

The Diary of Anne Frank

A Guide for Young People

by Tim Robertson, Chief Executive, The Anne Frank Trust UK



Anne Frank.

The Anne Frank Trust UK

Age group

- This introductory guide is for age 12 and over.
- 9 to 12 year-olds should check with an adult before using the guide.
- Not suitable for under 9s.

Why does the Diary matter?

Anne Frank's Diary is the world's greatest book by a teenager, and it has made the world a better place.

More than anything else written during the Second World War, Frank's Diary has helped millions of people understand what it was like to be Jewish under the Nazis. Faced with Hitler's attempt to dehumanise and destroy all Jewish people, Frank wrote about her day-to-day life in a way that made her humanity beautifully, undeniably clear. She responded to hatred by creating empathy. She used writing as resistance to discrimination.

Frank's life was cruelly cut short in the Holocaust, but her book has gone on to achieve all its goals. It not only helps us remember a terrible time in history – it is a role model for how any individual can speak out against oppression.



How did the Diary get written?

Anne Frank and her family were Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. They settled in Amsterdam, only to find that Holland was then invaded and occupied by the Nazis. For her 13th birthday on 12 June 1944, Anne was given a blank diary book with a red-checked cover. She started writing in it right away.

Three weeks later, Anne and her family had to go into hiding in a secret annexe (a hidden apartment) above her father's workplace in Amsterdam. They were trying to save themselves from being deported to concentration camps and murdered by the Nazis. Anne was a chatty, friendly person who found herself cut off from the outside world. She poured her feelings into her diary. She didn't show it to anyone, but she invented a friend called Kitty, and started each diary entry "Dear Kitty".

Anne's diary-writing was brought to an end on 4 August 1944, when the Franks' hiding place was discovered by the Nazis. The family were arrested and sent to concentration camps. After the arrest, Otto's secretary Miep Gies found the Diary in the Secret Annexe. She kept it to give to Anne after the War, but Anne's father Otto was the only member of the family to

survive the Holocaust, and Miep gave the Diary to him instead. Anne had made clear in the Diary that she wanted it to be published, so that is what Otto did. When it was translated from Dutch to English, the book's title became "*The Diary of a Young Girl*".



Miep Gies



Otto Frank

How famous is the Diary?

Since its publication in 1947, Anne Frank's Diary has become a **global phenomenon**. It has:

SOLD         
        
36 million

copies in **over 70 different languages**

BEEN     

MADE  plays, movies, TV programmes
pieces of music & works of art

**MADE THE ANNE FRANK HOUSE IN AMSTERDAM
A WORLD-FAMOUS MUSEUM VISITED BY**

1.2 million

                      **PEOPLE**
A YEAR

INSPIRED  Including **JF Kennedy**
WORLD LEADERS **Nelson Mandela &**
Barack Obama

Anne Frank.

The Anne Frank Trust UK

**GENERATED A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT
OF ANTI-PREJUDICE EDUCATION
INCLUDING THE ANNE FRANK TRUST
HERE IN THE UK**

What makes the Diary such a great book?

Millions of people write diaries, and thousands of diaries have been published, including many by people who lived under the Nazis in World War Two. But no other diary is so widely read or so deeply loved as Anne Frank's. There are three keys to Frank's genius as a writer: clarity, honesty and complexity.

Clarity

By describing her life to her imaginary friend Kitty, Frank explains carefully and clearly all the interesting details of life in the Secret Annexe, and everything she knew that was happening in the world outside. As a result, the book is accessible, engaging and vivid to readers of all ages and from many different backgrounds across the world.

Honesty

Frank is amazingly open in her thoughts and feelings, about both herself and others. She is not embarrassed by personal subjects like toilets or sex; she admits lots of bad mistakes, for example in some of her judgements on her parents; and she learns and changes her mind over time. The Diary's frankness makes it feel incredibly alive and close to the reader. It is as intimate as if we were with Anne in her mind.

Complexity

The greatness of any writer comes largely from the range and depth of their work – especially the multiple meanings and moods that they bring together and communicate through their words. Frank's Diary captures emotions from total happiness to desperate fear and depression. Her ideas range from wisdom to silliness. Her hopefulness is made convincing by the fact that she also recognises the likelihood of a terrible death. The final Diary entry is about being "a bundle of contradictions", and this is perhaps Frank's greatest response to prejudice – to show that human beings are far too wonderfully complex to be boxed into stereotypes.



