

*Hidden Letters*

Edited and Annotated by Deborah Slier and Ian Shine

Translated by Marion van Binsbergen-Pritchard

Learning Engagements:

1. Narrative Frame
2. Character Study
3. Internal Response
4. Inferences
5. Primary Source Annotations
6. Text-to-text Connections
7. WebQuest

**Learning Engagement #1: Narrative Frame**

Book Prompt: The eyewitness letters written by Philip “Flip” Slier provide the framework for this informational book. *Hidden Letters* includes 84 letters and postcards and one telegram written by Flip himself; it also includes one letter written to Flip by his parents. Although this is a work of non-fiction, readers can view the characters, setting, and events Flip describes in his letters in terms of a narrative frame.

Before reading *Hidden Letters*, review the components of a narrative frame. While reading, complete this category matrix based on Flip’s letters alone.

With a classroom of students, divide the class into small groups. Divide the letters and complete categories 3 through 7 for each episode. The recommended divisions are included on the *Teacher Resource: Flip’s Internal Responses* found at: [http://www.hiddenletters.com/pdf/internal\\_responses\\_guide.pdf](http://www.hiddenletters.com/pdf/internal_responses_guide.pdf)

Category Matrix: Narrative Frame for <i>Hidden Letters</i>	
1. Characters	
2. Setting	
Episodes—Letters/postcards dated:	
3. Initiating Event(s)	
4. Internal Response(s)	
5. Reaction to Initiating Event(s) (by the main character)	
6. Consequences	
7. Resolution	

---

---

**Teaching Tools from Star Bright Books**  
**Curriculum Guides for Home and Classroom Teaching**

---

---

**Learning Engagement #2: Character Study**

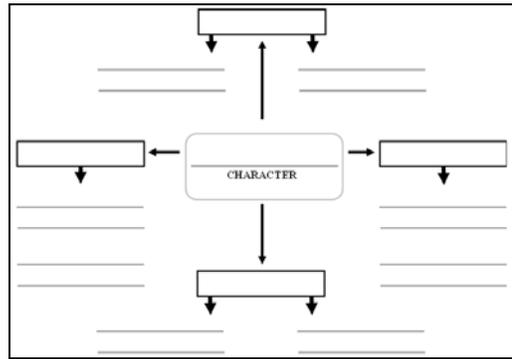
Book Prompt: Next to a sample of a “One Last Warning” call-up letter informing a Dutch citizen to report to a Dutch labor camp, the annotators provide readers with background information about Flip Slier (page 25). Read this information before reading the book.

While reading the book, make notes about Flip Slier’s character and record page numbers on which evidence for a particular trait are found.

After reading, complete a character map for Flip. As a sample, educators can use the completed *Character Map* found at: [http://www.hiddenletters.com/pdf/character\\_map\\_guide.pdf](http://www.hiddenletters.com/pdf/character_map_guide.pdf)

Choose four qualities and use evidence from the letters or annotations to document two instances in which Flip demonstrates each quality or characteristic. Record the page on which the evidence is found.

Use the Character Map as prewriting and compose a character study essay on the theme: Who Was Philip “Flip” Slier?

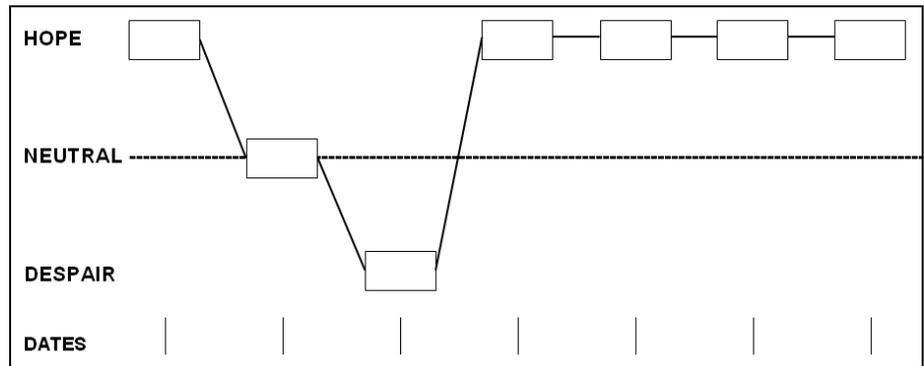


**Learning Engagement #3: Internal Responses**

Book Prompt: Flip Slier’s letters to his parents reveal the vicissitudes of hope and despair that he experiences as a forced laborer. What are the circumstances of Flip’s life in the camp and the events in the larger context of the war that affect Flip’s varying emotional states? What gives Flip hope? What fills him with despair?

Use a category matrix to make notes on the letters. *Teacher Resource: Flip’s Internal Responses* is a completed sample: [http://www.hiddenletters.com/pdf/hidden\\_letters\\_internal\\_responses\\_guide.pdf](http://www.hiddenletters.com/pdf/hidden_letters_internal_responses_guide.pdf)

Create a graph that maps Flip’s internal responses to the events in the camp and the situation in Amsterdam. Use the dates of his letters and postcards on the x-axis. Interpret his communications and plot his emotional state on the graph. (If dividing a class for group work, use the recommended divisions as shown on Teacher Resource: Flip’s Internal Responses.)



ReadWriteThink.org has an electronic Graphic Map Tool that may be useful for this learning engagement. Access it at: <http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/graphicmap/>

---

---

## *Teaching Tools from Star Bright Books* Curriculum Guides for Home and Classroom Teaching

---

---

### **Learning Engagement #4: Inferences**

Book Prompt: Annotators Deborah Slier and Ian Shine have added over two hundred primary source documents to further explain Flip's letters. Unlike a textbook that pre-digests primary sources and transmits them to readers secondhand, historians and students of history can go directly to primary sources and make their own interpretations and judgments.

