

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl

Discussion Guide #4

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: February 27, 1944 – March 22, 1944

Comprehension:

- What event does Anne write about on March 1, 1944, that distracts her from her personal worries? What's different about this event as compared to similar ones from the past?

There's been another break-in. However, this time it appears that the burglar must have had a key, for they'd clearly gotten in through a locked door, leaving no sign of forced entry.
- What does Peter reveal to Anne about his family? How does this make Anne feel?

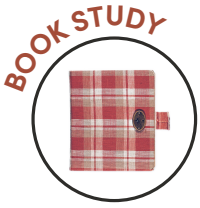
Peter tells Anne about how his parents are always fighting and how much his parents upset him all the time. On March 6, Anne says that ever since Peter confided in her, she's felt responsible for him, as though his problems with his parents are her own. She feels that she must help him, but she doesn't know how to do so. She writes, "Oh, Peter, if only I could help you, if only you would let me! Together we could banish our loneliness, yours and mine!"
- How does Anne feel when she looks into the candle on March 3, and why?

Anne feels calm and happy when she looks into the candle. She feels that her grandmother is in the candle and that her grandma is watching over and protecting her.
- Anne says that she has a different outlook than her mother about how to deal with sadness and feelings of discouragement and despondence. How does Anne feel differently than her mother?

In the face of melancholy, Anne's mother advises thinking about the suffering of others and being happy not to be among them. Anne thinks this is unhelpful and hurtfully dismissive. On March 7, Anne reiterates that she does not subscribe to her mother's viewpoint. Instead, she believes that getting outside and experiencing beauty is the remedy to melancholy. She thinks that dwelling on others' suffering would just immerse someone in it and blind him or her to the real beauty in life. Anne suggests that finding happiness is contagious. She says, "A person who's happy will make others happy."
- How does Anne feel about her life before she went into hiding?

Anne feels as though her life before she went into hiding was unreal. She talks about her life then as "heavenly" because she was popular with her peers and her teachers and spoiled by her parents. But she thinks of her past self as being shallow. Though she wouldn't mind returning to that life for a short while, she ultimately thinks she would long for something more meaningful and sincere.
- On March 10, Anne cites the proverb, "Misfortunes never come singly." What misfortunes does she describe?

First, Miep is sick with a cold. Second, Mr. Kleiman is still out sick, so Bep is left to do everything on her own. Third, a man whom Anne calls "Mr. M" has been arrested, which is not only terrible for him and his family, but also for those in the Annex—Mr. M was their supplier of potatoes, butter, and jam. Finally, Anne mentions that there has been another scare in the Annex. An unknown person knocked on the wall next door, making everyone "nervous and gloomy."



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Comprehension (Continued):

- Why does Anne have a perfumed handkerchief over her nose and mouth on March 14, 1944? What has led to the situation?

Anne has a perfumed handkerchief over her nose and mouth as a precautionary measure because lunch will consist of potatoes and old kale that is very smelly. She says that the kitchen smells like a mixture of “spoiled plums, rotten eggs, and brine.” They’re stuck eating such unappetizing food because the people who provided them with food coupons in the past were arrested, and without the coupons, they have no cooking fats. Additionally, since Miep and Mr. Kleiman are sick again, Bep is having trouble keeping up with shopping, so the food is “wretched.”

- With whom does Anne begin a written correspondence? What’s the nature of their correspondence?

Anne shares notes and letters between herself and her sister Margot. At first, Anne says that the notes are “just for fun.” Later, the notes take on a deeper tone. Anne shares letters from Margot that express Margot’s support and understanding about Anne’s growing relationship with Peter. Anne writes to Margot about feeling guilty due to her budding relationship with Peter, worrying that Margot would be jealous. Margot assures Anne that she shouldn’t feel bad.

Analysis:

- How does Anne demonstrate her lack of confidence in her new relationship with Peter?

Anne wavers between believing that Peter is as interested in her as she is in him and thinking that he feels little for her but annoyance. She’s miserable when he seems to ignore or avoid her, as when he didn’t join her in the attic on February 28. On March 6, she admits to living from one encounter with Peter to the next, always hoping to find that he’s “dying to see” her. She also talks about worrying that she’s being a nuisance to Peter, and when it appears to Anne that he’s angry with her, she feels “wretched and sad.” She says that she constantly asks herself if she’s bothering him too much, if she talks too much about serious subjects, and if she’s just imagined that he likes her. Other times, she’s a bit more confident. On March 22, she writes, “I’m sure now that Peter loves me too; I just don’t know in what way.”

- On March 16, Anne says, “For the first time in ages, Jan gave us some news of the outside world.” What do Jan’s entertaining stories reveal about life outside the Annex?

Jan’s stories reveal that things are hard for just about everyone in Amsterdam, especially when it comes to food. He tells of the limited variety of food he’s been eating, which shows that there’s likely little other available food, such as a wider assortment of vegetables or any meat or fish. Jan also tells the story about the issue of Miep’s “doctor” being busy with so many sick patients. He says, “These days there’re too many patients and too few doctors.” This reveals that many people outside the Annex are ill and suffering, and they’re getting little health care because the remaining doctors are overwhelmed.

Personal Connection:

- What makes you feel calm and happy when everything else in life seems out of your control? Why do you think this item, ritual, person, or place is able to reduce your stress?

Student answers will vary.



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DIARY ENTRIES: March 23, 1944 – April 16, 1944

Comprehension:

- What has Anne learned about how to avoid arguments with Mr. and Mrs. van Daan?