Margot, Otto, Anne & Edith in 1941

The main characters in the Diary

- **The Frank family:** Anne, her older sister Margot, her mother Edith, her father Otto.
- **The Van Daan family,** who shared the Secret Annexe with the Franks: Mr Van Daan (Otto Frank's business partner), his wife Mrs Van Daan, and their teenage son Peter, with whom Anne falls in love.
- **Albert Dussel:** a dentist, who also moved into the Secret Annexe, and with whom Anne had to share her bedroom.
- **The helpers:** Miep, Bep, Mr Kleiman and Mr Kugler – four non-Jewish members of staff in Otto Frank's business. They worked in the office downstairs from the Secret Annexe, and risked their lives for more than 2 years bringing food and other essentials to the hiders.

Some of the names Anne used for people in the annexe were invented, to protect them in case the Diary was found by the Nazis.





Peter van Daan
(real name: Peter van Pels)



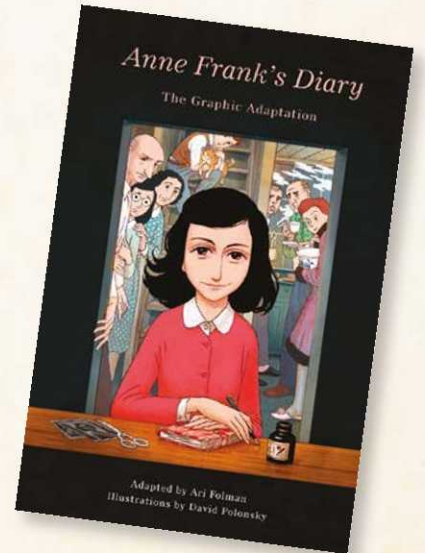
*Mrs van Daan,
Peter's mother*
(real name: Auguste van Pels)



*Mr van Daan,
Peter's father*
(real name: Hermann van Pels)

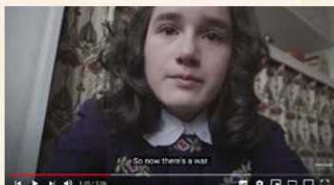
How to get to know the Diary

There are lots of ways to engage with the Diary – by watching film versions, listening to recordings, or reading online or on the page. There is an excellent graphic version *Anne Frank's Diary: The Graphic Adaptation* by David Polonsky (Penguin Books, 2018). The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam has released on [YouTube](#) a fantastic series of 5-minute episodes, filmed as if Anne were making a video diary.



Albert Dussel
(real name: Fritz Pfeffer)

The best thing of all is to read the whole book from start to finish. It's not too long. It gets better and better as you read on – funny, sad, exciting, inspiring. Don't miss out on this amazing experience.



The Diary of Anne Frank

Some key moments and topics

This is just a taster. The quotations are in date order, but they really make sense only in their full context. When you find a topic that interests you, look up that date in the Diary to find out more. You'll soon find yourself wanting to read the whole book.

The best version of the Diary to read is: **Anne Frank The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition**, translated from the Dutch by Susan Massotty (Penguin Books, 1995). The quotations here are taken from this version. Copyright © The Anne Frank-Fonds, Basel, Switzerland. (The Anne Frank Fonds – or Foundation – was set up by Otto Frank in 1963 to care for the global distribution and use of the Diary.)

Starting to write a diary

12 June 1942

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

The Secret Annexe

9 July 1942

"No one would ever suspect there were so many rooms behind that plain grey door."

Nazi antisemitism in occupied Holland

20 June 1942 (first entry)

"Our freedom was severely restricted by a series of anti-Jewish decrees."

The Franks are joined by the Van Daan family

14 August 1942

"Much to our amusement, Mrs Van Daan was carrying a hat box with a large chamber pot inside."

Inventing "Kitty"

20 June 1942 (second entry)

"The solemn dedication of my diary. Dearest Kitty!... We've now laid the basis for our friendship."

A bookcase is built to hide the door to the annexe

21 August 1942

"Now our Secret Annexe has truly become secret."

Leaving home and going into hiding

8 July 1942

"We just wanted to get out of there, to get away and reach our destination in safety."

Anne is frustrated by the adults

28 September 1942

"It won't be long before I explode with pent-up rage."

Fantasy shopping

7 October 1942

"I imagine that..."

News of Jewish people being taken to concentration camps

9 October 1942

"We assume that most of them are being murdered. The English radio says they're being gassed."

Mr Dussel arrives in the Secret Annexe

10-17 November 1942

"We're planning to take an eighth person into hiding with us!"

Anne feels lucky to be in hiding, and worries for people outside

19 November 1942

"I feel frightened myself when I think of close friends who are now at the mercy of the cruellest monsters ever to stalk the earth. And all because they're Jews."

