

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for The Day After Roswell by Philip J. Corso

Book Information

Philip J. Corso, The Day After Roswell

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Interest Level: UG

An account of Roswell and its aftermath, with the controversy that surrounded the mysterious crash.

Topics: Adventure, Discovery/Exploration; Military, Military (Various); Mysteries, UFOs; Popular Groupings, College Bound; Science Fiction, Aliens

Main Characters

Colonel Philip Corso the author of the story, who is privy to and covers up alien information; he also claims to have successfully helped harvest alien technology

Dan Dwyer a Roswell firefighter who witnessed the crashed alien vessel

General Arthur Trudeau Corso's boss when he is assigned to work at the Pentagon

Vocabulary

impudence being insulting or grossly lacking in respect

innocuous not having harmful qualities

modus operandi method of operation, or operational procedure

paradigm a model or standard for guidance

propagation biological reproduction; causing to spread

tensile relating to pulling or stretching

Synopsis

This book is a non-fiction autobiographical account of the military life of Col. Philip Corso. It focuses almost entirely on events that occurred from 1947 through the 1960s. The introduction explains that Corso's job was essentially to both gather alien facts

as well as conceal them. He also worked to harvest and reverse-engineer alien technology found on the Roswell space craft. In defense of keeping the military's knowledge of aliens among us a secret, he refers to the mass hysteria that occurred during the 1938 broadcast of *War of the Worlds*.

The weather the night of the alien crash in Roswell, New Mexico is explained in detail, mainly because it is later concluded that the lightning had something to do with bringing the UFO down. Base radar at the Army's 509th airfield was the first to detect a problem in the form of radar blips on their screen. Soon after, the UFO crashed onto Roswell soil. The military moved in swiftly to transport the craft, debris, and alien bodies. They also worked to cover the truth of what happened out there. There were, however, civilians who either witnessed the crash or saw the aftermath. It is later disclosed that the military found ways to keep these people silent. One alien tries to escape, but he is shot and later dies. There are many technological mysteries that the people examining the craft find but are unable to understand. The debris and the craft are later to sent to various military bases around the country, and to the general public it is as though the Roswell crash never happened.

Corso did not witness the UFO crash at Roswell. Coincidentally, Corso is assigned to work at Fort Riley, where some of the debris has been sent. One evening, he is informed of something he should see in a building. There, he encounters an alien body suspended in fluid in a type of coffin. He tries to shut this incident out of his mind. Soon, Corso is assigned to work at the Pentagon, in army R&D, under the supervision of General Arthur Trudeau. Trudeau entrusts Corso with what will later be known as the "nut file" -- the documents of the Roswell crash as well as some actual artifacts retrieved from inside the UFO. Corso is told to examine these artifacts to see how they can be used, or reverse-engineered. In other words, he should find out how their technology works so that humans can copy it. He is also asked to make sure everything is covered up so no one finds out.

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Corso examines the artifacts and finds their technology is not of this earth. With such advanced technology, there is no way we can defend ourselves and our planet against the aliens. Eventually, after much research and work, the alien technology is harvested to create such modern day advances as the transistor, the circuit, bullet-proof vests, lasers, and fiber optics. Corso concludes that, due to cattle mutilations and accounts of human abductions, the aliens are a hostile force looking to eventually colonize this planet. After much work, the military develops profound weapons to fight them, and the public is misled into thinking that these weapons are for defense against our Soviet enemies. The Cold War, he explains, was more about fighting the aliens than the Soviets. In fact, the plan to establish a space station on the moon was to avert alien attack, rather than Soviet attack. He explains that the "Star Wars" program is primarily intended for aliens.

The book goes into quite a bit of scientific detail and description about the various weapons, technology, and how they work. But basically these advances were pursued and achieved to thwart an alien invasion or colonization of our planet. Even President Reagan and Chairman Gorbachev worked together to fight the alien enemy. He explains that we now have the technology to defend our planet against these hostile aliens. And, fortunately for us, (he muses), the aliens were spying on us and crashed; otherwise, we would not have the technology we have today.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Literary Analysis

What was Project Horizon?

Project Horizon was a plan to develop a military base on the moon. Its purpose was twofold. It was to provide a foothold in the war against extraterrestrials, and it was also to gain a military and political advantage over the Soviet Union.

Inferential Comprehension

What are some ways in which the military might handle future alien attacks or an invasion?

They will use sophisticated weapons, such as lasers, to destroy their crafts. They might interfere with the alien aircrafts' circuitry using radar. It is likely they would mount some kind of counter-attack against them in outer space, possibly using a moon station like the one Corso described as Project Horizon.

Constructing Meaning

What methods could you use to evaluate the credibility of this book?

Students might suggest a number of techniques such as the following: They could locate other books about this subject to compare with this book. They could find book reviews and critiques by professionals that evaluate the validity of the author's theories. They could research the more easily verifiable facts to determine whether or not they are accurate. (If a books' major facts are inaccurate, the details carry less credibility.) Also, the students could research information about the author to evaluate his credibility and motives.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors Corso describes finding the alien artifacts and aircraft at Roswell as being one of the most important discoveries of all time. Have students research some other important finds of our world and how they have changed or affected civilization. One such important find would be the Rosetta Stone, which was found by one of Napoleon's officers in 1799. With it, scholars were finally able to translate the mysterious Egyptian hieroglyphs. Even if Corso's account of the discovery of aliens is correct, did it change the world more than any previous "breakthrough"?

Identifying Reason Corso's book is lengthy and redundant. It can leave the reader with a muddled understanding of the true strength of his evidence

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and rationales. Ask students to pick one of Corso's main assertions and track down his reasons in support of it. A good topic might be the claim that the aliens harbor hostile, militaristic intentions. Another would be his attribution of alien influence upon recent technology. How strong is Corso's evidence? Why does he support the claims he makes? Why should readers believe him?

Comparing and Contrasting Throughout the book, older weapons and newer, improved weapons are mentioned, and even contrasted. Have students research and compare the weapons of World War II with the weapons used during Desert Storm. Some World War II weapons to examine might include propeller-driven bombers, bazookas, mortars, M1 rifles, and anti-aircraft batteries. Some Desert Storm weapons to examine would include stealth fighters, jet fighters, laser-guided bombs, and cruise missiles.

Identifying Reading Strategies Much detail is given to the Cold War, especially how it conveniently functioned as a cover-up to hide what America was really doing: gathering weapons to defend against the aliens. For a project, have students examine the Cold War from a societal aspect--how did it contribute to the arms race, and how did it affect Russian society and economy? Essentially, as the Americans built weapons, the Soviets had to counter and build anti-weapons to defend against our weapons. This spiral continued until the Soviets were spending billions of dollars. The Russian people were unhappy and the economy eventually faltered. As satellite states eventually broke away, the Soviet Union collapsed. Does the students' research fit the historical pattern Corso posits to account for the Cold War's "real" causes and effects?