Review the translations of the original German documents related to Flip's arrest on pages 144-145.

Readers can consider the following questions as they analyze and interpret these documents.

1. Why was Flip in Amsterdam Central Station without a star?
2. Why did he give his correct address when he had been in hiding for about six months?
3. Could this have endangered his parents?
4. Why weren't his parents arrested at that time?
5. What could the scar on his lip indicate if this was a fresh wound?
6. Why would the Nazis want to know about a prisoner's family medical history?
7. Why would the Nazis want to know about a prisoner's grades in school?

Presentation: Write and perform a skit that reenacts Flip's arrest that includes answers to these questions.

### **Learning Engagement #5: Making Inferences from Primary Source Documents**

Book Prompt: The following are a sampling of the primary source documents from *Hidden Letters* that may prompt readers to develop their own interpretations.

1. An excerpt from a letter written by Walter Mattner, a police secretary, stationed at Mogilev in Belorussia on October 2 and 3, 1941 (page 75)
2. The letter from Edith Stein [a Jew who converted to Catholicism and became a nun and later a saint] to Pope Pius XI (page 95)
3. Grietje Slier Phillips's postcard that was limited to twelve lines (page 119)

Ask readers to read and to interpret one or more primary sources. Ask them to question the text as in Learning Engagement #4.

By combining the answers to their questions, evidence from the text, and their own background knowledge, readers can make inferences about these documents. Share interpretations in the form of expository or persuasive essays, creative writing or dramatizations, multimedia presentations, or other formats.

### **Learning Engagement #6: Text-to-text Connections**

Book Prompt: Reading an informational text can help build background information that helps readers comprehend novels as well as other informational texts.

After reading *Hidden Letters*, booktalk a selection of the titles on the following recommended lists. All of these books tell the stories of youth, twelve years of age and up. To facilitate discussing these books, form a book club or literature discussion groups that read the same title. Readers can also be grouped in mixed text groups in order to share ideas and to give each other recommendations for further reading.

An annotated bibliography of these resources can be found at:

[http://www.hiddenletters.com/pdf/hidden\\_letters\\_annotated\\_bibliography\\_guide.pdf](http://www.hiddenletters.com/pdf/hidden_letters_annotated_bibliography_guide.pdf)

### **Recommended Picture Books Focused on the Experiences of Young Adults During the Holocaust:**

*Anne Frank* by Josephine Poole, illustrated by Angela Barrett (Knopf, 2005)

*Memories of Survival* by Esther Nisenthal Krinitz and Bernice Steinhardt (Hyperion, 2005)

---

---

***Teaching Tools from Star Bright Books***  
**Curriculum Guides for Home and Classroom Teaching**

---

---

**Informational Texts Focused on the Experiences of Young Adults During the Holocaust:**

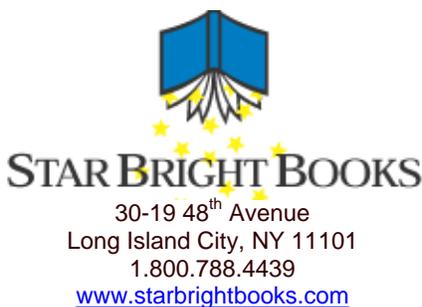
- The Beautiful Days of My Youth: My Nine Months in Auschwitz and Plaszow* by Ana Novac (Holt, 1997)  
*Ben's Story: Holocaust Letters with Selections from the Dutch Underground Press* edited by Kees W. Bolle (Southern Illinois University Press, 2001)  
*The Cage* by Ruth Minsky Sender (Macmillan, 1986)  
*The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition* by Anne Frank, edited by Otto H. Frank and Mirjam Pressler, translated by Susan Massotty (Doubleday, 1995)  
*Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti (Scholastic, 2004)  
*I Have Lived A Thousand Years* by Livia Bitton Jackson (Simon & Schuster, 1997)  
*In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer* by Irene Gut Opdyke (Knopf, 1999)  
*Lonek's Journey: The True Story of a Boy's Escape to Freedom* by Dorit Bader Whiteman (Star Bright Books, 2005)  
*Night* by Elie Wiesel (Hill & Wang, 1960/Bantam, 1982)  
*Parallel Journeys* by Eleanor H. Ayer with Helen Waterford and Alfons Heck (Atheneum, 1995)  
*Surviving I Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps* by Andrea Warren (HarperCollins, 2001)

**Recommended Historical Fiction Texts Focused on the Experiences of Young Adults During the Holocaust:**

- The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak (Knopf, 2006)  
*Daniel Half Human and the Good Nazi* by David Chotjewitz (Atheneum, 2005)  
*Escaping into the Night* by D. Dina Friedman (Simon & Schuster, 2006)  
*The Man from the Other Side* by Uri Orlev (Puffin, 1995)  
*Stones in Water* by Jo Napoli (Dutton, 1997)  
*Torn Thread* by Anne Isaacs (Scholastic, 2000)

**Learning Engagement #7: Genocide WebQuest**

Book Prompt: At the end of *Hidden Letters*, the annotators include information about the Convention on Genocide (page 163). Explore the Genocide WebQuest at: <http://www.hiddenletters.com/quest.html>



*Teaching Tools* © 2007 by Star Bright Books  
Judi Moreillon, Ph.D., compiled the learning engagements for this *Teaching Tools* guide.  
Star Bright Books permits and encourages downloading and photocopying of *Teaching Tools* for nonprofit educational use.