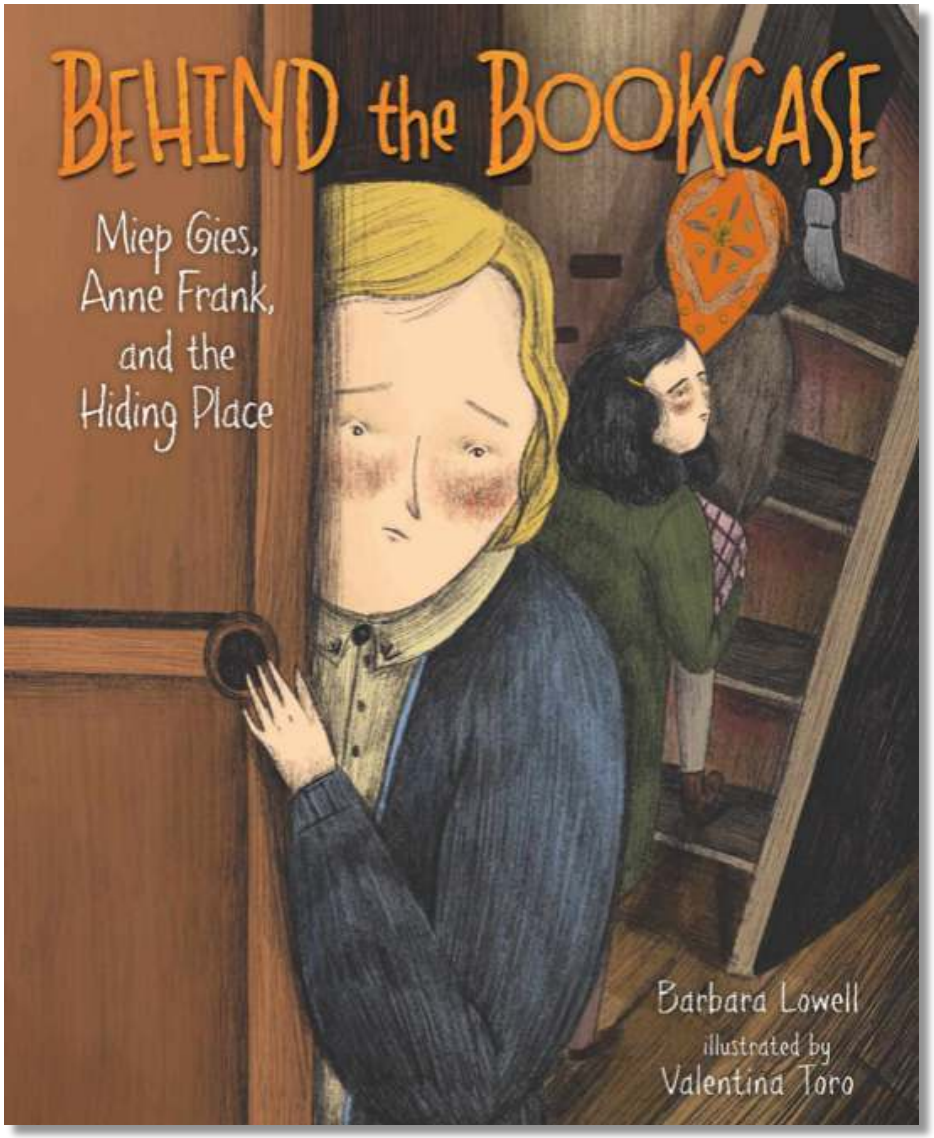
Behind the Bookcase:

Miep Gies, Anne Frank, and the Hiding Place

A teacher's guide created by Marcie Colleen
based upon the picture book
written by Barbara Lowell and illustrated by Valentina Toro



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Barbara Lowell is the author of *Sparky & Spike: Charles Schulz and the Wildest, Smartest Dog Ever; My Mastodon;* and more books for children. She loves to travel and first felt a connection to Miep Gies when she visited the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. After reading Miep's biography, she knew she wanted to tell Miep's story. Barbara lives in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. You can visit her online at: https://www.barbaralowell.com

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How to Use This Guide

This classroom guide for *Behind the Bookcase* is designed for students in second through fifth grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *Behind the Bookcase* into English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies curricula. Art and drama are used as a teaching tool throughout the guide.

All activities were created in conjunction with relevant content standards in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, and drama.

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Brief synopsis:

Anne Frank's diary is a gift to the world because of Miep Gies. One of the protectors of the Frank family, Miep recovered the diary after the family was discovered by Nazis, and then returned it to Otto Frank after World War II. Displaced from her own home as a child during World War I, Miep had great empathy for Anne, and she found ways—like talking about Hollywood gossip and fashion trends—to engage her. The story of their relationship—and the impending danger to the family in hiding—unfolds in this unique perspective of Anne Frank's widely known story.

