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The Hiding Place

by

Corrie ten Boom

with John and Elizabeth Sherrill

1971



MonkeyNotes by Diane Clapsaddle

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KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The setting for this memoir begins in Haarlem, Holland, in 1937, and ends with Corrie ten Boom's death in Orange County, California on April 15, 1983, her 91st birthday. In between, there are flashbacks to her youth in Haarlem where she was born in 1892, and explanations of the old and odd Dutch house where.....

CHARACTER LIST

Major Characters

Corrie ten Boom – the narrator of her own autobiography, she was a Dutch woman who went to prison for subversive activities against the Nazi occupation in Holland.

Betsie ten Boom – Corrie's older sister, she was the most devout of a very religious Dutch family and foresaw Corrie's ministry from her death bed.

Casper ten Boom – Corrie's father, he was a very good, beloved member of the Haarlem community, where he had been a watch maker and repairer all his life.

Mama ten Boom – Corrie's mother who died from a stroke, but not before exhibiting a miraculous recovery at Nollie's wedding.

Minor Characters

Willem ten Boom – Corrie's brother, he became an ordained minister in the Dutch Reformed Church and later opened a nursing home for elderly Jews. He worked in the underground movement, finding hiding places for Jews of all ages.

Nollie ten Boom van Woerden – Corrie's younger sister, her insistence on honesty in all instances nearly got the Resistance workers into trouble several times.....

Additional characters are described in the complete study guide.

CONFLICT

Protagonist – The protagonist of a story is the main character who traditionally undergoes some sort of change. He or she must usually overcome some opposing force. The protagonist of this story is Corrie ten Boom who tells the true story of her life. She constantly faces adversity when she.....

Antagonist – The antagonist of a story is the force that provides an obstacle for the protagonist. The antagonist does not always have to be a single character or even a character at all. The enemy is.....

Rising Action – This part of the autobiography occurs from the beginning and the celebration of.....

Climax – The climax of a plot is the major turning point that allows the protagonist to resolve the conflict. The climax comes when Betsie dies, foreseeing on.....

Falling Action – This part of the story takes place from the time Corrie is released from

Outcome – Betsie dies at Ravensbruck, but her visions of the future lead Corrie to find a ministry where she will tell what happened during their imprisonment, and how God and Jesus were always with.....

SHORT PLOT/CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

Corrie ten Boom's autobiography began with the 100th anniversary of the founding of the ten Boom watch shop in Haarlem, Holland. The ten Boom family was a highly respected one known for their deep religious faith and good will towards anyone who might need their help. This celebration took place in 1937 within the shadow of World War II and the rise of Nazism. However, the Dutch people believed that just as in World War I, their neutrality would be honored. Unfortunately, they could not know the evil and the horrors that come with it were just around the corner for them.

Corrie described in detail the old, strangely built Dutch house where she was born, because it would become the main setting of *The Hiding Place* – a secret room they would build to hide Jews and political prisoners fleeing Nazi persecution. The big old house was a beloved part of Corrie's childhood as she used it as a backdrop to reminisce about how she grew up. She remembered many fond moments: trying to get out of going to school; a father who prized his faith and education above all; a mother who made it a regular habit to visit the poor and ill and bring them help; an older sister who was to always be one her greatest friends; an older brother who.....

THEMES

The most important theme of this story is **God's love is always there** no matter how dark the shadows that fall over us. This theme overflows the events of the story as Corrie and Betsie always come back to it when despair threatens to overtake them.

Another theme involves the idea of **love for our fellow man**. The ten Booms never think of not allowing people who were in need into their home. Even before the war, eleven foster children were raised there and the family gave back a great deal to their community. Father and Mama taught them to never turn.....

Additional themes are discussed in the complete study guide.

MOOD

Many times, the mood of this story is one of fear and despair. The two women, Betsie and Corrie, are subjected to horrific conditions during their imprisonment, and they witness the deaths of many innocent people. However, the overall mood is uplifting and optimistic, because within the midst of.....

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

Corrie ten Boom was born on April 15, 1892, in Haarlem, Holland, and lived there in a wonderful old house called the Beje most of her life. After an early disappointment in love, she chose to never marry; this seemed to be a part of God's plan for her as she became a minister of His word after spending a year in Nazi controlled prisons and in Ravensbruck, the infamous concentration camp that was responsible for the deaths of about 95,000 women. Corrie's experiences in these prisons are the basis for her.....

LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This autobiography takes place at a time we have now come to know as the Holocaust. Although Corrie ten Boom only witnessed this horror from her own perspective and that of the Dutch, she accurately portrays how the Nazi regime systematically rounded up all those people they considered undesirable in.....