Anne says that agreeing with Mr. van Daan, listening quietly to what he has to say, and not saying much are good ways to get along with him. Most importantly, she finds it useful to respond to his “teasing and corny jokes” with a joke of her own. Anne thinks Mrs. van Daan responds best to honesty and openness, even in disagreements. Anne says that Mrs. van Daan also responds well to people openly admitting when they are in the wrong.

- What does Anne believe the adults in the Annex do too much of?

On March 27, 1944, Anne writes that she thinks the adults talk and argue about politics and the war's progress too much. She says they listen to the radio from 8:00 in the morning until as late as 11:00 at night. They listen to broadcasts from the German "Wehrmacht News" and the English BBC, and they've recently begun listening to special air raid announcements. With the round-the-clock air raids these days, Anne thinks it's too much.

- What information does the Dutch cabinet minister share that makes Anne see her diary in a new light?

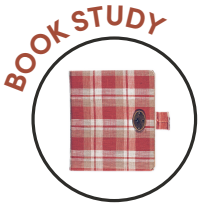
The Dutch cabinet minister Mr. Bolkestein announces that after the war, there would be a collection of people's diaries and letters to preserve the history of what happened to people during this time. In the past, Anne had seen her diary as just personal, but now she says it might be interesting to publish a novel about the Secret Annex. She says that people might one day be interested to know how they lived and what was going on around them during the war.

- Why do you think Anne writes more about the state of affairs outside of the Secret Annex in much of her diary entry on March 29, 1944?

After Anne learns about the plans to create a collection of diaries and letters to preserve the history of the time period, she writes about things like how frightening the air raids are. Anne addresses the epidemics raging all around them and the food shortages and widespread hunger the Dutch people are experiencing. She writes about all the burglaries and how people have had to adjust to the reality that their belongings might be stolen if they step away from their homes for even a few minutes. She details the outrageous cost of things like shoes, which are sold on the black market. These topics are the types of things Anne likely feels will be of interest to people reading her diary for historical information.

- What are “food cycles,” and what is the current food situation in the Annex?

On April 3, Anne explains that “food cycles” are periods of time when they must survive primarily on one type of dish or kind of vegetable. They have gone through cycles in which they primarily ate endive, and later, tomatoes or sauerkraut. They're currently going through a period with no vegetables. Aside from some rotten carrots, turnip greens, leftover beet salad, and potatoes, they eat mostly brown beans, split-pea soup, potatoes with dumplings, potato kugel, and then it's back to brown beans. She says there are brown beans in everything, including the bread. Their high point of the week is a slice of liverwurst and a little jam on a piece of unbuttered bread.



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Comprehension (Continued):

- What are Anne's hobbies and interests, as she writes on Thursday, April 6, 1944? What are her favorite and least favorite school subjects?

Her favorite hobby is writing, but she considers it more than a hobby. She enjoys constructing genealogical charts of European royal families, studying history, learning about Greek and Roman mythology, and reading. Her interests include movie stars and family photos, and she loves art history, especially historical writers, poets, and painters. She enjoys most of her school subjects, especially history, but she doesn't enjoy math.

- Why is the break-in on Tuesday, April 11, 1944, particularly upsetting for Anne and the others?

The break-in at the warehouse was especially frightening because the commotion resulted in police coming to investigate. When the men went to keep watch, they encountered the brazen burglars and tried to scare them away. Someone shined a light into the warehouse where the men from the Annex had gone, but the men managed to get back to the Annex and behind the bookcase. Everyone sat in total darkness and silence as they waited for the police. They heard footsteps in the house, in the private office, in the kitchen, and then on the stairs. They heard the bookcase rattling. Then, they heard footsteps going back down the stairs. But a light was left shining right outside the bookcase. Afraid that someone was watching and would hear them move about, everyone lay down on the floor to sleep. After the incident was over, Anne recounts, "None of us have ever been in such danger as we were that night . . . the police were right at the bookcase."

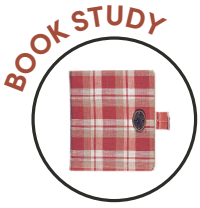
- What momentous event does Anne write about on Sunday, April 16, 1944?

She writes about her first kiss. After spending the evening with Peter, she was standing beside him as he was getting ready to go on his nightly round of the building. He kissed her through her hair, half on her left cheek and half on her ear.

Analysis:

- On March 25, 1944, Anne writes, "You never realize how much you've changed until after it's happened." What does she mean by this?

As Anne views her current self, she realizes that she's "drastically" different than she used to be and thinks she has changed for the better. She has a more independent view of the world and the people around her. For instance, she no longer believes that her family is always in the right with respect to the ongoing quarrels between the Franks and the Van Daans. She feels more content with who she is and what she wants in life.



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Analysis (Continued):

- What turning point occurs on April 5, 1944, in how Anne views her current situation and the future? What do you think helps Anne come to this new understanding?

Anne describes that she's been reluctant to continue her studies, given how preoccupied she was with Peter and how distant the end of the war still seemed. But she now realizes that she must continue her studies. On Saturday night, she began to feel very miserable, and she cried and cried in her room that night. Afterward, she writes, "And now it's really over." She realizes that she must continue working "to keep from being ignorant" because she wants to become a journalist one day. She wants to do more with her life than get married and have children. Anne likely reaches this new understanding because her fit of sobbing probably helps her release some feelings she's been holding in. After she's let her feelings out, she sees more clearly what's important to her and how she can work toward her goal.

Personal Connection:

- When Anne reflects on how much she's changed in the span of about two years, she says, "Inwardly, outwardly, nothing's the same." Reflect on your own life. How have you changed over the last two years, and how have you stayed the same? What stands out to you?

Student answers will vary.