Hanukkah (Jewish festival of light) and St Nicholas' Day (Dutch Christmas)

7 December 1942

"The eight of us had never celebrated St Nicholas' Day before."

Mr Van Daan makes sausages, Mrs Van Daan has a tooth out

10 December 1942

"Everyone who came into the room burst into laughter when they saw the dangling sausages."

Anne argues with her mother

2 April 1943

"Everyone expects me to apologise, but this is not something I can apologise for, because I told the truth."

Air raids

19 July 1943

"Entire streets are in ruins, and it will take a while for them to dig out all the bodies."

The routine in the annexe

4 August 1943

"We've been in hiding for a little over a year."

Depression and fear

8 November 1943

"I see the eight of us in the annexe as if we were a patch of blue sky surrounded by menacing black clouds."

Longing to be an ordinary teenager

24 December 1943

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

Feelings of confusion and longing

12 February 1944

"I'm in a state of utter confusion, don't know what to read, what to write, what to do. I only know that I'm longing for something..."

Sexual diversity – Anne's feelings for girls

6 January 1944 (first entry)

"Every time I see a female nude, such as the Venus in my art history book, I go into ecstasy... If only I had a girlfriend!"

Peter starts to respond to Anne

14 February 1944

"Peter kept looking at me."

God and nature

23 February 1944

"The best remedy for those who are frightened, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be alone, alone with the sky, nature and God."

Anne starts to fall for Peter

6 January 1944 (second entry)

"It gave me a wonderful feeling when I looked into his dark blue eyes."

Adults don't understand young people

2 March 1944

"The grown-ups are such idiots!... People can tell you to shut up, but they can't keep you from having an opinion."

Anne and Peter discuss sex education

24 January 1944

"I've learned one thing: there are young people, even those of the opposite sex, who can discuss these things naturally, without cracking jokes."

Anne has changed and feels happier

7 March 1944

"Beauty remains, even in misfortune. If you just look for it, you discover more and more happiness and regain your balance."

Anne's knowledge of sex and menstruation

18 March 1944

"Parents, and people in general, are very peculiar when it comes to sex."

Anne's first kiss from Peter

16 April 1944

"He gave me a kiss, through my hair, half on my left cheek and half on my ear."

News via BBC radio that the Diary could become a valuable record

27 and 29 March 1944

"Mr Bolkstein, the Cabinet Minister, speaking on the Dutch broadcast from London, said that after the war a collection would be made of diaries and letters dealing with the war."

What is the point of the war?

3 May 1944

"Why are millions spent on the war each day, while not a penny is available for medical science, artists or the poor?"

Wanting to be a writer

5 April 1944

"When I write I can shake off all my cares. My sorrows disappear, my spirits are revived! But... will I ever become a journalist or a writer?"

Anne is sorry after being hurtful to her father

7 May 1944

"What's done can't be undone, but at least you can keep it from happening again."

After the annexe is nearly discovered by police, Anne sets goals for her future

11 April 1944

"That night I really thought I was going to die..." "If God lets me live,...I'll make my voice heard, I'll go out into the world and work for humankind!"

Britain's role in the war

22 May 1944 (first part)

"The invasion, liberation and freedom will come someday; yet Britain, not the occupied territories, will choose the moment."

Antisemitism

22 May 1944 (second part)

"Jews are regarded as lesser beings."

D-Day

6 June 1944

"Oh, Kitty, the best part about the invasion is that I have the feeling that friends are on the way."

Gender roles

13 June 1944

"One of the many questions that have often bothered me is why women have been, and still are, thought to be so inferior to men."

Work, religion, and finding a purpose in life

6 July 1944

"Religion itself, any religion, keeps a person on the right path. Not the fear of God, but upholding your own sense of honour and obeying your own conscience."

Recognising death, maintaining hope (The most famous and perhaps greatest entry in the Diary)

15 July 1944

"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."

