



Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl

Discussion Guide #3

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.

DIARY ENTRIES: August 10, 1943 – January 6, 1944 (first entry)

Comprehension:

- What kinds of things does Anne do that her mother calls the “art of living”?

Anne figures out ways to get through unpleasant things quickly. For instance, when she must eat something she doesn't like, she pretends that it's delicious, avoids looking at it, and it's quickly gone. She finds getting up in the mornings disagreeable, so she leaps out of bed, gets a sniff of fresh air through a crack in the window, and strips the bed as quickly as possible so that she's not tempted to crawl back under the covers.
- What has now happened to Anne's beloved Westertoren clock? What effect does this have on the people living in the Annex?

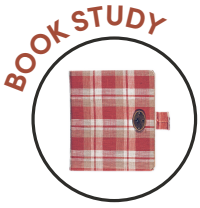
The bells have been taken away to be melted down so the metal can be used for the war. Without the bells chiming the time, no one in the Annex knows the exact time of day or night.
- What “wonderful” news does Anne report in her diary entry on September 10, 1943?

Italy has surrendered to the Allies in the war. The British forces had landed in Naples, Italy, on September 3, and a truce was signed that same day.
- On November 3, 1943, Anne writes about what Pim did to help her and Margot “take our minds off matters as well as to develop them.” What does he do for the girls?

He ordered a catalog of courses from a correspondence school. When Margot was unable to find a course that interested her, Pim chose a trial lesson in Latin for her. After Margot tried the course, she was very enthusiastic about it, and they ordered the entire course. For Anne, Pim asked Mr. Kleiman to bring a children's Bible. Though they are Jewish, he and Anne think that reading the Bible could be a learning experience, or a “new project,” for her.
- What happens to Anne's beloved fountain pen? Why has her pen been so important to her?

Anne accidentally throws her pen in the stove when she's cleaning up. Nothing of it is left except the pocket clip. The fountain pen, a gift from her beloved grandmother when Anne was nine years old, was one of Anne's prized possessions. She took it to school with her when she was ten, and her teacher let her use it for her schoolwork. She took it with her, in a brand-new case, when she went to the Jewish Lyceum a couple of years later. It was one of the possessions she took with her to the Annex, at age thirteen. There, she used it to write many diary entries. (NOTE: Anne references this same fountain pen in passing early in her diary on June 21, 1942, when she tells the story of writing her Chatterbox essay for her teacher, Mr. Keesing. The discussion of its demise here on November 11, 1943, could be explored as being symbolic of the passing away of the old Anne's previous, carefree existence. As Anne writes, her fountain pen was “cremated.”)
- On Saturday, November 27, 1943, Anne writes about a dream she had. What happened, who was there, and how does it make Anne feel?

Anne dreams about her old friend, Hanneli. In her dream, Hanneli is dressed in rags and begging for Anne's help. The dream brings up feelings of guilt in Anne—she feels regret as she reflects on mistreating Hanneli in the past. Anne wonders why she herself has been chosen to live in relative comfort, while Hanneli is likely in a concentration camp, where she will probably die.



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DIARY ENTRIES: August 10, 1943 – January 6, 1944 (first entry)

Comprehension (continued):

- After having re-read portions of her diary, Anne confesses, on January 2, 1944, that she's a little shocked. What upsets her about what she's written, and how does she explain it?

Anne is shocked by how often she's written such hateful things about her mother. She explains that she's clearly been seeing things only from her own perspective, not considering how she may have also said and done hurtful things. She says that she could easily have written "over and done with" on many of those entries. Even so, Anne still feels a distance between her and her mother. And her conscience is soothed by the fact that she had only written these negative thoughts and not expressed them out loud to her mother.

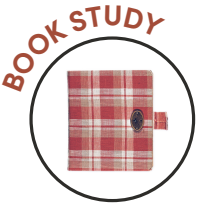
- In Anne's very next diary entry on January 6, 1944, she returns to the subject of her mother. What does she say about her mother?

