

Book Club Discussion Guide



Three Ordinary Girls by Tim Brady, Page 1 (May 2022)

Three Ordinary Girls: the Remarkable Story of Three Dutch Teenagers Who Became Spies, Saboteurs, Nazi Assassins, and WWII Heroes

By Tim Brady

About the author:

Tim Brady is an award-winning history author whose critically acclaimed books include *Twelve Desperate Miles*, *A Death in San Pietro*, *His Father's Son* and *Three Ordinary Girls*. In addition to contributing numerous articles, reviews, essays and short stories for a wide range of magazines, newspapers and journals, he has

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written and helped develop a number of television documentaries, including the Peabody Award-winning series, *Liberty! The American Revolution* for PBS. He lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, and is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Source: Publisher's website: (<https://www.kensingtonbooks.com/>)

About this book:

May 10, 1940. The Netherlands was swarming with Third Reich troops. In seven days it's entirely occupied by Nazi Germany. Joining a small resistance cell in the Dutch city of Haarlem were three teenage girls: Hannie Schaft, and sisters Truus and Freddie Oversteegen who would soon band together to form a singular female underground squad.

Smart, fiercely political, devoted solely to the cause, and "with nothing to lose but their own lives," Hannie, Truus, and Freddie took terrifying direct action against Nazi targets. That included sheltering fleeing Jews, political dissidents, and Dutch resisters. They sabotaged bridges and railways, and donned disguises to lead children from probable internment in concentration camps to safehouses. They covertly transported weapons and set military facilities ablaze. And they carried out the assassinations of German soldiers and traitors--on public streets and in private traps--with the courage of veteran guerilla fighters and the cunning of seasoned spies.

In telling this true story through the lens of a fearlessly unique trio of freedom fighters, Tim Brady offers a never-before-seen perspective of the Dutch resistance during the war. Of lives under threat; of how these courageous young women became involved in the underground; and of how their dedication evolved into dangerous, life-threatening missions on behalf of Dutch patriots--regardless of the consequences.

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Harrowing, emotional, and unforgettable, *Three Ordinary Girls* finally moves these three icons of resistance into the deserved forefront of world history.

Source: Publisher's website: (<https://www.kensingtonbooks.com/>)

Discussion Questions:

1. Many women served in the underground resistance during WWII. What makes the stories of Truus, Freddie, and Hannie so remarkable?
2. Hannie Schaft's background was very different from that of Truus and Freddie Oversteegen, but the three joined forces despite their differences. What were the events that drew them together?
3. Truus, Freddie, and Hannie came of age during a tumultuous moment in 1930s Europe. How did life in their medieval village of Haarlem change after the commander of The Dutch Royal Army surrendered to the Nazis and nine million Netherlanders were suddenly under the heel of the German boot?
4. Hannie, Truus, and Freddie had a strong sense of social justice at a young age. How did that come about?

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5. Do you think you would have aided in the Resistance if you had lived in the Netherlands during WWII? Why or why not?
6. How did the Hannie and the Oversteegen sisters use misconceptions about youth and teenage girls to their advantage?
7. The girls had mixed feelings about what they did in the name of the Resistance, but not in the Resistance itself. How did that conflict make you think about what constitutes duty and bravery?
8. The girls started with simple acts of covert illegality: lifting German ID cards to counterfeit them; distributing fliers announcing strikes, passing out anti-Nazi literature. But with each mission, the stakes got higher and their acts became more dangerous, evolving into stockpiling weapons, detonating bombs, spying, sabotage, and murder. Do you think they ever went too far?
9. Is there anything you would be willing to risk your life for the way Hannie, Freddie, and Truus did?

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10. The stories of Hannie Schaft and the Oversteegen sisters are quite well-known in the Netherlands, but few people in the United States are aware of them. Why do you think that is?

Source: *Bookclubs* (<https://bookclubs.com/>)