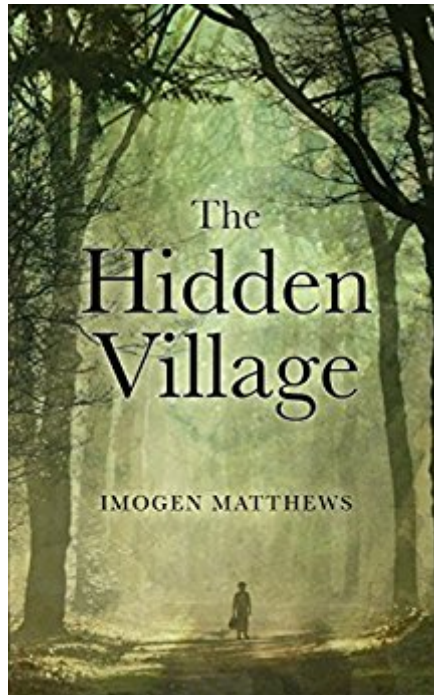




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# **The Hidden Village: A Story Of Survival In WW2 Holland**



## Synopsis

Wartime Holland. Who can you trust? Deep in the Veluwe woods lies a secret that frustrates the Germans. Convinced that Jews are hiding close by they can find no proof. The secret is Berkenhout, a purpose-built village of huts sheltering dozens of persecuted people. Young tearaway Jan roams the woods looking for adventure and fallen pilots. His dream comes true when he stumbles across an American airman, Donald C. McDonald. But keeping him hidden sets off a disastrous chain of events. Sofie, a Jewish Dutch girl, struggles to adapt to living in Berkenhout, away from her family and friends. As weeks turn to months, she's worried they'll abandon her altogether. Henk Hauer, head woodman, is in charge of building the underground huts and ensuring the Berkenhout inhabitants stay safe. But many grow suspicious of his liaisons with the Germans. Is he passing on secret information that could endanger lives? All it takes is one small fatal slip to change the course of all their lives for ever.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Hidden Village by Imogen Matthews. This is a fictitious account of a hidden village that was actually created in Veluwe, a national park in Holland. During World War 11, a group of Jews hid from the Germans by living in underground huts in this village. They were helped by a group of men and women and children in the nearby village. This group of rescuers gathered food and other necessities for the hundreds of people who eventually lived in this hidden village. Imogen Matthews used archive materials, letters, photos, interviews, and a book called *Het Verscholen Dorp* by A. Visser which was an account of this village. She also used this book as a way of writing down the stories her own mother told of the years spent in Holland during its occupation by the Germans. The result is a very unique look at this hidden village and the people who lived there and helped hide them. The story revolves around a Holland youth, Jan, and a Jewish girl, Sofie, along with her best friend Liesbeth, a Holland girl. Sofie was in school with Jan's brother Oscar and her best friend Liesbeth. Sofie had a crush on Oscar and he had one on her. Liesbeth, who was more outgoing than Sofie, encouraged her to get to know Oscar better. Shortly after this, Sofie's world collapsed when she was forced into hiding because she was Jewish. She was among the first to go to live in Berkenhout woods and the last to leave. Oscar had helped build the huts they were to live in and then was sent elsewhere to help. Liesbeth worked with the underground to get food for the Jews and helped keep Sofie's spirits up as she was separated from her parents. Jan, Oscar's little brother, ached to help but was continually thwarted from helping by his own father. Jan didn't understand that his father was trying to protect him. However, a ten-year-old boy finds a way to get into trouble. The book is quite interesting and well-written. Knowing that Berkenhout did indeed exist as did the majority of the characters makes it even more interesting. It makes you wonder how many places like this existed throughout Europe and remain unknown to this day.

This historically based, yet fictional account of the atrocities suffered during WWII in Holland is exceptionally riveting. Both by being heartwarming and heartbreaking, it is a read that you won't soon forget. The strength, endurance, and generosity of the characters, which surely is an accurate depiction of the human nature of people caught up in desperate times, requires the readers' avid and rapt loss of attention to their own environment. It's that good!

This is part of the story of the Holocaust I knew nothing about. A story of ordinary human beings performing heroic acts. The story of those who did not just sit by and do nothing while their

neighbors were persecuted. A story of Jews and gentiles together going to extraordinary lengths to save human lives. Fascinating tale.

Very good explaining the terror these poor people went through, and the cruelty of the SS and the Nazis. Also the bravery of everyone who survived especially the young children with hardly any food or shelter.

well done for its intended demographic

Three point five stars. The Hidden Village is YA historical fiction set in Holland during World War II. It features the work of the Dutch resistance who hid people from the German army, primarily Jewish families. This story is about a group who created Berkenhout, a hidden village deep in the woods, which the Germans spent many years trying to find. Meanwhile the resistance secretly moved people, food and escaping allied pilots. To give added interest, it's actually based on a true-life story, from the memories of the author's mother. The storyline represented many who risked their lives daily in the fight against the German occupation. It was hard to pick a favourite character; several were children, but I think Jan was portrayed well by the author. The cast of characters is large and interesting, and at times it was hard to keep them all in my head; I wondered if the story would have had more impact with less characters, but more time spent developing key people and the parts they played. Despite constant raids by the Germans, this is not an action/suspense thriller but an examination of the conflicting emotions of the people forced to live in the village, their reluctance to do so, etc; Sofie worries that she might never be reunited with her family, for instance. It's very much a 'human interest' story, with just a dash of intrigue; the head woodman, Henk Hauer, is under suspicion because of his meetings with the Germans. I would have liked a little more practical information about the construction of the village and how it was hidden, which confused me at first, though this becomes clearer later on. This is an informative piece of work from an important time in history which highlights the bravery of the Dutch resistance, and shows what the time was like for those who suffered through it.

What an excellent book! So good I couldn't put it down. I read it in a day. I didn't know anything about the Dutch hidden villages, so not only was the story page-turning but I learnt something new at the same time. The story revolves around characters in a Dutch village who help hide Jews from the German soldiers during WW2. From the first chapter you are engaged with the characters and I

even found myself warning them when they were due to be raided - OUT LOUD! Sensitively written, with a page-turning plot, this is a wonderful new book from Imogen.

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