



TEACHER'S NOTES 1

ANNE FRANK: HER LIFE AND LEGACY

BACKGROUND

Anne Frank was born in Germany on 12 June 1929 to Jewish parents, Edith and Otto Frank. She had one sister, Margot, who was three years older. The family lived in Germany until Anne was four. In 1933, Adolf Hitler was elected as national leader. The Jews were blamed for Germany's economic problems and anti-Jewish measures were introduced. They suffered from discrimination and were isolated from the rest of their community. So in 1934 the family moved from Frankfurt to Amsterdam in The Netherlands to escape the persecution from the brutal Nazis.

For a few years they lived a happy life. The children went to school and Otto, their father, ran a successful business. Then World War II broke out. On 10 May 1940, Nazi troops invaded and occupied The Netherlands and trouble started for the Jews again. Very quickly, their freedom was severely restricted and Jews were required to wear a yellow star bearing the word 'Jew'. But by now Hitler and the Nazis had begun to murder hundreds of thousands of Jews across Europe.

In 1942, Anne's parents bought her a present for her 13th birthday. It was a red and white checked notebook Anne had seen in her local bookshop. She began to write in it every day documenting her school and family life.

Then her sister Margot received her call up papers ordering her to be sent to a Nazi war camp for Jewish people in Germany – an instruction that meant almost certain death. Seeing the danger his family was in, Otto organised a secret hiding place for them in the annexe of his Amsterdam factory, and people who would help provide clothes and food.

On 6 July 1942, Anne's life changed forever, as the Franks began their exile in the 'Secret Annexe'. They were joined by four other Jewish people: the Van Pels, their son Peter, and later a dentist Fritz Pfeffer.

ANNE'S WRITING

Anne spent the next two years writing in her diary nearly every day at a desk in the new bedroom she had to share with Fritz Pfeffer. Having a place to record her thoughts and feelings was very important to her.

This is what she wrote about receiving her diary on her birthday:
'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.'

Living in such a small space with seven other people, terrified of being discovered, was frightening and frustrating for everyone. During the day they had to be completely silent so the people working at the front of the building could not hear them. They could not move around or cough or flush the toilet. They spoke in whispers and never went outside.

The teenage Anne also had little privacy. She shared her room with the often irritable and strict Fritz Pfeffer. The relationship between the two was often difficult. They were different characters, and the pressure and strain of being in hiding and their 40-year age gap, made it worse. Mr Pfeffer would annoy Anne by constantly criticising her chattiness, and she in turn irritate him with her exuberance and capriciousness. Most disturbing to Anne was that Mr Pfeffer insisted on using her writing space for his own studies; something that he considered to be more important than the scribbles of a teenage girl.

Writing in these cramped and tense conditions, Anne's diary entries were often anguished, humorous and, on many occasions, starkly honest and critical of her fellow housemates. However, she was as critical of herself as she was of those around her.

On 4 August 1944, after being trapped in the hiding place for over two years, Anne and her family were betrayed. Someone told the Nazis where they were hiding. They were arrested by the Dutch police, and sent to a Nazi death camp in Poland. Here the Frank family were split up and, one month later, Anne and Margot were sent to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp, and imprisoned under atrocious conditions. They were mistreated and starved, and made to work like slaves. The sisters died of starvation and typhus a few weeks before the camp was liberated by the British Army in April 1945. Anne's father Otto Frank was the only member of the eight in hiding to survive.

ANNE'S LEGACY

Otto Frank was freed in 1945 and returned to Amsterdam. He learned that his daughters and wife had perished. When Anne Frank and her family were arrested, they weren't allowed to take any of their belongings with them, and so Anne's diary was left behind. One of the people who had helped them hide, Miep Gies, had kept it in her office desk drawer. She handed it back to Otto saying, 'This is your daughter's legacy'.

Determined to realise his daughter's dream of becoming a writer and to give voice to six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, Otto set about getting the diary published. It took a long time to find a willing publisher but eventually he was successful. The first 1,500 copies were printed in June 1947. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* has since sold over 30 million copies, been translated into more than 70 languages and inspired people the world over.