Anne says that she's finally figured out what's wrong with her mother. She says that her mother told her and Margot that she thinks of them as friends more than daughters. Anne doesn't like this because she wants her mother to set a good example for her, not to be her "friend."

Analysis:

- Compare Anne's opinion of Mr. Dussel, her roommate, with her opinion of Mr. Kleiman, one of their helpers. What does Anne say in her diary to support your conclusions?

Answers will vary but may mention that Anne thinks Mr. Dussel is selfish and whiny, but that Mr. Kleiman is uncomplaining and generally wonderful. On August 10, Anne relates the story of how Mr. Dussel puts everyone in danger "for the umpteenth time." This time, he had Miep bring him a banned book, one that was anti-Mussolini (dictator of Italy, and Hitler's ally). If Miep, who'd had a run-in with an SS officer, had been found with the book, things could have gone badly for everyone. Anne also describes Mr. Dussel walking around with an "air of propriety" and then scowling and loudly stamping away when he can't get something he wants from the office. On the one-year anniversary of his coming to live in the Annex, Anne says Mr. Dussel misses the opportunity to thank everyone for having unselfishly taken him in. Anne points out that, even though he gave a beautiful cake to Mrs. van Daan and Mrs. Frank for Hanukkah, Mr. Dussel had asked Miep to bake it. Anne writes, "On top of all the work she has to do!" On the other hand, Anne adores Mr. Kleiman. On September 10, 1943, she tells the bad news of Mr. Kleiman's illness, that he'll need surgery and a long stay in a hospital. Anne says that he remains "unfailingly cheerful and amazingly brave" even though he's sick and in pain. She says that her mother is right when she says, "When Mr. Kleiman enters a room, the sun begins to shine."



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Analysis (Continued):

- Overall, what is the mood among the residents of the Secret Annex during this period of time? How is Anne feeling during these months in hiding?

The overall mood for much of this part of Anne's diary is gloomy and depressing. There's a lot of arguing and discontent among the residents of the Secret Annex. On September 16, Anne writes that relationships among them are "getting worse all the time." Dinners are nearly silent. Anne is taking medicine for her anxiety and depression, and she writes that she and everyone else have practically forgotten how to laugh. On September 29, Anne writes that there is "trouble brewing with the Van Daans." Even Pim is furious, believing the Van Daans are cheating them out of their fair share of food. Anne writes about hard feelings toward her mother. On November 8, Anne says that she's "currently in the middle of a depression." She talks about her fear, how she lies in bed thinking of the very real possibility that she'll be discovered and taken away. On November 17, she writes that Mr. Kleiman is bedridden and Bep is unable to come due to an outbreak of diphtheria among her family at home. These events have "the house rocking on its foundations." Anne has sad dreams, and she worries about other people who are suffering and dying. She also gets a bad case of the flu. Towards the end of December, Anne envies their helpers, who have normal lives outside of the Annex and can go outside into the brisk air and visit friends and family.

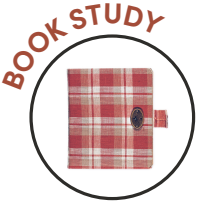
- On Monday evening, November 8, 1943, Anne describes how she sees herself and the others in hiding. Describe the figurative language that she uses and its effect.

Anne uses an extended metaphor that compares the eight people hiding in the Annex to a patch of blue sky surrounded by dark, threatening clouds. She sees the dangerous clouds moving in on them, and as the clouds tighten around them, everyone is pulled closer together, running into each other. The clouds have cut them off from the fighting below them, but they've also cut them off from the beauty above. Anne cries out for the ring to open up and let them all out, but it's impenetrable. This extended metaphor emphasizes the helplessness, fear, and despair that everyone in the Annex is feeling. It helps explain why there may be so much discord among those living in such close quarters in the Annex.

Personal Connection:

- On December 24, 1943, Anne expresses feelings that she thinks make her seem ungrateful. She writes them in her diary rather than saying them out loud. What method do you prefer when expressing your personal, unpleasant thoughts? Would you rather write them down or talk about them with someone?

Student answers will vary.



