

Dutch Girl: Audrey Hepburn and World War II by Robert Matzen

Discussion Points

1. Defend Ella's admiration of Adolf Hitler in 1935. At this point in history, why was Hitler admired by so many around the world, including leaders such as Winston Churchill?
2. What were the implications of Audrey's sighting of people carrying their possessions and fleeing Arnhem the day the Nazis marched in? Who were these people, and why were they leaving their homes?
3. If you had been in the Netherlands during the war and under occupation, what role would you have played? Would you have gone along with the ruling authorities? Been a collaborator? Joined the Resistance?
4. In what ways did participation in ballet change Audrey's life?
5. Was Ella a positive or a negative influence in Audrey's life and career? What is an example of Ella's being a positive influence? What is an example of Ella as a negative influence?
6. Discuss your feelings as you read the story of Otto, Count van Limburg Stirum. Why do you think Audrey never gave his name in a press interview?
7. With Audrey's father absent, who were other "father figures" she looked up to during the war?
8. Name some factors related to the German regime that increased hardships for the Dutch civilian population as the war progressed.
9. Discuss the different groups of people who went into hiding and became "onderduikers." What were the motivations of each?
10. In what ways did D-Day change the social, political, and military situation in the Netherlands as experienced by Dutch civilians, including the van Heemstras?
11. In the end, did you find Ella van Heemstra to be a sympathetic character? Why or why not?
12. Discuss Audrey's activities on behalf of the Resistance. Why was she given such responsibilities as a teenager?
13. What were the parallels between Audrey Hepburn-Ruston and Anne Frank? What do you think was the long-term impact on Audrey of her 1946 reading of the *Het Achterhuis* manuscript and visit to Prinsengracht 263 in Amsterdam?

14. Audrey spoke on several occasions about seeing Jews under arrest and being sent to concentration camps. What impact do you think this had on her? What impact would it have on you to see these sights?
15. Think of yourself as a teenager. Relate challenges in your own life to those Audrey faced in the war.
16. Discuss the impact of Operation Market Garden and the battle of Arnhem on Audrey and her family.
17. Do you think the Hunger Winter affected Audrey's health for the remainder of her lifetime? If so, how?
18. Audrey's son Luca Dotti stated that the war "made my mother who she was." In what ways do you think was this true?
19. Discuss the connection between Audrey's wartime experiences and her participation in activities on behalf of UNICEF.
20. How did this book affect your previous perception of Audrey Hepburn?