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Reading Comprehension

Before reading *Behind the Bookcase*,

Look closely at the Front Cover ~

- Describe what you see.
- Who do you think the woman is? Who do you think the other people are?
- When do you think this story takes place? Today or a long time ago? What clues on the cover tell you this?
- Can you guess what the story might be about? What are some clues that tell you the setting?

Now read or listen to the book.

Help students summarize in their own words what the book was about.

- Why do you think the author refers to the world as "a very dark place" when talking about Miep Gies helping the Frank family?
- Describe some of the hardships faced by those living in Nazi occupied countries.
- How did Miep know the Frank family?
- Why did Otto Frank make plans to hide his family in the empty rooms above his offices?
    - Who agrees to help Mr. Frank?
- Miep was a child during World War I. How did the war affect her family?
    - How do you think Miep's experience from childhood influenced her when helping the Franks?
- How did Miep end up being raised in the Netherlands with a Dutch family?
- What kind of notice does Margot receive?
    - Why do you think Otto Frank decides at that time to go into hiding?
- Miep was surprised to see so many boxes and sacks of food, pots and pans, and furniture in the hiding place. When do you think Mr. Frank brought these items to the office?
- How does Anne make her room in the hiding place look lovely?
- In your own words, describe some of the morning visits Miep took to the attic. Use evidence from the book to help you.
- Why do you think more people soon joined the Franks in the attic?
- How is the door to the hiding place concealed?

- Why do you think Miep takes a special interest in spending time with Anne and doing special things for Anne?
- Choose THREE words to describe the relationship between Anne and Miep.
- When Miep and her husband spend the night in the attic, why do you think she said she knew how it felt to be a Jew in hiding?
- As the war dragged on, how does life in the attic become more difficult?
- How do you think the Nazi officer knew about the hiding place? Who do you think would betray them and why?
- How long did Anne and the others hide in the attic?
- Why did Henk and Miep hurry upstairs before the Nazi could return?
- What item does Miep save for Anne?
    - After the war, who does Miep give the diary to?
- How was Miep Gies instrumental in making sure that Anne's wish to "go on living even after my death" came true.

Let's talk about the people who created *Behind the Bookcase.*

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Valentina Toro's illustrations of the hiding place contain some specific details from real life.

Visit the Anne Frank house online where you can take a virtual tour through the annex where the Franks hid, https://www.annefrank.org/en/anne-frank/secret-annex/.

Make note of all the details shown in both the photos online and the illustrations in *Behind the Bookcase*.

Reading Nonfiction

While reading *Behind the Bookcase* aloud to the class, have students take notes in two columns:

- *Things We Learned*
- *Questions We Have*

Pause before each page turn to add notes to the columns. These columns can either be individual or put on the smartboard and worked on as a class.

Things We Learned (Facts)	Questions We Have	Answers We Found

- Once the story is read, discuss the *Questions We Have* column.
    - Were any of these questions answered as the story went along?
    - If so, ask students to find the answer within the text.
    - Record the answer next to the question in the third column labelled *Answers We Found.*

- For all remaining questions in the *Questions We Have column*, that have yet to be answered, students will need to take the steps to find answers, either through the Internet or book research.
    - Discuss how to find answers to questions through research.
    - Assign students to specific questions to help them focus.
    - Record all answers in the *Answers We Found* column.

- After the answers have been shared with the class, engage in a discussion on research practices.
    - What was the most difficult part about finding answers?
    - Was it easier to find answers on the Internet or in a book?
    - Which source is more reliable, the Internet or a printed book? Why?
    - How can you determine whether to trust a source?
    - What tips would you give someone who is about to do research?

- Read the Author's Note at the back of the book.
    - Create an additional chart to document what information in the back matter was included in the story and what information was not included.
    - Why do you think Barbara Lowell chose to include certain information in the text of the story and leave other information to the back matter?
    - Choose three facts from the back matter and explain why you think each was not included in the story.

Extension: Design and illustrate posters representing each Fact, Question, and researched Answer based on *Behind the Bookcase* and display them within the classroom.

Who was Miep? Who was Anne? ~ Character Study

How a character acts can tell readers a lot about who the character is.

Read *Behind the Bookcase*, scene by scene, and record your thoughts regarding character, in a chart like the one below.

Text	What Miep does	How would you describe Miep?	What Anne does	How would you describe Anne?
Example: *When the world was a very dark place, Miep Gies helped hide Anne Frank.*	Hides Anne Frank and her family to keep them safe.	Brave, a leader, a hero, kind, trustworthy, generous	Hides with her family in the attic.	Brave, a child, friendly, kind

After gathering information regarding Miep's and Anne's characters, use the scenarios below to write a new scene for *Behind the Bookcase* in which Miep visits Anne one morning in the attic. What do they say and do?

Writing Activities

Family Heirloom Show & Tell

Often, when someone we love is no longer living, we like to keep a few of their belongings for comfort and remembrance.

Miep Gies gave Otto Frank his daughter's diary after the war. Why do you think the diary may have meant a lot to Mr. Frank?

Does your family have any special heirlooms that belonged to someone who is no longer living? Ask someone to share a few of these heirlooms with you.

