

The Diary of Anne Frank

Study Guide

Overview

The Diary of Anne Frank, which is sometimes referred to as The Diary of a Young Girl, was originally written in Dutch by Anne Frank between 1942 and 1944 while she and her family were in hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam during World War II. Anne died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945 after the family's capture. Anne's father, Otto Frank—the only member of the family to survive the war—published his daughter's diary in 1947. The first English-language version was published in 1952.

The Diary of Anne Frank is a poignant and powerful account of a Jewish girl's life during the Holocaust. The diary begins when Anne is thirteen and continues until the Franks' hiding place is discovered in 1944. The setting is the concealed annex of an office building, where Anne, her family, and a few others lived in seclusion to escape persecution by the Nazis. The diary is deeply intertwined with the atrocities of the Holocaust. Anne's personal reflections provide an intimate and human perspective on the challenges, fears, and hopes of those living in hiding. The diary stands as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of extreme adversity.

The Diary of Anne Frank is a poignant and powerful account of a Jewish girl's life during the Holocaust. The diary begins when Anne is thirteen and continues until the Franks' hiding place is discovered in 1944. The setting is the concealed annex of an office building, where Anne, her family, and a few others lived in seclusion to escape persecution by the Nazis. The diary is deeply intertwined with the atrocities of the Holocaust. Anne's personal reflections provide an intimate and human perspective on the challenges, fears, and hopes of those living in hiding. The diary stands as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of extreme adversity.

The Diary of Anne Frank has become a symbol of the human cost of intolerance and persecution. Anne's eloquent and insightful writing captures not only the daily struggles of life in hiding but also her dreams for a better future. The diary has played a crucial role in educating people about the Holocaust and the importance of human rights. The profound influence of the diary is reflected in its numerous translations, adaptations, and its place as a literary and historical cornerstone. A well-known 1957 film adaptation directed by George Stevens was adapted from a play that playwright Albert Hackett based on the diary.

Full summary

Anne's diary begins on her thirteenth birthday, June 12, 1942, and ends shortly after her fifteenth. At the start of her diary, Anne describes fairly typical girlhood experiences, writing about her friendships with other girls, her crushes on boys, and her academic performance at school. Because anti-Semitic laws forced Jews into separate schools, Anne and her older sister, Margot, attended the Jewish Lyceum in Amsterdam.

The Franks had moved to the Netherlands in the years leading up to World War II to escape persecution in Germany. After the Germans invaded the Netherlands in 1940, the Franks were forced into hiding. With another family, the van Daans, and an acquaintance, Mr. Dussel, they moved into a small secret annex above Otto Frank's office where they had stockpiled food and supplies. The employees from Otto's firm helped hide the Franks and kept them supplied with food, medicine, and information about the outside world.

The residents of the annex pay close attention to every development of the war by listening to the radio. Some bits of news catch Anne's attention and make their way into her diary, providing a vivid historical context for her personal thoughts. The adults make optimistic bets about when the war will end, and their mood is severely affected by Allied setbacks or German advances. Amsterdam is devastated by the war during the two years the Franks are in hiding. All of the city's residents suffer, since food becomes scarce and robberies more frequent.

Anne often writes about her feelings of isolation and loneliness. She has a tumultuous relationship with the adults in the annex, particularly her mother, whom she considers lacking in love and affection. She adores her father, but she is frequently scolded and criticized by Mr. and Mrs. van Daan and Mr. Dussel. Anne thinks that her sister, Margot, is smart, pretty, and agreeable, but she does not feel close to her and does not write much about her. Anne eventually develops a close friendship with Peter van Daan, the teenage boy in the annex. Mr. Frank does not approve, however, and the intensity of Anne's infatuation begins to lessen.

Anne matures considerably throughout the course of her diary entries, moving from detailed accounts of basic activities to deeper, more profound thoughts about humanity and her own personal nature. She finds it difficult to understand why the Jews are being singled out and persecuted. Anne also confronts her own identity. Though she considers herself to be German, her German citizenship has been revoked, and though she calls Holland her home, many of the Dutch have turned against the Jews. Anne feels a tremendous solidarity with her aggrieved people, and yet at the same time she wants to be seen as an individual rather than a member of a persecuted group.

