

# Analysis of our secret by susan griffin

Business



The Meaning Of The Title “ Our Secret”, A Chapter From “ A Chorus Of Stones” by Susan Griffin Truth is possibly one of the most powerful forces in humanity. Truth has the power to set people free, change lives and end them.

Because of this, the truth is usually feared and often concealed. In Susan Griffin’s “ Our Secret”, the concealing of the truth become a major theme in the advancement of the plot, and also carries the meaning to the work’s title. The title of “ Our Secret” refers to the secrets that the individual characters in the story keep from others reference to the fact that humanity is keeping secrets from itself.

As the story opens, already the reader is confronted with the topic of concealing the truth. The narrator speaks to a woman who discusses her abnormal childhood. The woman claims formal speech was not possible in her household due to her father’s profession and also due to the time of war.

Griffin writes, “ There were nuclear missiles standing just blocks from where she lived. But her father never spoke about them. Only after many years away from home did she learn what those weapons were. ” (Griffin, 299).

This family’s secrets affected this girl’s childhood dramatically to the point where normal, casual conversation was unusual for her as an adult.

As a result of this, the family ended up keeping secrets from themselves about who they truly were. A close family relationship could not have been possible under those conditions. A big theme in “ Our Secret” is the subject of homosexuality. The idea of homosexuality during WWII was not accepted at all, and homosexuals were outcasted and even condemned as if their

practices were a crime. Because of this, homosexuals often kept their lifestyle a secret and lived with great caution at all times.

In “ Our Secret” Griffin discusses an instance in which her sister came out as a lesbian to her family. The family is shocked, and even Griffin feels like she no longer knows her sister and that the person she once knew was a lie. In Our Secret, the character of Heinz is the best example of concealed homosexuality. A German boy in the time of Concentration Camps in WWII, Heinz was a homosexual who knew to conceal his secret. Heinz knew that he would be killed if anyone found out about his lifestyle, and told no one about his secret besides his mother.

However, the Nazis eventually discovered a picture of Heinz with his lover, and sent him to a Concentration Camp to be killed.

These individuals being forced to conceal their lifestyles is, in a way, forcing them to conceal who they truly are. Keeping secrets from others, in a way, means that they have not fully come to terms with who they are. Griffin also uses examples from her own family to expand upon the title’s meaning. Griffin claims her family was constantly pretending to be happy, perfect or aristocratic. In family photos, everyone smiled together and attempted to make it seem like nothing was wrong.

The author claims that looking back on these pictures, this was clearly not true, as she can see the pain her father his hiding in one picture, or signs of trauma in another. The real conflict underneath was never truly revealed. The family also made attempts to appear aristocratic and high class when they really were not. Griffin claims that the family was aware that this was

not true, but still attempted to keep up the ruse. Griffin writes: “ But when certain visitors came, we were as if driven by an inward, secret panic that who we really were might be discovered.

Inadvertently, by some careless gesture, we might reveal to these visitors who were our better that we did not belong with them, that we were not real. Though of course, we never spoke of this, to anyone, not even ourselves. ” (Griffin, 307) This is a prime example of a family that has not come to terms with itself at all. The secrets that this family keeps from others means that they have not accepted who they actually are. The secrets they keep from others mean they are actually keeping secrets from themselves.

The finest example of concealed secrets in *Our Secret* is related to the topic of the Nazis, the Concentration Camps, and Henrich Himmler. Himmler, head of the Nazi S. S. , led a very troubled and traumatic childhood. Constantly hounded and smothered by his father, Himmer was never allowed to have his own individual thoughts or feelings. He was constantly trying to live up to the image his father had made for him.

Griffin’s interpretation of the situation is that, “ He harbors his secrets in fear and guilt, confessing them to no one one until in time the voice of his father chastising him becomes his own. ” (Griffin, 306).

The secrets Himmler kept from his father prevented him from truly knowing himself as a child. This, in turn, caused him to continue this habit for the rest of his life. Himmler’s unusual upbringing contributed to who he became as an adult: the chief overseer of the Nazis’ horrible Concentration Camps.

Called “ The Final Solution”, these camps were used by the Nazis to systematically execute Jews and others who they deemed to be different.

This horrible practice was kept a secret from the Allies. Himmler himself told his fellow Nazis regarding the camps, “ Now you all know about it, and you will keep it quiet.

Now we share a secret and we should take our secret to our graves. ” (Griffin, 300) The Nazis did, indeed, keep the camps a secret from all outsiders, and in doing so they prevented themselves from truly coming to terms with what they were doing. Following only their own narrow-minded reasoning, the Nazis never truly came to terms with their crimes. The Nazis and Himmler both have the same problem: they are incapable of addressing these secrets they keep.

They distanced themselves from the atrocities they were committing by keeping them a secret from the world, and this caused them to lose sight of who they truly were as human beings.

Himmler himself never truly knew he was his entire life. The secrets he kept prevented him from truly coming to terms with himself and dealing with his problems that started when he was a child. Griffin sums up his condition very accurately by writing, “ As over time his secrets fade from memory, he ceases to tell them, even to himself, so that finally a day comes when he believes the image he has made of himself in his diaries is true. ” (Griffin, 306) Everyone has something to hide, either from themselves or from others. In the end, however, it all amounts to the same thing.

Humanity keeps secrets from itself and cannot come to terms with its deepest and most significant truths. Our Secret provides multiple examples of individuals who keep secrets from others, and shows how these secrets relate to directly to secrets they are keeping from themselves. The power of the truth cannot be understated. Truly, it is the strongest, and most feared force in all of humanity.

Works Cited Griffin, Susan.

“ Our Secret. ” A Chorus of Stones: the Private Life of War. New York: Anchor, 1993. Print. Batholomae, David, and Anthony Petrosky.