

BookTalk

A Discussion Guide for Teachers, Parents, and Others

A TRAITOR AMONG US

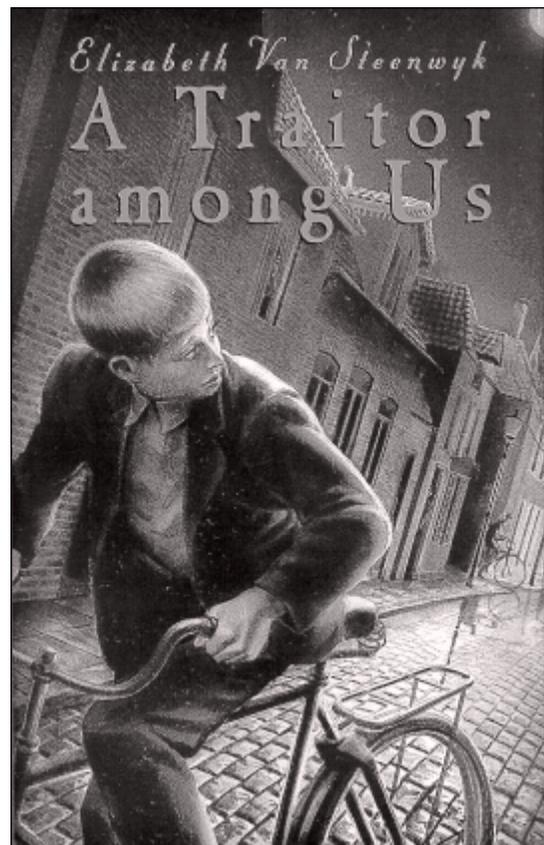
Thematic Connections

Courage
Friendship
Love
Fear
Hatred
Forgiveness

Grades 4-8

Parent's Guide to Children's Media Awards for 1998

Selected as Outstanding by Parent Council® Ltd.



Pieter finds the courage to make a difficult choice during tense and fearful times, in this award-winning novel set in Nazi-occupied Holland during World War II.

In the fall of 1944, although the Germans occupy Holland, the Resistance movement constantly undermines them. Thirteen-year-old Pieter Van Dirk, who's part of the movement, knows there's a traitor in his village—someone who would reveal his identity to the Nazis if his undercover work is discovered. But who is it?

As Pieter takes more and more chances, the shadow of the traitor is everywhere. The obvious suspects are the Nazi soldiers. But Pieter begins to wonder if it's one of the villagers. Could it be Mr. Van Der Meer, who teaches his students about German writers? The local doctor, who treats German soldiers? His uncle, who feeds them at his tavern? The suspects multiply as the suspense increases and the stakes grow higher.

"What will hold readers is not only the thrilling action of the kid in the underground army but also the spy story. . . . The suspense rises to the very last chapter."
— Booklist

"Sharp period detail . . . almost cinematic tension . . . The climax—a furtive, after-curfew bicycle ride in which Pieter flushes out the traitor—is heart-pounding."
—Publisher's Weekly

Fiction • Ages 9-14

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for Young Readers

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About the Book

To order, call 1-800-253-7521

Or E-mail: sales@eerdmans.com

A Traitor among Us, a suspense-filled story rich in historical detail, will appeal to young readers for many reasons. This tautly woven story illustrates the many faces of World War II and challenges students to find love, courage, and friendship, handle fear and hatred, and learn to forgive during times of war.



ABOUT *the Author*

Elizabeth A. Van Steenwyk is the award-winning author of over 50 books for young readers. As a child, Van Steenwyk spent countless summer days exploring the Galesburg Public Library, where she not only made her way through the children's section but ascended to the restricted third floor where old magazines and newspapers were kept. It was there that she discovered her two favorite reading subjects: Abraham Lincoln and Carl Sandburg. There, her interest in history developed. The setting for *A Traitor among Us* particularly interested her because she had a stake in it. "I was a young child during WWII. I guess the child that's still inside me is looking for answers, explanations perhaps, or closure to the events that happened then," she says. The questions posed by history always seem to find their way into Van Steenwyk's books.

Born

July 1 in Galesburg, Illinois

Current home

San Marino, CA

Previous job

Freelance writer for print, radio, and television

Hobbies

Reading and hiking at the family-owned walnut ranch

COURAGE—How do you find courage to do things which are beyond your experience, possibly life threatening, and which might change your life forever? How did Pieter find courage? Is courage something that takes over in times of trouble, or is it something that grows slowly as you gain experience and knowledge in learning how to live?

FRIENDSHIP—Do you have a friendship similar to Pieter's comfortable friendship with Jan? What would you do for a friend? How would you handle what Pieter finally has to face about his best friend's father? Would you have the courage to tell your best friend something that he/she would not like?

LOVE—Do you think Pieter's feelings of love for Beppie go too far during such a stressful time? Do you think he should give up his love for Beppie when his feelings are not reciprocated? What would you do if your feelings for someone were not returned?

FEAR—How does Pieter manage his fear, or doesn't he? Is it good thing always to be a little fearful of a new situation? Why? Would foolhardiness be dangerous in certain situations? Is Pieter respected despite his fears?

HATRED—Why does Pieter hate the German soldiers? Is this hatred natural? Is his dislike and distrust of his teacher, Mr. Van Der Meer, understandable? Explain.

FORGIVENESS—Would you be able to forgive Jan's father in a similar situation? How do you find forgiveness for someone who has wronged you?