During the two years recorded in her diary, Anne deals with confinement and deprivation, as well as the complicated and difficult issues of growing up in the brutal circumstances of the Holocaust. Her diary describes a struggle to define herself within this climate of oppression.

Anne's diary ends without comment on August 1, 1944, the end of a seemingly normal day that leaves us with the expectation of seeing another entry on the next page. However, the Frank family is betrayed to the Nazis and arrested on August 4, 1944. Anne's diary, the observations of an imaginative, friendly, sometimes petty, and rather normal teenage girl, comes to an abrupt and silent end.

Otto Frank is the family's sole survivor, and he recovers Anne's diary from Miep. He decides to fulfill Anne's wishes by publishing the diary. Anne's diary becomes a condemnation of the unimaginable horror of the Holocaust, and one of the few accounts that describe it from a young person's perspective.

Since Anne's diary is a true personal account of a life in hiding, it is inappropriate to analyze it as a novel or other work of fiction. Parts of the diary were intended for public view, but others clearly were not. To appreciate and interpret the diary, it is necessary to consider its horrible context, World War II and the Holocaust, before any discussion of plot development or thematic content.

Character analysis: Anne

When Anne Frank is given a diary for her thirteenth birthday, she immediately fills it with the details of her life: descriptions of her friends, boys who like her, and her classes at school. Anne finds comfort writing in her diary because she feels she has difficulty opening up to her friends and therefore has no true confidants. Anne also records her perceptions of herself. She does not think she is pretty, but she is confident that her personality and other good traits make up for it. Through her writing, Anne comes across as playful and comical but with a serious side.

Anne's diary entries show from the outset that she is content and optimistic despite the threats and danger that her family faces. The tone and substance of her writing change considerably while she is in hiding. Anne is remarkably forthright and perceptive at the beginning of the diary, but as she leaves her normal childhood behind and enters the dire and unusual circumstances of the Holocaust, she becomes more introspective and thoughtful.

During her first year in the annex, Anne struggles with the adults, who constantly criticize her behaviour and consider her "exasperating." Anne feels extremely lonely and in need of kindness and affection, which she feels her mother is incapable of providing. She also wrestles with her inner self and considers what type of person she wants to become as she enters womanhood. Anne tries to understand her identity in the microcosm of the annex and attempts to understand the workings of the cruel world outside. As she matures, Anne comes to long not for female companionship, but intimacy with a male counterpart. She

becomes infatuated with Peter, the van Daan's teenage son, and comes to consider him a close friend, confidant, and eventually an object of romantic desire.

In her final diary entries, Anne is particularly lucid about the changes she has undergone, her ambitions, and how her experience is changing her. She has a clear perspective of how she has matured during their time in the annex, from an insolent and obstinate girl to a more emotionally independent young woman. Anne begins to think about her place in society as a woman, and her plans for overcoming the obstacles that have defeated the ambitions of women from previous generations, such as her mother. Anne continues to struggle with how she can be a good person when there are so many obstacles in her world. She writes eloquently about her confusion over her identity, raising the question of whether she will consider herself Dutch, as she hears that the Dutch have become anti-Semitic. Anne thinks philosophically about the nature of war and humanity and about her role as a young Jewish girl in a challenging world. From her diary, it is clear that she had the potential to become an engaging, challenging, and sophisticated writer.

Famous quotes explained

"I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support."

Anne writes this on the inside cover of her diary just after she receives it for her thirteenth birthday. At the time, she feels that she does not have any true confidants, which makes her feel lonely and misunderstood. Anne does, however, have many friends and admirers, and she is a playful, amusing, and social young girl. Thus, her sentiments in this passage may seem odd and a bit exaggerated, but she later explains that even though she has friends, she is never fully able to open up to them. Anne finds that she and her friends talk only about trivial things, even when she has deeper things on her mind that she wishes to share. For example, she never broaches the subjects of her developing body or Germany's occupation of Holland. Having a diary—which she addresses as "Kitty," like a friend—enables her to express her thoughts without fear of being criticized by others. Anne's relationship with her diary helps comfort her through her insecure, lonely, and fearful time in hiding.

