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A Place to Hide

by Ronald H. Balson



About the Book

From the winner of the National Jewish Book Award.

Theodore ?Teddy? Hartigan is the scion of a wealthy Washington, D.C. family who place him into a comfortable job at the State Department and a placid diplomat?s career. In 1938, as Hitler?s inexorable rise continues, Teddy is reassigned to the US Consulate in Amsterdam to replace fleeing staff.

Teddy?s job is to process visa applications, and by 1939, refugees from Nazi-conquered Poland, Austria and other countries are desperate to secure safe passage to America. As Hitler sweeps through France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark and Holland, the screws tighten and law after virulent law is passed to threaten the lives --- indeed the very existence --- of the Jewish people.

When Teddy and his girlfriend, Sara, are introduced to an orphaned young girl named Katy, who has been abandoned on the grounds of a nursery school, they agree to adopt her. Teddy comes to realize that he holds the key to saving lives, whether five, 50 or 500 --- and makes the dangerous and selfless decision to join with underground groups and use his position at the Consulate to rescue those with no other avenue of escape.

Powerful and dramatic, National Jewish Book Award winner Ronald H. Balson?s A PLACE TO HIDE explores the deeply moving actions of an ordinary man who resolves, under perilous circumstances, to make a difference.

Discussion Guide

1. Did you ever desire to create a memoir for future generations? Do you keep a photo album or a scrapbook? What sorts of feelings do you get when looking back into your past? Teddy felt that his memories were starting to fade, and he feared he was losing a part of himself. Did you ever experience those feelings?

2. At the end of the book, Teddy and Julia are not the same people that they were in the beginning. How did they change? What were the major shifts in their personalities, and what caused them?

3. Teddy and Julia could have gone home with the consulate staff in 1941, but they chose to stay in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam. Did you feel that was realistic? Was it strength, or was it recklessness?

4. Other than the fictional Teddy and Julia, there were real heroes in Holland, people like Henriette Pimentel, Walter Suskind and Johan van Hulst. What made them heroic?

5. As you read the story, what were your feelings about the US policies on immigration? Were they fair? Could a change in the immigration policy have resulted in many saved lives? How should Congress have dealt with the immigration demand?

6. Karyn spent months writing Teddy?s memoir from his dictations. She did it for free. Why did she stay with it? When it became apparent that Teddy could not locate Annie, Karyn?s sister, why did she continue with the assignment? What benefit was it to her?

7. Why is it so important to keep Holocaust stories alive? As disturbing as they are, what benefit is served by studying them?

Author Bio

Ronald H. Balson is an attorney, professor and writer. His novel THE GIRL FROM BERLIN won the National Jewish Book Award and was the Illinois Reading Council's adult fiction selection for their *Illinois Reads* program. He is also the author of THE RIGHTEOUS, A PLACE TO HIDE, AN AFFAIR OF SPIES, DEFENDING BRITTA STEIN, ELI'S PROMISE, KAROLINA'S TWINS, THE TRUST, SAVING SOPHIE and the international bestseller ONCE WE WERE BROTHERS. He has appeared on many television and radio programs and has lectured nationally and internationally on his writing. He lives in Chicago.

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Publication Date: September 2, 2025
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction
Paperback: 304 pages
Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin
ISBN-10: 1250397154
ISBN-13: 9781250397157