Imagine that someone asks you to tell the story of a family heirloom?

Write the story and draw a picture of the heirloom to share with your class.

Remember all stories need to have a beginning (where the heirloom came from), a middle (how the heirloom came to your family), and an ending (what the heirloom means to you).

Optional: Create the story together as a class.

Dear Diary

A diary contains someone's deepest thoughts on situations in their lives. For many a diary can be a place of confession or secrets.

While Anne was hiding in the attic, she wrote in her diary (she called it Kitty.) Because Miep Gies saved Anne's diary all those years after the war, those who now read the diary can know who Anne was and what her life was like in hiding.

Reflect on something that has happened to you today. Write down your memory of the event, including what happened, how it made you feel, and why.

- How does writing a diary entry make you feel?
- If you don't already, is keeping a diary something that you would like to start to do? Why or why not?
- Can you see any benefit to writing in a diary? If so, what?
- Why do you think a diary was important to Anne?

Consider continuing the practice of writing in a diary to chronicle your days.

Language Activities

Vocab Detectives

Behind the Bookcase has some new and challenging vocabulary, mostly related to World War II. Words like "occupied" and "rationed" may be unknown to some young readers.

Re-read *Behind the Bookcase* aloud and ask students to listen carefully for words they do not know.

- As soon as they come across an unknown word, they should raise their hand.
- Repeat the phrase using the unknown word. What might it mean, based on context?
- Look up the word in the dictionary. (*Depending on the level of your students, a student volunteer can do this or the teacher can.*) Read the definition.
- Come up with a way to remember what the word means. *Using Total Physical Response, students can create an action that symbolizes the word and helps them remember it.*
- Re-read the story and when you come to a vocabulary word, have the students fill in the meaning in how they choose to remember it.

Create a list of vocabulary words and hang it on the wall to revisit again and again.

New Vocabulary: Peace

The Jewish faith observes Shabbat each week from just before sundown on Friday night until the completion of sundown on Saturday. Shabbat is the day of rest after six days of work. Shabbat is considered a day of joy, spirituality, and peaceful connection with family and friends. Although Anne and the others were hiding for fear of their lives, they still observed Shabbat.

Lead students in a class discussion on peace in each student's life.

- What is peace?
    - Freedom from disturbance; tranquility; calm.
- When have you felt peace?
- What are some ways we foster peace in our day-to-day lives?
- How did Anne Frank and the others hiding in the attic foster peace in their day-to-day lives?
- How did Miep Gies help foster a feeling of peace for those she hid?
- Design a poster encouraging peace, even in difficult times. Hang the poster in your classroom, or get permission to hang it in the school library, the office, main hall, etc.

Social Studies

Allies

An ally is someone who stands by your side. Ally comes from the Latin word alligare, meaning "to bind to." Allies protect those who need protection.

How was Miep Gies an ally to the Frank family and the others who hid in the attic?

- How could you have helped Anne if you had known her?
- Have you ever had a chance to stand up for something you thought was wrong? What did you do?
- Have you ever had a chance to help someone who was being treated unfairly? What did you do?

Think of a way you can be an ally to someone. You could help fellow students study for a test or you could read books to younger kids in a homeless shelter.

Have the class pick a project they all want to help with, something that will bring an improvement to people's lives. Maybe they all write letters to seniors in an assisted living facility. Maybe they collect books and toys for children living in a homeless shelter. Maybe they bring canned food for a food pantry to aid the hungry.

Miep and Anne's Legacies

A eulogy is a speech that is often given at a funeral to highlight the key events of a person's life and their legacy or what they leave behind.

Write a eulogy for either Miep Gies or Anne Frank, based on the information provided in *Behind the Bookcase* and your own research.

"I am not a hero."

Miep Gies said, "I am not a hero. I stand at the end of the long, long line of good Dutch people who did what I did or more…"

Do you think Miep Gies was a hero? How so?

Ask students to think of someone who exhibits some of the same heroism as Miep Gies. It can be a family member or a friend or someone they know of in the community. What are 5 things that make this person a hero?

The Project:

- Have each student lay down on a large piece of paper while someone traces their body with a pencil.
- Once the student has the silhouette of their body, they can write the 5 things about the hero they chose *outside the outline*.
- *Inside the outline*, they can write some of the qualities they share with this hero. Or ways in which this hero has inspired them.
- Then students can decorate their silhouette to further depict their relationship with their special person. Photos can be added to create a collage.

History

A World War II Timeline

While Miep Gies hid Anne Frank and her family in the attic for two years (from July 1942 to August 1944), the span of the war was much longer.

Visit the following two sites for a detail timeline of World War II, the Holocaust, and Anne Frank's life.

The Anne Frank House: https://www.annefrank.org/en/anne-frank/the-timeline/

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-holocaust-and-world-war-ii-key-dates

Discuss:

- How would you explain World War II and the Holocaust to someone?
- Do you think anti-Semitism is over? Are all people now treated equally? Explain your answer.