

# Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl

## Discussion Guide #1

Encourage critical thinking and support your students' literacy development by asking questions during reading. Here are some questions you can ask your readers to engage them in a discussion.

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### DIARY ENTRIES: June 12, 1942 – July 10, 1942

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#### Comprehension:

- What does Anne name her diary, and why does she give it a name?

Anne names her diary Kitty. She gives her diary a name because she wants to pretend that her diary is the true friend that she feels she doesn't have. She wants to confide in her diary in a way that she's unable to confide in anyone else.

- How did Anne and her family come to be in Amsterdam?

Anne's family is from Germany. However, the Franks are Jewish, and during the early 1930s, there were many anti-Jewish laws in Germany. In 1933, when Anne was four years old, her father moved to the Netherlands, where he started managing the Dutch Opekta Company. Mrs. Frank, Anne's mother, followed soon after. Then, Anne's sister Margot, followed by Anne, moved there, too, after staying for a time with their grandmother.

- At first, Anne and her family led a somewhat normal life in Amsterdam. When did things change, and why? How did things change for them?

Things changed after May 1940. The war started in 1939, and the Germans invaded the Netherlands. The Dutch soon surrendered. Anne says that when the Germans came, "the trouble started for the Jews" in Amsterdam. There were many anti-Jewish decrees that severely restricted their freedoms. For example, Jewish people could not ride in cars, be outside past 8:00 p.m., or go to theaters. They were forced to wear yellow stars on their clothes to identify them as Jews.

- Anne writes quite frequently about Hello. Who is Hello, and what is his place in Anne's life?

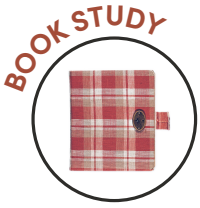
Hello is a male admirer of Anne's. He lives with his grandparents because his parents are in Belgium, and Hello is unable to join them there. Hello is sixteen years old, three years older than Anne. He decides that he likes Anne better than his girlfriend, Ursul. However, Hello's grandmother thinks Anne is too young for Hello. Anne likes the attention from Hello, and her family likes him very much. However, Anne writes that she's "not in love with him." She prefers a boy named Peter.

- Who is Mr. van Daan, and why does Anne's mother go to see him?

Mr. van Daan is a business partner and friend of Anne's father. He and his family have been planning to go into hiding with the Frank family. However, Anne's father receives a call-up notice from the SS (later, we learn that the call-up notice was really for Margot, Anne's older sister). Mr. Frank isn't home at the time, so Anne's mother goes to see Mr. van Daan to ask if they could go to their hiding place earlier than planned.

- Anne says that she and her sister, Margot, pack their "most important belongings" to take with them into hiding. What kinds of things does Anne pack?

The first thing Anne packs is her diary. She also packs everyday things like hair curlers, a comb, and handkerchiefs. She packs school books, and she throws in old letters that have sentimental value to her.



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#### Comprehension (continued):

- Who are Miep and Jan Gies, and what is their importance to Anne and her family?  
Miep Gies is a family friend who has worked for Mr. Frank's company for many years. She and her husband, Jan, are two of the main helpers of the Franks and the Van Daans. Miep and Jan help smuggle the Franks' belongings out of their home and into their hiding place. Miep leads Margot to the hiding place when the time comes.
- Why do Anne and her family wear so many layers of clothing on the day they go into hiding?  
They want to take as much of their clothing with them as possible, but they can't put it in a suitcase and carry it with them. Because they're Jewish, it would be very dangerous for them to be seen leaving with suitcases. The suitcases would make it obvious that they are fleeing, trying to escape the call-up notice. They would likely be arrested.
- Where do Anne and her family go into hiding? Why is it a good place to hide?  
They go into hiding in a hidden apartment attached to the offices of the Opekta Company, where Mr. Frank works. The address is 263 Prinsengracht. It's an old building on a canal in Amsterdam. Only those who work in the offices are aware that people will be hiding there and can help keep the Franks hidden. The actual hiding place is well hidden at the back of the building, behind a gray door that opens onto a steep flight of stairs leading up to what Anne calls their "Secret Annex." There's a washroom and a few other rooms, including a kitchen, an attic, and a loft. There's also a nearby storage area. It's a good hiding place because of the functional living spaces and how hidden it is.

