

# What If You Were Maria?

Below is a list of questions you may want to ask yourself as you read through the story, or in reflecting upon it. Pretend you are Maria. How would you answer these questions if the life in this book were your life?

You may want to use these questions in groups with your mother or with friends reading the same book. They are a good way to begin talking about questions and issues in your own life that might be similar to what Maria faced.

After answering each question, also answer why or why not.

**Chapter 1:** Would you believe all that Duchess Margaretha told you and be afraid to go to The Dillenburg?

**Chapter 2:** What would you say to Philips Willem when he told you he could not go with you to The Dillenburg?

**Chapter 3:** If you found yourself having to listen to the Bible readings and you were afraid, would you run out into the garden in the rain as Maria did? Would you just stay in the dining hall and try not to listen? Would you feel like screaming? Like asking your father about it?

Can you think of a time when you were in a situation that felt dangerous? How did you respond?

**Chapter 4:** Would you feel comfortable with Oma and be unafraid to drink the herbal cures she offers? Or would you suspect that she was a demon trying to trap you?

Do you ever wonder whether it is safe to trust some friend or family member? What do you do then?

**Chapter 5:** After all Margaretha's warnings, why would you be willing to trust Oma to teach you about the herbs?

What life skills would you like to learn someday? Do you know someone who could teach you these skills?

**Chapter 6:** How would you feel when Oma pulled the Bible from her bag and began reading? What would you do about it?

How do you respond when someone you love does something you think might be wrong?

**Chapter 7:** Would you try to talk to Oma about the Bible? Would you run home by yourself? Would you try to stay away from Oma after this?

When you face danger, do you run away and hide or do you confront the person who brings that danger and try to understand what is going on?

**Chapter 8:** How would you feel when you learned that the King of Spain wanted to kill your father and uncle and take away your childhood home in Breda?

Can you think of a time when something precious was taken from you? (For example, your father or mother was terribly ill or you lost your house in a fire or a flood.)

**Chapter 9:** Would you worry about Philips Willem after his kidnapping? Would you find it easy to trust God the way Oma told you to?

Can you think of something that gave you good reason to worry? What did you do about it?

**Chapter 10:** How would you treat your little sister, Anna, after her mother left?

Have you ever known somebody who needed your help when they were in trouble? How did you help them?

**Chapter 11:** What would you fear most when you awoke and heard Anna screaming in the night? Would you be happy when she left?

**Chapter 12:** Remember that in Maria's day, it was common for girls to be married at thirteen or fourteen years of age. How would you feel about that possibility? Would you want to go back to Brussels and let the Duchess find you a husband, as she had promised?

Do you ever think about what kind of husband God might give you someday?

**Chapter 13:** What would you decide about the kind of mother you wanted to be, after Anna sent Emilie home to Oma? Would you have trouble loving this baby?

What do you think makes a good mother?

**Chapter 14:** How would you feel about Anna after they put her into the prison? How would you feel about Jan Rubens? Would you be glad they were imprisoned or would you feel sad for them?

How does it make you feel when someone does wrong and is punished for it? What do you think is the godly way to feel?

**Chapter 15:** What would you say to your father when he told you that he was afraid to go to war, but he trusted God to take care of him? Would you be ready to trust God to do this for him?

Can you trust God when you have a need of some kind?

**Chapter 16:** If your uncles went off to war together in a snowstorm, and your father was already out there somewhere, would you pray more or worry more or would you talk more to Oma or Toske about it?

When does prayer help you most?

**Chapter 17:** What would you do if you were in the chapel when Oma came in and began to cry? How do you react when you have a friend who is crying and needs comfort?

**Chapter 18** How would respond when you saw the helmet from your uncle and heard Oma read the letter she had written him? Would you try to comfort Oma? Cry yourself from being so upset? Try to keep Emilie from understanding what had just happened? Talk to the servant boy about it?

What do you do when you are upset?

**Chapter 19:** What would you do if Father demanded that you leave Oma when she was old and ill and nearly blind and often depressed over the loss of her sons? How would you try to change his mind? Would you be angry with him?

Do you share your feelings with your father?

**Epilogue:** Which important things would you want to tell Oma if you were writing to her at the end of your life? How would you feel about the return of Philips Willem?

Think of someone you love very much and who has prayed for you for years. Write them a letter and tell them how God has answered their prayers.

## Do You Want to Learn More?

One of the fun things about reading a historical novel is the fact that it opens a lot of doors into new worlds of knowledge you may never had suspected were out there. So, maybe you found yourself asking, who was Willem van Oranje, anyway? And what was the Dutch war for independence all about? Could I go to Europe today and see The Dillenburg?

I just say, go for it, and may you have as good a time digging as I've had over the years.

The list below suggests a few places you might like to look. This can be a particularly rewarding adventure for mothers and daughters or groups of good friends who are learning to search the web and libraries for information. Many of today's mothers can learn from their daughters how to search the web for helpful information. Or if you have a chance to travel abroad, by all means, go to Dillenburg or even to Stolberg.

### Suggested Books for Enriched Reading

- J. H. Alexander. *Ladies of the Reformation*. Harpenden, Herts, England: Gospel Standard Strict Baptist Trust, 1978.
- Marie Collins and Virginia Davis. *A Medieval Book of Seasons*. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.
- Karen Cushman. *The Midwife's Apprentice*. New York: Clarion Books, 1995. A Newberry Medal Award winner.
- J. D. Douglas, ed. *Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.
- John Gerard. *The Herbal or General History of Plants* (the complete 1633 edition as revised and enlarged by Thomas Johnson). New York: Dover Books, 1975.
- Sonia Halliday and Laura Lushington. *Stained Glass*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1976.
- Ethel Herr. *The Dove and the Rose*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996.
- . *The Maiden's Sword*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1997.
- . *The Citadel and the Lamb*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998.
- (Ethel Herr's books are part of The Seeker's Series. They are novels about Willem van Oranje and his mother, Juliana von Stolberg.)
- Rien Poortvliet. *Daily Life In Holland in 1566*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992 (English translation).

C. V. Wedgwood. *William the Silent*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1944. First published in U. S. 1968

### Topics You May Want to Look up on the Internet

- Medieval/Renaissance herbalism. Warning: Many websites that promote herbalism do so as part of witchcraft or pagan beliefs. So take care to avoid these when you look for facts and pictures.
- Juliana von Stolberg
- Maria van Buren
- Dillenburg
- William of Orange
- 80-years war
- Life at court—Renaissance Europe

### Places to Visit

- Dillenburg
- Stolberg
- Delft
- Mook Heide (where Ludwig and Hendrick died)