

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl

Discussion Guide #5

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: April 17, 1944 – May 22, 1944

Comprehension:

- On April 17, 1944, what does Anne feel doubtful about, and what is she wondering about?

Anne wonders if her parents would approve of her spending time sitting on the divan kissing Peter. She wonders what Margot and her own friends would say. She defiantly writes, "Why shouldn't we kiss each other in times like these?" But even so, she confesses to feeling doubts, and she thinks that maybe she should tell Father.
- On April 21, 1944, Anne writes, "Here we've been going from one disaster to the next." What is she talking about?

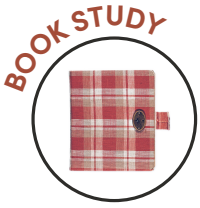
After recently having gone through the big scare, the event which led to their doors having to be reinforced, Mr. van Maaren, who had caused trouble before, is causing trouble again. While Anne thinks it's likely that he's the one who stole potato flour from them, he's trying to pin the blame on Bep, who is furious. Everyone in the Annex is "in an uproar."
- How has Mr. Dussel reacted to the new security measures in the Annex?

On April 25, 1944, Anne explains that all the recent security measures since the break-in incident have set Mr. Dussel at odds with the other men in the Annex. The security measure that most upsets him is that no windows can be propped open with a stick at night. Dussel says he'd rather live without food than without air. Additionally, Dussel is no longer allowed to go down to Mr. Kugler's office on Saturdays or Sundays for fear that he may be heard by the manager of Keg's next door. But when Dussel went anyway, Mr. van Daan was infuriated, and even Mr. Frank got upset.
- On May 2, with Peter's approval, Anne tells her father about her relationship with Peter. How does Mr. Frank initially respond to Anne's confession, and how does his response change? What does Anne decide to do?

Mr. Frank tells Anne that he doesn't think what she and Peter are doing is wrong. Even so, he thinks they must be careful because they live in such close quarters. Later, he amends his response, telling Anne that after thinking about it more, he wants Anne to stop going upstairs to visit Peter so often. Father talked to Peter about the issue, too. Anne decides that she's not going to follow her father's advice, and that she's going to continue going upstairs to be with Peter.
- How does Anne sometimes see her life in hiding?

On May 3, 1944, Anne describes that she sees her life in the Annex as a "good beginning to an interesting life." To keep herself from falling into despair, she tries to view her life in hiding as an "interesting adventure, full of danger and romance," one that provides fodder for her writing.
- What does Anne reveal about her family's past? What does Anne feel about living such a life?

Both Anne's father and mother grew up comfortably—Mr. Frank was born into a wealthy family, and Mrs. Frank was born into a well-off family. Though the money has since been lost, both parents grew up with a rather extravagant lifestyle. They attended fancy parties and enjoyed the finer things in life. Anne thinks it would be nice to have "a little money" so that after the war, she could travel to Paris and London and study the languages and art history. She has dreams of seeing the world, meeting fascinating people, and wearing gorgeous dresses.



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Comprehension (Continued):

- What news causes Anne and the others "great sorrow and dismay," as she relates on May 22, 1944?
Anne shares that anti-Semitism is cropping up in unexpected places in the Netherlands. She's heard that some people are saying that Jewish people who had immigrated from Germany should be sent back after the war. Anne loves Holland and wants to become a citizen. She thinks it's unfair that all Jewish people are being blamed for the bad behavior of a few, something that doesn't happen when non-Jewish people behave in the exact same ways.

Analysis:

- On May 16, Anne says that they've reverted to leaving the windows open at night. Previously, she'd written about how Mr. Dussel was so upset about not being able to do so in the wake of the big break-in. Why do you think they've likely gone back to opening the windows?
When people are so cooped up, they may feel a strong need to get some fresh air. Even though it's dangerous to open the windows at night, it's easy to convince oneself to relax precautions when time passes and a perceived danger is no longer an immediate threat.
- On May 16, Anne writes a "Systematic Survey of Courses and Reading Matter" of the members of their Annex family. What insights into life in the Annex and the people living there does Anne's list provide?
It's apparent that people in the Annex spend a lot of time reading and/or studying. Most people study languages, including English, French, German, Dutch, and Latin. Mr. Dussel also studies Spanish, although Anne suggests that he's not making much progress in his language studies. As usual, Anne's description of Mr. Dussel indicates her disdain for him. Both Anne and Margot have an extensive list of subjects that they're studying. Margot studies the highest number of subjects. She "reads everything" and is taking correspondence courses in several subject areas, such as trigonometry, geometry, mechanics, physics, chemistry, biology, bookkeeping, geography, history, and economics. She likes to read books about religion and medicine, which likely indicates some of Margot's hopes for her future. By contrast, Anne prefers biographies and books about history. Both girls likely have a busy schedule of schoolwork, and they're probably quite smart and devoted to their studies. Peter's courses suggest that he's more interested in "worldly" topics, like economics and geography. He's interested in working with his hands, as indicated by his woodworking course.

Personal Connection:

- When Anne is "down in the dumps," she reminds herself that her life is just beginning and that she has many blessings. What do you do when you're feeling down, and what positive things could you list about yourself and your life that might help you feel better?

Student answers will vary.



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DIARY ENTRIES: May 25, 1944 – August 1, 1944 + Afterword

Comprehension:

- On May 25, 1944, Anne says, "The world's been turned upside down." What does she mean?

