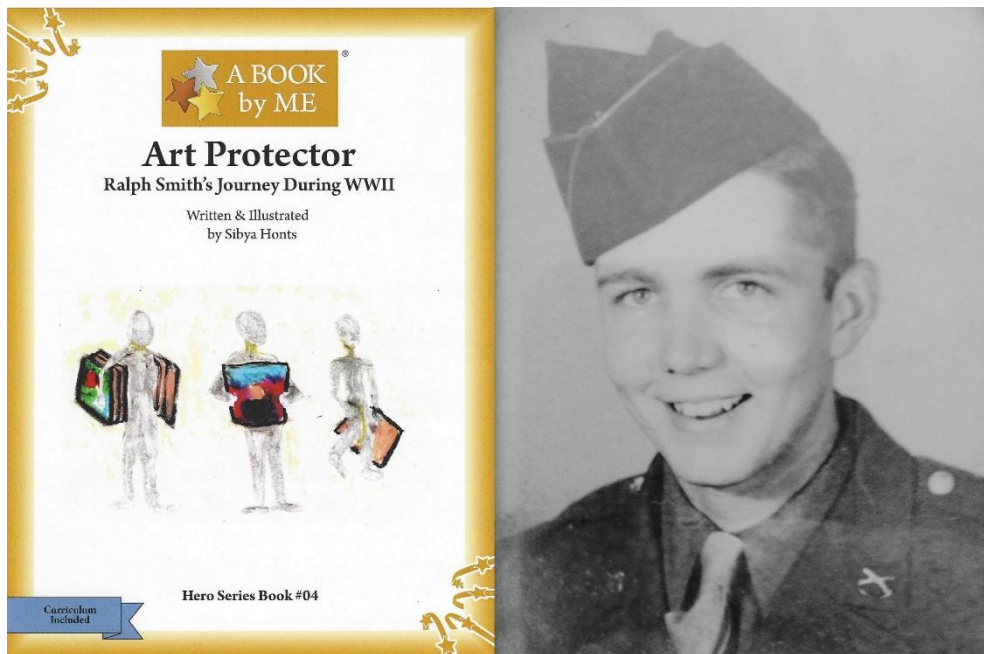


Art Protector Readers Theater

Based on the book by Sibya Honts

This title found in Heart for Humanity book set
at understandingworks.org



#honor

Ralph Smith was an American soldier serving in Europe during WWII. Many men died in the Battle of the Bulge and Ralph was in charge of taking their bodies to friendly soil for a proper burial. When the war ended, his unit was assigned to guard something valuable in a big castle in Germany. Ralph learned it was famous art worth millions. It was stolen by the Nazis and recovered by the Monuments Men.

Cast:

[Narrator 1](#)

[Narrator 2](#)

[Ralph Smith](#)

[JoAnne, Ralph's Sister](#)

[George Stout, Monuments Man](#)

[Kathy Schoaf, Ralph's daughter](#)

PROPS & COSTUMES: Props could consist of some paintings, small statues or sculptures in the background. Costuming can be simple. JoAnne can be dressed in a simple dress like those of the 1940s. Ralph could wear something approximating a soldier's WWII uniform. George Stout was a civilian but could be wearing khaki pants and a leather jacket. Viewing the movie, *The Monuments Men*, could provide ideas for costuming and props.



Author Sibya Honts with Ralph Smith

Scene 1
Burnside, Kentucky

Narrator 1: Perhaps you've seen the movie about the Monuments Men (starring George Clooney) about those who worked to recover thousands of pieces of stolen artwork when World War II ended. During the war Hitler had collected and stored thousands of priceless masterworks taken from countries the Nazis invaded and from victims of the Holocaust. He wanted to put them into a great museum that he hoped to build after the war to honor Nazism...and, of course, himself.

Narrator 2: One person, who was not a Monuments Man, but who assisted their efforts, was an American soldier named Ralph Smith. His story, of course, doesn't begin with WWII in Europe, but in the small town of Burnside, Kentucky (once called Point Isabel), where Ralph lived with his father Fred, his mother Ruth, and his sister JoAnne.