#### Analysis:

- What does Anne mean when she says, "Paper has more patience than people"?  
Anne doesn't think people would be interested in hearing her deeper, sometimes brooding and unhappy thoughts, but she feels that she can write such thoughts in her diary. The pages of her diary cannot complain or judge her.
- Describe Anne's interaction with her math teacher, Mr. Keesing, as she relates it in her June 21, 1942, diary entry. What aspects of Anne's character does this interaction reveal?  
Mr. Keesing is frustrated with Anne's incessant chattering, so he assigns her a series of essays. This reveals that Anne is quite outgoing at school and that she's very full of life and a bit of mischief. In the first assignment, Anne carefully considers her response and writes what she feels is a convincing argument about why she cannot stop talking so much. This reveals that Anne is a thoughtful person who enjoys meeting a challenge. It also shows that she has a sense of humor. Anne's essay initially amuses Mr. Keesing, but he sees no change in Anne's chattering ways and assigns more essays as punishment. Anne composes one of these essays in poetry. It amuses Mr. Keesing so much that he reads the poem to the class and never again complains about Anne's talking. These things reveal that Anne is quite a character. She's very smart, and she can be charming, endearing, and funny.



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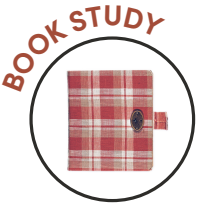
- At certain points in Anne's diary, there are hints that her seemingly carefree life is about to change, even though she could not have known the extent of the coming change when she wrote them. What parts of Anne's diary foreshadow the coming change? When does the big change actually occur?

Though Anne writes a lot about her friends, classmates, and her “beau,” she also writes about the unfortunate situation she and her fellow Jewish people are enduring due to the anti-Jewish decrees. Even so, she shrugs it off and says that life goes on, choosing not to dwell on it. However, in her entry on July 5, 1942, she writes about a walk she takes with her father. Her father broaches the subject of going into hiding someday. Anne is frightened by his somber words, but only for a while. Her father tells her not to worry and to just live her carefree life for as long as possible, and she's soon distracted by Hello ringing the doorbell. It's later that same day, July 5, 1942, that everything suddenly changes, and Anne and her family are forced to go into hiding. She tells what happened a few days later.

#### Personal Connection:

- Anne says that because she was so preoccupied with having to go into hiding, she packed the “craziest things.” If you suddenly had to leave your home and go into hiding, what things would you pack? Would you pack practical things, or would you pack personally meaningful items? What would be the first thing you threw in your bag?

Student answers will vary.



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#### Comprehension:

- In her early days and weeks in the Secret Annex, what does Anne find reassuring about her hiding place, and what does she find unsettling?

Right from the start, Anne finds the chiming of the Westertoren clock every quarter hour reassuring, even though Margot, her mother, and her father can't get used to it. She finds it unsettling to go downstairs and listen to the radio because she fears that someone will hear them. In fact, she's always scared that someone outside will hear them and that they'll be discovered. On the other hand, the silence in the evenings (before the Van Daans' arrival) also makes Anne nervous. Additionally, Anne writes that never being able to go outside is terribly upsetting for her.

- After over a month without writing an entry in her diary, Anne picks up writing again on August 14, saying, ". . . so little has happened that I can't find a newsworthy item to relate every single day." However, something newsworthy had happened. What big change happened in the Secret Annex??

The Van Daan family—Mr. and Mrs. van Daan and their 15-year-old son, Peter—arrived on July 13 to live in the Secret Annex alongside the Franks. Anne writes that, after just a few days, it was as though the seven of them were one big family.

- Mr. van Daan tells the Franks about what happened after their departure from their home on Monday, July 5. What happened?

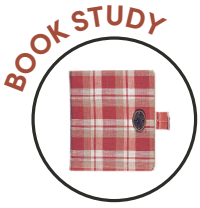
Mr. van Daan went to the Franks' rented apartment and found the landlord, Mr. Goldschmidt, distraught. It was about 9:00 in the morning on the day the Franks had escaped into hiding. Goldschmidt showed Mr. van Daan the note the Franks had left. The two men went together from room to room, straightening up. Mr. van Daan related that "suddenly," he saw a notepad with an address in Maastricht written on it. Mr. van Daan pretended to be struck with an idea. He supposed that the Franks must have escaped to Maastricht with an old friend, a "high-ranking officer" who had visited Mr. Frank at the office recently. Mr. van Daan told the landlord that he'd heard this friend offer Mr. Frank help if needed. That friend, Mr. van Daan told Mr. Goldschmidt, was stationed in Maastricht. He said that the friend likely helped the Franks escape to Belgium and then to Switzerland and that there would be no harm in telling others about what had likely happened to the Franks. Mr. Goldschmidt must have done so, for Mr. van Daan heard others telling the story later.