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

PREFACE - July, 1971 - Chappaqua, New York

Summary

The authors, John and Elizabeth Sherrill, give us an explanation of how they came to write *The Hiding Place* in the Preface. They point out that they were writing *God's Smuggler* when the name Corrie ten Boom began to crop up. She was known behind the "Iron Curtain" (former-Soviet controlled countries) and even called by the

honorably titled “Double-Old Grandmother” in Vietnam. They considered, upon hearing about her missionary work, to include her in the book, but changed their minds when they realized that she was a book unto herself.

Then, in 1968, at a church service in Germany, the authors listened to two speakers who had been prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. The first speaker showed the deep pain he still felt in his face and in his shaking hands, but the second speaker – Corrie ten Boom – radiated love, peace, and joy. She so intrigued the authors that they stayed behind to speak with her.

Corrie ten Boom was spreading a world wide ministry of comfort and counsel which had begun in the concentration camp where she had found, as Isaiah had promised, “a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest . . . the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” The authors got to know her and traveled with her to the places that held so much meaning for her. They came to the conclusion that they were not looking into the past, but into the future and came away learning many truths they adapted to their own lives. They also realized that this woman and the people from her life were people the authors wished they had known. And so they decided that they would make them known by writing about them.

Notes

The authors prepare us for this indefatigable woman who will characterize this book by examining some of her obvious traits: a constant feeling of love, peace, and joy in spite of her terrible experiences in a concentration camp; a deep commitment to a ministry of comfort and counsel to people who have been severely scarred, both physically and emotionally; and a loving memory for the places and the people she loved.

They also indicate from where the title of the book was derived: Isaiah’s comments in the Bible about the hiding place. So we know now that what we are about to read is not just about a physical place God provides to protect us from the storm, but also the deep emotional comfort he offers when we need it most.

CHAPTER ONE – The One Hundredth Birthday Party

Summary

The story opens in 1937, in Haarlem, Holland, with the 100th birthday party for the family watch shop. Corrie is the narrator who tells about the house where she lives – how she can’t see anything but the walls of the buildings beside her room until she looks straight up and sees that it’s going to be a sunny day. She was 45 years old at this point in her life and unmarried. She bemoaned the loss of her waistline while commenting that her sister, Betsie, in spite of being seven years older, still had the same slender grace that made people turn and look after her in the street.

The house where she lived was a curious old house – known as the Beje (pronounced bay yay) - which was three stories high, two rooms deep, and one room wide. It was actually two houses that had at one time been separate, after which their back walls had been knocked out and a narrow, twisting staircase added in between.

It seemed as if all of Haarlem was coming to the party, even the delivery boy who brought flowers from Herman Sluring, an enormously wealthy customer whom she and Betsie called Pickwick, because he looked so much like the illustration of that character in their copy of Dickens’ book. Corrie carried the flowers into the workroom to find an artful spot to place them. Corrie mentioned how much she loved this room behind the customer part of their shop, where there was the sound of the thousands of ticks of the many clocks in there.

The party was for the shop which opened in January of 1837 by Corrie’s grandfather, but it was also for her father whom everyone in Haarlem seemed to love, calling him “Haarlem’s Grand Old Man.” We learn just what a kind man he was when Corrie mentioned their saleslady-bookkeeper, Toos, who had such an ill temper that she could never hold a job until Casper ten Boom hired her and disarmed and mellowed her.

Corrie went to the heart of the house – the dining room – for breakfast and we see from her description of that room and the people who were no longer there except in spirit – her mother, her two aunts, her other sister, Nollie, and her brother, Willem – that this was a very loving family. Here they had all sat around the table and enjoyed each other's company. She marveled that somehow her father had managed to feed, dress, and care for eleven more foster children after his own four had grown up. She and her sister, Betsie, reminisced about their mother and aunts who had always worn only black from head to toe and yet who would probably have loved the new styles and colors of 1937. Corrie wondered to herself as the narrator how either of them could have guessed at that moment how just around the corner was anguish and horror and even heaven. She wondered, too, how at the time, she could never have imagined that her white-bearded father – called Opa, or Grandfather, by all the children of Haarlem – would be thrown by strangers into a grave without a name. She wondered how she could ever have imagined that her conservative, loving sister would stand naked before a roomful of men. On this day, on the 100th birthday, such thoughts were not even thinkable.

We learn further about the deep faith of the ten Boom family who met every morning at 8:30 for Scripture reading and opened their devotionals to any and all, including their employees, who included Hans the apprentice, Toos, the saleslady-bookkeeper, and Christoffels. Christoffels was an itinerant clock mender who had once trudged all over Holland repairing tall pendulum clocks in every Dutch farmhouse.

