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Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Summer of My
German Soldier

by Bette Greene

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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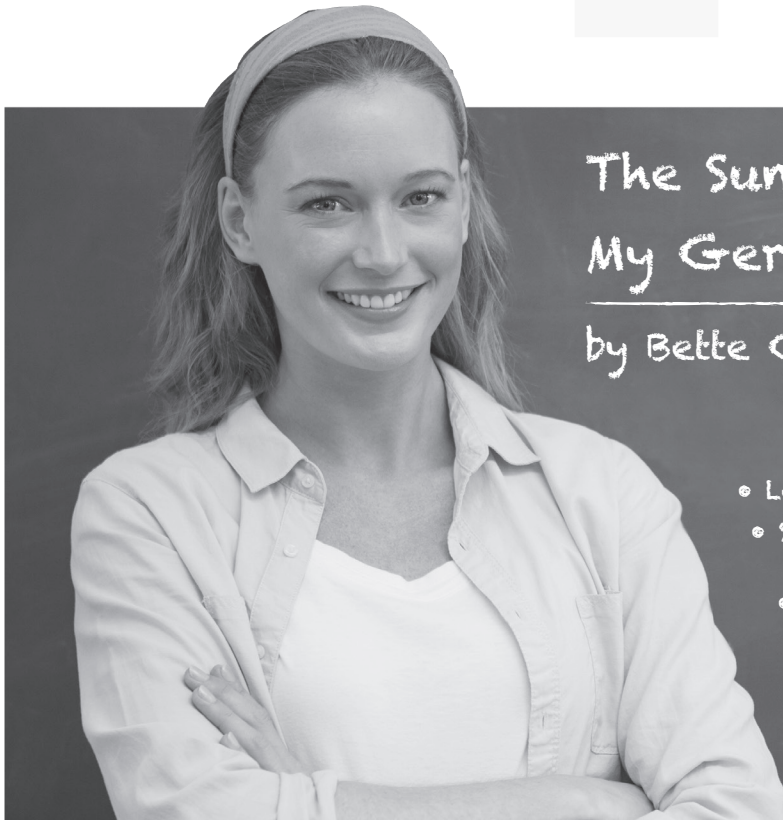
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Notes

This story takes place in Jenkinsville, Arkansas, during World War II (1941-1945). In Europe the Nazi's are in the process of murdering eight million Jews and other minority groups. In the Southern United States the bigotry and intolerance directed at the Blacks is supported and reinforced by state Jim Crow laws. Prior to, and during this period, the violence and intimidation aimed at Blacks and to a lesser extent Jews and other minorities largely went unpunished. It is in this context that a twelve-year-old Jewish girl, suffering from the rejection of her parents and the agony of loneliness, befriends a young German prisoner of war.

All references come from the Puffin Books edition of *Summer of My German Soldier*, copyright 1973.

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to

1. refer to incidents in the story to support that this is a “coming-of-age” novel.
2. define and point out examples of the following:
 - simile
 - metaphor
 - personification
3. cite examples of flashbacks which are used to fill in background information about the characters .
4. comment on how the use of first-person narration in this story limits the reader’s view of people and things.
5. discuss the following social issues of the 1940’s that are raised in this book: the anti-Semitic attitudes in Germany and the United States; the oppression of the Black population in the United States and the role of Black soldiers during World War II.
6. point out events that refute or support that a major theme in the novel is “Love is better than hate and it is better to build than to tear down.”
7. recognize when a character is a foil and point out how a foil enhances the qualities or features of another character.
8. point out and discuss the kinds of conflict in this story.
9. comment on Anton’s perceptions of the political and social atmosphere in Germany and Hitler’s policies; discuss Anton’s belief that love is the only hope for the world.
10. comment on the life pressures which contribute to the protagonist’s lying and storytelling.
11. support or refute, by referring to the novel, that a major theme in this novel is “despite the bigotry, intolerance, and cruelty we see around us, there is hope for the world through courage, tolerance and love.”
12. use incidents from the story to support or refute that the following generalizations about life are present in this story:
 - People can overcome huge obstacles if they tackle them a little at a time and refuse to give in.
 - One who is not capable of humor is capable of great cruelty.
 - It is important for people to remain open to new experiences and continue to learn throughout their lives.
 - It is God’s will that humans protect each other from evil.
13. draw inferences about people and events when their meanings are not explicitly stated.

Questions for Discussion and Essay

1. Define anti-Semitism. Why is the nondenominational service at the reform school, which discusses the Jews killing Jesus, offensive to Patty?
2. Discuss the impact of oppression on the Black population during the 1940's. How can Ruth be considered a courageous hero?
3. What is the connection between Patty's flashback to Father's Day and the shirt she gives Anton? How is the shirt ultimately returned to her?
4. How does the use of first-person narration enhance the reader's sympathies for Patty's act of treason?
5. Child abuse can take many forms. Contrast the ways Patty's father and mother abuse her. How does their abuse contribute to Patty's lying?
6. Define sibling rivalry. Why do you think Patty is sweet to Sharon despite the fact that Sharon is clearly the parents' favorite?
7. Write a character sketch of Edna Louise Jackson. How is she different from Patty?
8. Do you think Anton is a brave man? What evidence is there that he disagrees with Hitler's policies? If so, why does he fight for his country?
9. Write a character sketch of Ruth. Do you think that she is a positive role model for Patty?
10. Compare the behavior of the ordinary citizens toward the German prisoners to Patty's behavior. What is her father's attitude?
11. What does Patty say to Ruth to help Ruth feel better about the dangers her son Robert faces as a soldier in World War II?
12. Discuss how conflict is central to any plot. What kinds of conflict are present in this story?
13. Support that this story is a "coming-of-age" novel. What is the innocence-shattering experience that changes Patty forever?

The Summer of My German Soldier

CHAPTER ONE

VOCABULARY

fastidious – fussy and demanding
Jerries – slang term for “Germans”
jubilee – happiness; joy

1. Why is Patty disappointed when she sees the German prisoners?

2. Briefly describe Ruth.

3. Why is Patty worried that waving at the prisoner might “count against me”? What does Patty’s worry suggest about her parents?

4. Who is Robert? How does Patty help Ruth feel better?

CHAPTER FOUR

VOCABULARY

abundant – plentiful
contradicting – arguing against
hospitable – friendly; welcoming

1. Why do you think Patty wants to talk about the prisoners, first with her mother and then with Sister Barker? What happens to make her regret this decision?

2. Who is Edna Louise Jackson? Why is her character a foil for Patty?

CHAPTER EIGHT

VOCABULARY

acquiescence – consent

fabrication – fiction; something made up

implicate – to name as a participant, usually in crime

pertinent – relevant; to the point

sabotage – deliberate destructive action intended to obstruct or hinder

technicality – a minor detail

1. What does Patty read in the paper that makes her afraid?

2. Support the following statement: Anton’s father does not like Hitler; he does not fight the Nazis because he is afraid.

3. What two qualities does Anton admire most about his mother?
