

MEET
CLAIRE

Claire (left) and her sister, Ollie.
Rotterdam, Netherlands, 1943.

BIOGRAPHY:

Claire was born in 1936 in the city of Rotterdam, in the Netherlands. Her grandparents and extended family lived in Rotterdam and she spent lots of time visiting with relatives as a child. Her parents watched the increasing discrimination of Jews in neighbouring Germany during the Nazi period and tried to get visas to immigrate to the United States, but their application was denied. After the German occupation of the Netherlands in 1940, persecution of Jews increased. In 1942 some of Claire's relatives were arrested and deported to Nazi camps, so her father decided that the family had to go into hiding. Claire and her younger sister, Ollie, first lived with a family in a little village by the sea, where they pretended to be Christians, but soon neighbours grew suspicious. For the rest of the war the girls lived in Rotterdam with a woman they called Tante Nel (Aunt Nel), the sister of a Resistance worker who knew their father. In May 1945 the Netherlands was liberated and the girls were reunited with their parents. Claire's family immigrated to Canada in 1951.

“For three years we lived a life of pretense and a constant lie. We realized our lives were in danger and knew we had to lie in order to protect each other, to survive.”

– **CLAIRE BAUM**

You are going to read Claire's memoir called *The Hidden Package*. Read **pages 1-70**, and you will also see some of the letters and drawings by Claire during the Holocaust.

Claire's story is complicated and contains lots of historical information. Below are some important places and dates to know.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The Netherlands is a small country located in northwestern Europe, just west of Germany. The country had a small Jewish population, though the number of Jews there increased when Jews fled Nazi Germany to neighbouring countries. In May 1940, the Germans invaded the Netherlands and installed a German **occupation** government, but many Dutch officials continued to work in the government. In 1942 mass arrests and deportations began: usually Jews were arrested and held in a Dutch transit camp called **Westerbork**, and then sent to Nazi camps where most were killed. Although some Dutch people collaborated with the Germans, **Resistance** groups also sprung up to combat the German occupation and to help rescue Jews. Approximately **100,000** Dutch Jews were killed in the Holocaust.