Eventually, Betsie sent Corrie to the home of their younger sister, Nollie, for her cups, because a steady stream of guests began to find their way to the ten Boom home to congratulate their father. She rode her bicycle there and once again stops, as the narrator, to wonder how she could have foreseen that day how on a summer day in the not so distant future, she would brake her bicycle once again in front of this house, daring to go no further for fear of what was happening inside. While waiting on the cups, Corrie introduces the readers to her nephew, Peter, who at thirteen was a musical prodigy and the pride of her life.

Later in the chapter, Corrie introduces us to other people who would come together again and again in the future under very different circumstances: the policemen, Pickwick, Mr. and Mrs. Kan, the owners of the other watch shop, and of course, Willem, her older brother. She notes that these characters were all so very different from each other and yet, in her father's eyes, all alike. That was his secret: he not only overlooked the differences in people, he actually had no idea they were there. She tells us more about Willem, who was the only one of the children to go to college and had become an ordained minister. She felt he was so much more observant than other people, because back in 1927, in Germany, where he had completed his doctoral thesis, he had written about a terrible evil that was taking root there, the seeds of contempt for human life such as the world had never seen. At that time, the few who read his paper had merely laughed. Now, of course, in 1937, they weren't laughing anymore, for some of the businesses owned by Jews, with which the family had done business for years, had simply vanished.

As a result, Willem had scrimped and saved enough money to open an old folk's home for elderly Jews and then, opened it, also, to younger and younger Jewish refugees from Germany. With these people came tales of a mounting madness. That day, Willem brought with him a man named Herr Gutlieber, a young Jewish man whose face had been severely burned. He had just arrived from Germany that morning and his burns were the result of a group of teenage boys in Munich who had set his beard on fire. As Corrie struck up a conversation with the newcomer, she overheard the watch salesman say that the police in Munich would catch up to the young hooligans, because "Germany was a civilized country."

Corrie observes that the shadow of war fell only lightly over them on that winter afternoon in 1937. Nobody believed the shadow would grow until it was too late and blocked out the sky. She knows now that the experiences of our lives, "when we let God use them, become the mysterious and perfect preparation for the work He will give us to do." Now she can think back to how events of the past stand out in perfect focus against the blur of the rest of her life as though they were unfinished, as though they had something more to say.

Notes

This chapter is one of introduction for the reader to the members of Corrie's family and all of their friends who will have a profound impact on the events which are waiting just around the corner. It helps set the stage for the sad events which affect such a highly loved group of people who will become victims of the Nazi war machine. We, too, will be affected, because it's obvious what a devout, decent family the ten Booms are. They accept anyone, no matter what faith or what class, into their homes, and so we can begin to understand that they would willingly make it a hiding place for anyone as well. There are some interesting ironies, many examples of foreshadowing, and symbolic moments as well. Corrie's commentary about how they could never have known what was awaiting them just around the corner on that winter afternoon prepares us for the horrific experiences that await them. The watch salesman's comment that Germany is a civilized country, is ironic, given that all readers must now know how uncivilized they actually were. And the dear old watch shop, with its many ticking clocks, which brings Corrie such comfort and joy, is actually the ticking of a symbolic time bomb leading to the horrors they will face.

It is also important to note that now Corrie sees how the events of her life were all intended by God to help her find something significant that He wanted her to do.....

OVERALL ANALYSES

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Corrie ten Boom – As the main character and narrator of *The Hiding Place*, we see the events of World War II and her early life through her eyes. She is an extraordinary woman who presents her story in a very humble way, striving to emphasize that she was always an instrument of God. Her early life molded her into a deeply religious woman who still had doubts at times as to what God's plan for her really was. Nonetheless, she faced disappointments in her life, like the loss of Karel, the only man she ever loved, with the.....

Betsie ten Boom – this character is given by Corrie an almost saintly description. She learned early in her life that her weak heart would never allow her to have children, so she chose to never marry and to instead provide a home for her father and Corrie and also to meet the needs of the less fortunate. When she was arrested along with Corrie and her father, she decided that it was a golden opportunity to tell others about

Casper ten Boom – this character is known as Father (to Corrie and Betsie), Opa, or grandfather to children, and the Grand Old Man of Haarlem. He was a very devout Christian who lived his life in Christ's example. He was kind to everyone, even the most difficult among us to love. He opened his home to.....

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

This story is an autobiography written by Corrie ten Boom with the help of John and Elizabeth Sherrill. It begins in 1937 with the 100th anniversary of the ten Boom watch shop, but this is followed by a flashback.....

THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

The most important theme of this story is **God's love is always there** no matter how dark the shadows are that fall over us. This could be seen first in how the ten Boom's secret work for the Resistance was challenged many times and yet always persevered until God Himself decided to allow the raid that sent Corrie and Betsie to prison. He needed them in the various prisons and concentration camps to provide hope for those who were facing, at the least, the horrific conditions within the prisons and, at the most, their inevitable deaths. He provided miracles such as the never-emptying vitamin bottle as a light which shone on the power of His love. Later, he used Betsie's prophetic deathbed words to help Corrie find a way to help those who were in the most pain from the events set in motion by the Nazis. Even when Corrie feels her.....