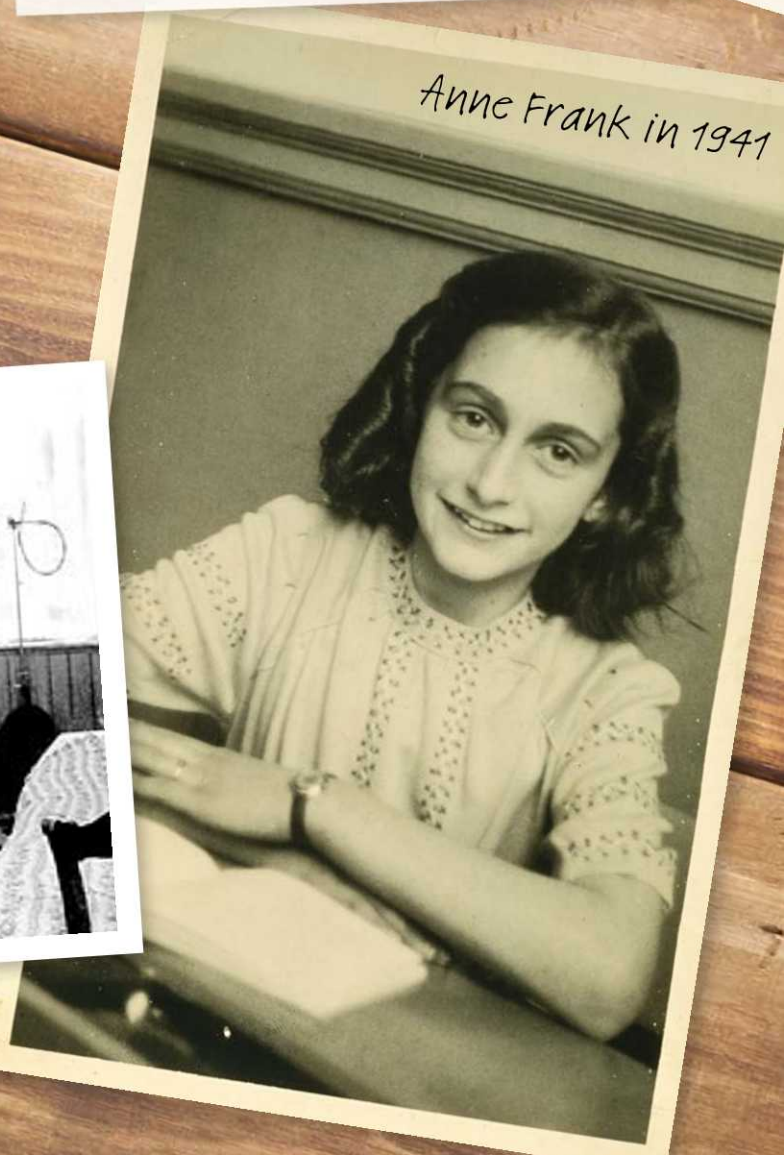
The split between public face and private feelings

1 August 1944

"A bundle of contradictions."



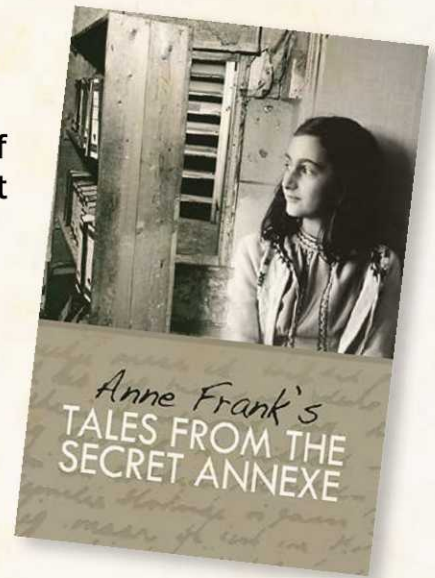
Anne's bedroom in the Secret Annexe



Anne Frank in 1941

Anne Frank's other works

While writing the Diary, Frank also wrote short stories and part of a novel. These can be found in *Anne Frank Tales from the Secret Annexe* (Halban Publishers, 2010). One of the short stories, *Happiness*, includes one of Frank's most famous quotations:



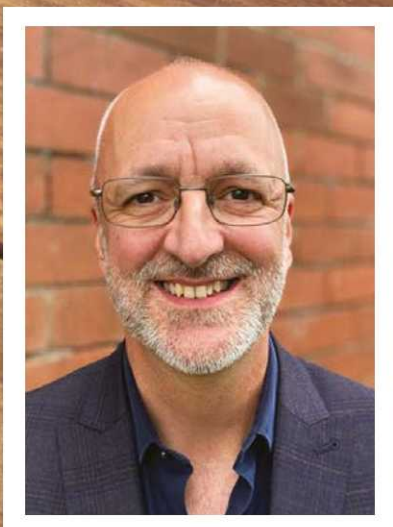
“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

Quotations **not** by Anne Frank

On the internet you will find some quotations that have been **wrongly attributed to Anne Frank**. **Make sure you don't use these quotations:**

“Everyone has inside of him a piece of good news. The good news is that you don't know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish! And what your potential is!”

“Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness.”



This guide is by Tim Robertson,
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