- What is added to the Secret Annex to make it even more hidden? Why is it added, and who helps add it?

A hinged bookcase that swings outward like a door is added to the front of the entrance to their hiding place. Mr. Kugler comes up with the idea because he's worried that the hiding place might be discovered with so many houses being searched for hidden bicycles. Mr. Voskuil, Bep's father, does the carpentry work.

- In what ways does Anne feel that her parents, especially her mother, and the others in the Annex mistreat her?

Anne feels that her mother treats her very differently than she treats Margot. She feels offended, for instance, by the fact that things Margot does, such as breaking the vacuum, receive little criticism. However, small things Anne does, such as wanting to rewrite something illegible on her mother's shopping list, cause a big argument. Though Anne feels closer to her father, she thinks he too often takes her mother's and Margot's side. Additionally, Anne frequently writes of how even the Van Daans are constantly criticizing her about things, such as her manners, what she eats or doesn't eat, and how she talks too much.



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#### Comprehension (continued):

- While Anne often complains about her life and the other people living with her in the Secret Annex, it's clear from her diary that there are good things, too. What good things does Anne talk about?

Anne enjoys the books that Mr. Kleiman brings for her to read. She's amused by the funny happenings in the office and the camaraderie between the office workers, Miep and Bep, and their bosses. Anne says that she and Peter like dressing up together for fun. One night, Peter wears one of his mother's dresses, and Anne dresses up in Peter's suit, which makes everyone laugh. Anne enjoys the correspondence course in shorthand—she thinks of it as learning to write a secret code. She also writes about being the best of buddies with her mother and sister for a while (October 14), relating a time when she and Margot share a cramped space in bed and discuss sharing their diaries. She talks of having “lots of fun” one Monday night when Miep and Jan spend the night with them and they have a nice dinner together.

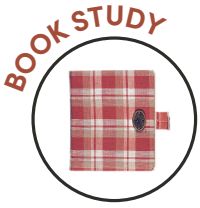
#### Analysis:

- Consider the story that Mr. van Dan tells about what happened between him and Mr. Goldschmidt, the Franks' landlord. What does the story reveal about the preparations that the Van Daans and Franks had made?

The story shows how he and the elder Franks had carefully planned their escape, even concocting an elaborate story and staging “clues” that would put people off their scent. Mr. van Daan planted the seeds of a story that explained the Franks' sudden disappearance, and he verified that the story had circulated. All of this shows how the heads of the two families worked together to try to keep each other's families safe. They must have given much thought to the details of their escape plan.

- On Peter's 16th birthday in November, Anne writes that one of the biggest surprises comes when Mr. van Daan reports that the English landed in Tunis, Algiers, Casablanca, and Oran, locations in northern Africa. Mr. van Daan and the others believe that it's “the beginning of the end” of the war. However, Winston Churchill, the British prime minister, disagrees. What does he say? How is it different, and what does he want people to understand?

According to Anne's diary entry, Winston Churchill says, “This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.” While the people in the Annex think, or at least hope, that the landing in northern Africa may lead to an end of the war soon, Churchill warns that there is a long road ahead. He wants people to have realistic expectations. He wants them to know that they cannot expect liberation and peace soon. There will be much suffering before the end, but there is hope. People who have been suffering for so long, including those hiding in the Annex, are so anxious for the end of the war that they may be too optimistic, too hopeful that the end is coming sooner than it actually will.



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#### Analysis (continued):

- The Franks and the Van Daans have clearly committed themselves to each other's safety and well-being. However, Anne writes of many conflicts between the two families living together in the Secret Annex. Why are there likely so many conflicts between members of the two families?

Answers will vary, but responses may include the fact that the two families are under a great deal of stress given their current, very unfortunate situation. Both families have been forced to go into hiding to protect themselves from the Nazis. They've left their homes, many of their belongings, and their lives behind. They now live in very close quarters with other people as though they were family. They share everything with these other people, and they have little privacy. These factors are likely to cause dissension and discord.

#### Personal Connection:

- Anne often writes about feeling that she's treated unfairly by others in the Annex. Have you ever felt unfairly singled out by a parent, teacher, or another person? What happened, and how did you handle it? Do you think your feelings were justified? Why, or why not?

Student answers will vary.