Additional themes are analyzed in the complete study guide.

RISING ACTION

This part of the autobiography occurs from the beginning with the celebration of the 100 years the.....

FALLING ACTION

This part of the story takes place from the time Corrie is released from Ravensbruck until she

POINT OF VIEW

The point of view is first person as it is told entirely from the recollections of Corrie ten Boom. We see

OTHER ELEMENTS

Language

The language of this story is in English, but sometimes incorporates Dutch and German phrases and names, since it takes place in Holland and Germany.

Foreshadowing

There are several examples of **foreshadowing** which frequently present clues of something that will happen later in the autobiography:

- 1.) The realization that the people of Haarlem call Casper ten Boom the Grand Old Man of Haarlem prepares us for his kindly character and his willing sacrifice of his life to offer aid to those in need.
- 2.) When Corrie tells us on the day of the anniversary celebration that she couldn't have known that her kindly old father would end up in an unmarked grave, it foreshadows Casper's sacrifice of his own life.....

Fourteen additional examples of foreshadowing are identified in the complete study guide.

Irony

There are also examples of irony which occurs when something happens, or is seen, or is heard that we may know, but the characters do not, or that appears opposite of what is expected.:

- 1.) A guest at the anniversary celebration says that the Germans will get the hooligans under control in their country, because it is civilized. This ironic, because Germany will become one of the most uncivilized countries in history.
- 2.) It is ironic that Mama, who can only say the words yes and no after her stroke, is able to sing every word of her favorite hymn at Nollie's wedding.....

Five additional examples of irony are included in the complete study guide.

Metaphors

There are also examples of metaphors which are direct comparisons made between characters and ideas:

- 1.) Father reads frequently from the Book of Isaiah about how God is our hiding place and our shield. This is a metaphor for what the Beje will become during the war.
- 2.) When Corrie asked as a child that father tell her about sex, he made her try to pick up his heavy suitcase on the train. When she couldn't do it, he said that the same was true in life: there are some things too heavy for us to know until we are old enough to bear the burden. The heavy suitcase is a metaphor for the burdens of life.....

Five additional examples of metaphors are included in the complete study guide.

IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS - QUOTES AND ANALYSIS

The following quotations are important at various points in the story: (A Bantam Book, published by arrangement with Fleming H. Revell Company, November 1971)

- 1.) “Young and old, poor and rich, scholarly gentlemen and illiterate servant girls – only to Father did it seem that they were all alike.” (pg. 13) Here Corrie points out the deep kindness that filled her father.
- 21.) “A full ten years ago . . . Willem had written in his doctoral thesis, done in Germany, that . . . the seeds were being planted of a contempt for human life such as the world had never seen.” (pg. 13) In this quote. Corrie relates the fear that was building as far back as 1927 for the Hitler war machine.....

Twenty additional quotations are listed and analyzed in the complete study guide.

SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS / IMAGERY / SYMBOLS

- 1.) The ant living in the crack in floor in Corrie’s prison cell symbolizes strength.
- 2.) The light blue sweater Nollie sends Corrie symbolizes hope.
- 3.) The words Corrie rights on her prison wall after learning about Father’s death – Father. Released. – represent that his release was to God.....

Additional items are examined in the complete study guide.

IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY

Title: The Hiding Place

Author: Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizabeth Sherrill

Date Published: 1971

Meaning of the Title: Refers to the Scriptural message from the Book of Isaiah which states in part, “Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word . . . Hold thou me up, and I.....”

STUDY QUESTIONS - MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUIZ

- 1.) In the first chapter, Corrie several times mentions that at the anniversary party, they couldn’t have known certain events were going to happen. This is an example of
 - a.) metaphor.
 - b.) irony.
 - c.) foreshadowing.
- 2.) When Corrie fears her father might die after she sees the dead baby, he uses, as a way to comfort her, the metaphor of
 - a.) the hiding place.
 - b.) the train ticket.
 - c.) the heavy suitcase.....

ANSWER KEY

- 1.) c 2.) b 3.) a 4.) b 5.) a 6.) c 7.) b 8.) b 9.) c 10.) c 11.) a 12.) a 13.) b 14.) a 15.) a

ESSAY TOPICS - BOOK REPORT IDEAS

1. Analyze how Corrie’s religious faith gave her strength not just when she was in prison, but also at other tragic or stressful times in her life.
2. Discuss how Father was such an important moral example in the lives of his children by citing specific examples to prove this point.....

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