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DIARY ENTRIES: January 6, 1944 (second entry) – February 23, 1944

Comprehension:

- Anne has very vivid dreams. What three people does she write about showing up in her dreams, and what do these three people mean to Anne?

Anne dreams of her grandmother, her friend Hanneli, and Peter Schiff. Her grandmother is like a guardian angel in Anne's dreams. Hanneli represents the suffering of all her Jewish friends and Jewish people in general. Peter Schiff is the boy whom Anne calls her "one true love."
- How has Anne's attitude toward the Van Daans changed, as she describes in her diary entry on January 22, 1944?

Anne says that she has stopped looking at all of the many arguments with the Van Daans from her own family's point of view. She thinks that, if her family had been more patient and better able to deal with other people's flaws, things wouldn't have gotten so negative. She wants to look at the situation independently, unbiased by her family's point of view. While she still thinks her family is right on the issues, she thinks that much of the discord could have been avoided if her family had dealt with the situation better.
- In her diary entry on January 28, 1944, what does Anne express that she finds so annoying about living in the Annex?

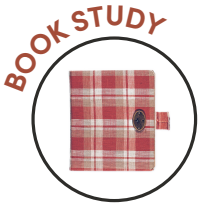
Anne finds it annoying that everyone tells the same stories over and over again, ones that they've all heard a thousand times. She says that there's no chance of anything new being brought up as a topic of discussion amongst those in the Annex.
- In what ways does Anne say that many Dutch people are being unselfish and generous?

People are working in resistance groups, such as Free Netherlands, which helps people find hiding places and provides them with financial assistance. These people risk their own lives to help others, much as the Franks' own generous helpers do. Anne says their helpers never say that they feel burdened and that they take the time to talk and visit with all the people hiding in the Annex. Anne also notes that they remain cheerful, and they're always ready and willing to help.
- By February 18, 1944, Anne thinks that her life in the Annex has "improved greatly." What's changed her outlook on life in the Annex?

Since Anne has developed a budding relationship with Peter, she feels that she has something to look forward to each day—seeing him and talking to him. She feels a beautiful friendship building between them.
- What does Anne believe that she and Peter bond over on February 23, 1944?

She feels that they silently bond over an appreciation of nature, which they observe together as they look out the window of the attic. She writes that neither of them wanted to break the spell with words.
- What does Anne believe is the best "solace for every sorrow"?

She believes that experiencing the beauty of nature can bring comfort to all who suffer.



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DIARY ENTRIES: January 6, 1944 (second entry) – February 23, 1944

Analysis:

- On February 12, 1944, Anne says that she is longing for something. On February 14, she says that a small part of her problem has been resolved. What was she likely longing for, and how was her problem resolved?

Anne was likely longing to have a connection with someone else. She may have been longing for a friend or even a little romance. Her longing is somewhat satisfied by Peter confiding in her about an incident involving Mr. Dussel. Anne listens to him attentively and feels glad that she has found someone else living in the house who flies into rages as she sometimes does. She's happy to have "a strong feeling of fellowship" with Peter.

- What does Anne mean, as she writes on February 16, 1944, that Peter has an "inferiority complex"?
- What is the significance of Anne addressing Peter directly at the end of her diary entry on February 23, 1944?

She means that Peter unjustifiably has a low opinion of himself. She first mentions Peter's inferiority complex after he expresses to her that he feels like a "worthless bum." Later, she uses the term to describe how Peter always thinks "he's so stupid and we're so smart." She wants to point out how, even though she can help him with things like French, he is much better at things like English and geography.

Anne has always addressed her diary entries to an imaginary friend named Kitty. Addressing her thoughts to Peter in her diary suggests that she believes she may have found a real person to whom she can confide. Even so, she doesn't express her thoughts directly to Peter, indicating that she's hopeful, but not yet sure, that she can express herself openly without judgment.

Personal Connection:

- On January 12, 1944, Anne writes that she's "currently going through a dance and ballet craze." What's a craze you've gone through in which you've been all-consumed with a certain topic or activity? Explain.

Student answers will vary.