JoAnne: My brother Ralph and I grew up during the Great Depression, when times were hard for many families who struggled for the bare necessities. Like many others we didn't have much, but we lived a happy life together. Ralph enjoyed riding his bicycle and playing basketball. I remember one time when he also enjoyed playing hooky from school, but, because the town was so small, it wasn't so much fun when his parents found out about it. He never tried that again!

Ralph: I was born on March 28, 1926. I suppose you could say I had a typical childhood, even though times were difficult for so many others. I think my parents must have shielded me and my sister from the worst parts of the Great Depression. I was very outgoing and had many friends, so I don't remember feeling deprived or disadvantaged. When I was 18, I joined the Army to do my duty, like thousands of other young men during WWII. My peaceful days in a small town ended with that decision. After basic training, I was sent to France and then joined my division in the Netherlands. Although the war seemed to be winding down by 1944 when we arrived in Europe, there was still plenty of dangerous work for me and my GI friends.

JoAnne: Ralph, wrote to us often back in Kentucky, but his letters were always censored. The military constantly checked them to make sure they did not contain information that might be useful to the enemy. Information about where Ralph was or what he was doing was always blacked out. Of course, as long as we received any kind of letter from him, we knew he was safe. We were very proud that Ralph was fighting for freedom and against tyranny.

Scene 2
A Castle in Europe

Ralph: When the war ended, like many other American soldiers, I was ordered to remain in Europe. But, at least I was finally able to tell my family what I was doing when I wrote letters home. In one letter I told them that I had been assigned to guard art objects in Count von Spee's castle. My fellow soldiers and I even stayed in the castle and slept there in nice beds with clean sheets. We walked on beautiful rugs and drank the Count's champagne. Of course, I didn't drink much! I just drank a little to celebrate the war being over. Not until much later did I find out how important the artwork was that we were guarding! We weren't allowed to inspect it, so I didn't know that it was worth over \$10,000,000!

George Stout: I was one of many men and women who volunteered to go to Europe near the end of the war and afterward to find all the precious artwork that Hitler stole and hoped to claim as his own! I became part of a special force of American and British museum directors, professors, curators, historians, librarians, architects and artists who were willing to risk our lives to prevent the destruction of years of culture by the ruthless Nazis. My work on art conservation before the war at Harvard's Fogg Museum made me especially qualified for this effort. By the way, George Clooney played me in the movie, *The Monuments Men*.

Narrator 1: George Stout worked with over two dozen other Monuments Men, criss-crossing France, Germany and Belgium, recovering art pieces that the Nazis had stored in caves, salt mines and large, isolated buildings such as von Spee's castle where Ralph stood guard. Eventually, with the help of hundreds of Monuments Men and Women, over 5,000,000 artistic and cultural treasures were returned to the countries from which they were stolen.

Narrator 2: The importance of Ralph's job as "Art Protector" cannot be underestimated. He and many other soldiers like him helped to keep watch over the treasures until they could be moved to secure sites or returned to their rightful owners. Ralph took his job seriously, but also enjoyed the luxuries that the von Spee castle provided for a war-weary soldier.

George Stout: At that time, so many European towns in the areas where we located the stored art objects were either destroyed or in chaos because of the battles that had raged around them. So, it was important to keep villagers, enemy soldiers or even our own soldiers from plundering the artworks. We operated with limited resources and relied on soldiers like Ralph to guard looted objects until we could secure packing material, crates and trucks to remove them and take them to collection points. It took over five years to return all the art items we found, and some are still being stored in hopes that owners can be located.

Scene 3 Kentucky & Illinois

Ralph: When I was finally discharged from the Army, I returned to Kentucky and attended college, thanks to the GI Bill which provided financial assistance. I attended the University of Kentucky and became a mechanical engineer. I married my sweetheart, Louellen, and moved to the Quad Cities area of Illinois where we raised three children. As you can imagine, I was excited to watch the movie called *The Monuments Men*. For so long, very few people knew the story about recovering stolen artworks. I am proud that I served my country during wartime and would like everyone to know of the sacrifices made by so many for our freedoms.

Kathy Schoaf: I'm Ralph's daughter Kathy. His storybook was printed and shipped just in time for him to see it before he passed away. I was reading it aloud to him and he turned his head to see the beautiful artwork the student had drawn. He died that very day knowing students reading his story would be learning more about World War II through his eyes. Listening to stories from a senior citizen is the greatest gift that you can give them.