WHAT SHE WROTE

Anne longed to have a voice and it was her ambition to be a journalist or a writer. Her diary shows how important writing was to her and how it helped her to examine her own personal troubles against the backdrop of the Holocaust. She talked about her feelings, growing up, love for Peter, her ideals and family relationships. She also wrote short stories, some of which indicate how she believed humans could 'improve the world'.

Her first words in her diary were:

'I hope I can 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's writing developed a great maturity over the two years – so much so that when her father Otto Frank first saw the diary, he realised he had not truly known his daughter.

EXTRACTS WRITTEN BY ANNE

We're stuck in this house like lepers, especially during winter and the Christmas and New Year holidays. Actually, I shouldn't even be writing this, since it makes me seem so ungrateful, but I can't keep everything to myself, so I'll repeat what I said at the beginning: 'Paper is more patient than people.' (24 December 1943)

Whenever someone comes in from outside, with the wind in their clothes and the cold on their cheeks, I feel like burying my head under the blankets to keep from thinking 'When will we be allowed to breathe fresh air again?' I can't do that – on the contrary, I have to hold my head up high and put a bold face on things, but the thoughts keep coming anyway. Not just once, but over and over. (24 December 1943)

In the eyes of the world, we're doomed, but if after all this suffering, there are still Jews left, the Jewish people will be held up as an example. Who knows, maybe our religion will teach the world and all the people in it about goodness, and that's the reason, the only reason we have had to suffer. (11 April 1944)

We can never be just Dutch, or just English, or whatever, we will always be Jews as well. And we'll have to keep on being Jews, but then, we'll want to be. God has never deserted our people. Through the ages Jews have had to suffer, but through the ages they've gone on living, and the centuries of suffering have only made them stronger. (11 April 1944)

We're not the only people that have had to suffer. There've always been people that have had to... sometimes one race... sometimes another. (11 April 1944)

When I write, I can shake off all my cares. My sorrow disappears, my spirits are revived! But that's a big question, will I ever be able to write something great, will I ever become a journalist or a writer? (5 April 1944)

THE ANNE FRANK TRUST UK

The Anne Frank Trust UK is the British partner organisation of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. The Trust was founded in 1990 by family and friends of the late Otto Frank. Its mission is to draw on the power of Anne Frank's life and diary to challenge prejudice and reduce hatred, encouraging people to embrace positive attitudes, responsibility and respect for others. It does this through its travelling exhibitions and educational programmes in schools, prisons and community settings, working in some of the UK's most deprived and divided areas. As well as national educational projects such as Anne Frank Day and Thirteen in 13, the Trust has intensive programmes running in London, North West England, North East England, Eastern England, Yorkshire and Humberside and Scotland. Through its national and regional activities the Trust educates over 70,000 young people each year.

www.annefrank.org.uk



TEACHER'S NOTES 2

ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

In December 1960, lawyer Peter Benenson was outraged to hear about two Portuguese students who had been sent to prison under dictator Antonio Salazar's regime. Their only crime had been to raise a toast to freedom in a Lisbon restaurant.

It stirred Peter Benenson to write an article in response, *The Forgotten Prisoners*. Published in 1961 in *The Observer* and subsequently picked up by newspapers around the world, it urged readers to write letters on behalf of people who were jailed for expressing their views. Peter Benenson called them 'prisoners of conscience' and his idea was to bombard governments with letters of protest at their imprisonment, and to call for their release.

This was his opening paragraph:

Open your newspaper any day of the week and you will find a report from somewhere in the world of someone being imprisoned, tortured or executed because his opinions or religion are unacceptable to his government. There are several million such people in prison....and their numbers are growing. The newspaper reader feels a sickening sense of impotence. Yet if these feelings of disgust all over the world could be united into common action, something effective could be done.

The article received tremendous response: letters of support and money arrived, details of many more prisoners were sent in, and volunteers eager to work for the release of prisoners of conscience came forward in many countries. Within eight weeks the first international meeting had taken place. Amnesty International had begun. In its first year, national Amnesty International offices had been set up in seven countries.

Today, over 50 years later, Amnesty International has over 3 million members in over 150 countries and territories in every region of the world and over 50 nationally organised offices. In the UK there are nearly 260,000 financial supporters of Amnesty and there are offices in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

As well as working for prisoners of conscience, Amnesty's current campaigns include the Control Arms campaign, abolition of the death penalty and the rights of refugees.