Anne says that the best, most decent people are being arrested and sent to concentration camps and prisons, while the "lowest of the low," the Nazis, rule over everyone. She shares that in the morning, Mr. van Hoesen, the man who delivered potatoes to the office, had been arrested. He was hiding two Jewish people in his house. Anne says that the Jews he was hiding are once again "balancing on the edge of an abyss." On May 26, she shares that the event has made everyone in the house even more frightened. The police had forced the door at Mr. van Hoesen's home, and they all know that this could just as easily happen in their own hiding place.

- What is Anne's new "prescription for gunfire jitters," and how well does it work?

On June 2, 1944, Anne writes that when the shooting is loud, she runs up and down the wooden staircase. She says the noise from running and falling, along with the resulting scratches, distract enough from the gunfire that you won't even hear it. She says she's used this "prescription" multiple times "with great success."

- What momentous, historical event does Anne write about on June 6, 1944? How do the people in the Annex react to the news?

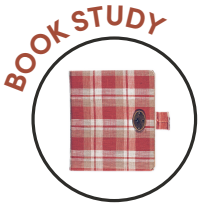
June 6, 1944, also known as D-Day, was the day the Allied powers invaded the coast of France. After hearing the news in the morning, the people living in the Annex conclude that it was just another trial landing, as had happened two years previously. However, it soon becomes clear that it's the real thing this time. Then, there's a "huge commotion" in the Annex, as everyone is filled with new hope that the war would finally come to an end, and they would be freed. Anne tries to be realistic, though. She writes that she knows there is a long road ahead, but she feels that "friends are on the way."

- What does Anne believe about finding true happiness and satisfaction in life, as she expresses in her diary entry of July 6, 1944?

Anne believes that happiness and true satisfaction must be earned and that they cannot be achieved by laziness and taking the "easy" path. She wishes she could help Peter understand this.

- On July 15, 1944, Anne reflects on her feelings and behavior in regard to Peter. What does she think, and what does she admit about herself and Peter?

On July 15, 1944, Anne reflects on her feelings and behavior in regard to Peter. She feels that she made a mistake by using physical intimacy to get closer to him because it ruled out other types of friendship. She confesses that she had concocted an image of Peter that was not exactly accurate, and that she saw him as a conquest, not the other way around. Now, she thinks that their time together leaves Peter feeling happy and satisfied, but it leaves her feeling like she'd like to start all over again and do things differently.



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Comprehension (Continued):

- What does Anne mean when she refers to herself as “a bundle of contradictions” on July 21, 1944, and on August 1, 1944?

Anne's behavior is often contradictory as she tends to debate and needs to have the last word. Anne also believes she's a bundle of contradictions because she's “split in two” between her inner and outer selves. Her outer self is bubbly, superficial, and lighthearted, which can be amusing to others for a while. But Anne's inner self is very different. She's “deeper,” more serious, and introspective, the opposite of her public persona. Anne doesn't let this side of herself be shown because she's afraid that others will mock her. She wishes that she could let this part of herself shine through more because she thinks it's the better part of herself.

- What happened on the morning of August 4, 1944?

An SS sergeant, Karl Josef Silberbauer, and three members of the Dutch Security Police arrived in a car at the hiding place at 263 Prinsengracht. They arrested all eight people hiding in the Annex and two of the helpers, Mr. Kleiman and Mr. Kugler.

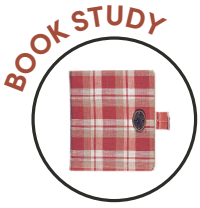
Analysis:

- On May 26, 1944, Anne writes about being more miserable than she's been in months. What is at the heart of her misery? Is anything that she writes about surprising?

Anne and the others in the Annex can never escape the terrible situation they are in, as their helpers are often able to. She and the others live in constant fear of being caught, especially since the recent incidents with the break-in and the arrest of Mr. van Hoven. There are some unexpected revelations in Anne's diary entry. One of the negative things that Anne references is her “disappointment in Peter,” something that she hadn't specifically referenced before. Additionally, she talks about tension between the people in hiding and their helper Miep. She hadn't talked about that in her diary before either. Anne says that Miep suspected that the people in hiding believed she and the other helpers were “infected with the current anti-Semitism.” Offended, she confronted Mr. Frank, who assured her that was not the case.

- On July 8, 1944, Anne writes about a day filled with strawberries. At the beginning of the second paragraph of this entry, Anne refers to herself in the third person. What does this show about how Anne sees the scene she's describing?

When Anne uses the pronoun “she” to describe herself, it shows how she's looking down on the scene and seeing it as it may have looked from the outside—like a normal day shared by family and friends as they make strawberry jam. It's alien to her because her life is not, and has not been, normal. She and the others living in the Annex have been hidden away and separated from normal scenes of everyday life like this for about two years.



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Analysis (Continued):

- On July 15, 1944, Anne writes, "I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart." How do you think Anne was able to maintain that viewpoint given the horrors all around her?

Anne was able to focus on the good that she saw in people, choosing not to think of all the misery around her. She revered the friends and helpers who took care of the Van Daans, Mr. Dussel, and her family. Anne considered them examples of the beauty in the world. Though at times Anne's innocence allowed her to hold a romantic view of the world, she understood the harrowing realities of the war. Still, Anne says, "It's utterly impossible for me to build my life on a foundation of chaos, suffering, and death." She chose to believe that "peace and tranquility will return once more."

Personal Connection:

- On June 13, 1944, Anne writes about what she likes and dislikes about Peter. What are some beliefs, behaviors, and traits that you value in a friend? Why are those things important to you?

Student answers will vary.