of the acts that Corrie commits that run against her Christian upbringing. Do you think such actions are justified? Why or why not?
8. How does Corrie honor Betsie’s last request, that they “...must tell people what we have learned here”?
9. When Betsie and Corrie learn the identity of the man who has betrayed them to the Gestapo, they both have very different reactions. Discuss how their reactions differ, and how the different reactions illustrate the differences in their personalities. How does Corrie finally accept the news?
10. Betsie has three visions while in Ravensbruck. What are they and how do all three visions eventually become reality?
11. Discuss how Corrie’s faith sustains her.
12. Point out various instances of irony in the book.

Chapter 4

Vocabulary

ignominy – disgrace
taciturn – habitually untalkative
unabashed – not embarrassed

1. What happens to Mama?

2. Does Mama recover from her stroke?

3. What lesson does Corrie learn from her mother?

4. Who is next to marry in the ten Boom family?

5. What unusual occurrence takes place during the wedding service?

6. Is this the beginning of Mother's recovery?

12. Why does the group vote upon whether or not one of the residents, Mary, can continue to stay there?

13. The title, *The Hiding Place*, is a reference to a passage from the Bible, which states that God is “my hiding place; [who] shalt preserve me from trouble.” What literary term, therefore, describes the title?