"I see the eight of us in the Annex as if we were a patch of blue sky surrounded by menacing black clouds. . . . They loom before us like an impenetrable wall, trying to crush us, but not yet able to. I can only cry out and implore, "Oh ring, ring, open wide and let us out!"

Anne records this vivid image on November 8, 1943, after living in the annex for more than a year. As the war rages on and people throughout Europe suffer, Anne is starting to become depressed and pessimistic about her family's chances of survival. She alternates between imagining what her future will be like and fearing that she and her family will be discovered

at any time. Anne's writing becomes more metaphoric as she tries to express her fears and the anxiety and desperation that plague the residents of the annex. Nature is perhaps what Anne misses most about the outside world, so it follows that she describes her feeling of claustrophobia and entrapment with an image of nature. The image of blue sky suggests freedom. Dark clouds, signifying the oppression and restrictions on the Jews, cover the sky, suffocating Anne and the annex's other inhabitants. Anne's blue sky represents liberation. Both the sky and freedom remain beyond her reach.

"I sometimes wonder if anyone will ever understand what I mean, if anyone will ever overlook my ingratitude and not worry about whether or not I'm Jewish and merely see me as a teenager badly in need of some good, plain fun."

In this passage from December 24, 1943, Anne reminds us that she is just a normal young girl who has been forced into extraordinary circumstances. She willingly makes sacrifices and deals with the restrictions of the annex without much complaint because she knows that she is more fortunate than her friends who have already been arrested and sent to concentration camps. This attitude demonstrates Anne's remarkable maturity, but it clearly takes its toll on her spirit. Aside from wanting to return to the freedoms and comforts she had before the war, Anne simply wants to experience a normal childhood. She does not want to live in a world that places such significance on where she is from, what her religion is, or whether she behaves well with adults. She wants to be in a place where she does not have to worry whether she will live or whether her friends are suffering. The diary has such emotional impact because we see Anne not as a saint, but as a normal girl with real human feelings and imperfections who falls victim to the tragedy of the Holocaust.

"It's difficult in times like these: ideals, dreams and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. It's a wonder I haven't abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart."

Anne writes this on July 15, 1944, less than one month before the Nazis arrest her and her family, sending them all to the concentration camps. This is perhaps the most well-known quotation from Anne's diary because it is a brazen expression of optimism in the face of imminent and incomprehensible cruelty. The passage also provides a brief glimpse into Anne's mind during her last days in the annex and demonstrates how much she has changed from when her family first went into hiding. At the beginning of her diary, Anne would likely never have had the self-insight to make such a sweeping statement. After two years of growth while living in extremely difficult circumstances, however, she is able to find within herself a core of hope and optimism. This passage is an example of Anne's occasional and brilliant glimpses of lucidity and insight into her horrific situation.

"I get cross, then sad, and finally end up turning my heart inside out, the bad part on the outside and the good part on the inside, and keep trying to find a way to become what I'd like to be and what I could be if . . . if only there were no other people in the world."

This statement ends Anne Frank's last diary entry, written on August 1, 1944. Anne does not intend to end her diary at this point: to her, it is just the end of a regular day of hiding in the annex. However, this turns out to be her last entry because the Nazis arrest her and her family just three days later. It serves as a fitting conclusion to Anne's development and personal growth during her time in the annex. Since her time in hiding coincides with puberty, Anne constantly struggles with her identity and her evolving sense of self. She tries to figure out her role within the annex and how she fits into the war and suffering in the outside world. Anne believes that she is a good person, but she also realizes that because of her confinement, she is unable to reach her true potential until she is released back to her normal life after the war. Anne's words resonate even more profoundly because we know that within months these "other people" kill her in the concentration camp. Anne is never allowed to reach her full potential and never gets the chance to become the good person she has in mind.