

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl

Build Background Knowledge

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl details the real-life experiences of Anne Frank and her family, along with a few friends, who remained in hiding during the German occupation of the Netherlands in World War II. Anne's diary begins around her thirteenth birthday and chronicles her thoughts, feelings, dreams, and realities over the course of two years.

Before beginning *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, read the background information below, which provides some historical context for the events that took place before, during, and after Anne went into hiding.



IMAGE:
Anne Frank, 1942, age 13

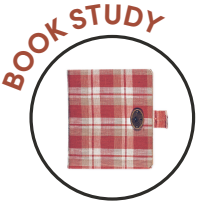
Hitler's Rise to Power

In the early 1900s, Germany was one of the most powerful countries in Europe. But in 1918, World War I ended with a German defeat. The winning nations blamed Germany for the war, and through a treaty signed in 1919, they stripped Germany of its territories, placed limits on the size of Germany's army, and ordered the country to pay for damages they had inflicted on other countries during the war. These punishments weakened Germany's economy and left its people impoverished and humiliated. The German people were angry and felt they were being mistreated.

Germany's instability following World War I resulted in the rise of many nationalist groups, such as the National Socialist German Workers' Party, led by Adolf Hitler. This group, widely known as the Nazi Party, was formed in 1920 and attracted a large following of lower-middle-class German

citizens. Hitler galvanized support from huge groups of people, allowing him to successfully spread his hate and anger. He insisted that Jewish people were to blame for all of Germany's current problems and that Aryans, non-Jewish Caucasians, were the superior race.

Shortly after the worldwide Great Depression began in 1929, Germany's aging president, Paul von Hindenburg, proved he was no longer an effective leader. In early 1933, he appointed Hitler as Chancellor of Germany, giving him legitimate power in the country's government. Almost immediately, Hitler became a dictator and, with the Nazi party, moved aggressively to undo Germany's democracy and implement his plans.



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Continue reading the background information before reading Anne Frank's diary.

Nazi Germany

Hitler's Nazis believed that Aryans were a superior race and that non-Aryan people were inferior, even corrupt. The Nazis embarked on a mission to annihilate people they deemed unworthy. The bulk of their wrath was focused on Jewish people, but they also targeted other groups, such as Romani, Slavs, LGBTQ+ people, Black people, communists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and people with disabilities.

Though Hitler explicitly demonstrated his hatred and extreme ambition, most people didn't believe he'd actually eliminate large groups of people. So in the early years of Hitler's control, many German citizens turned a blind eye to Hitler's efforts. However, there were others who were concerned, took his threats and authority seriously, and left Germany early on. From 1933 to 1939, Hitler restricted—and eventually took away—the basic rights of those Hitler saw as his enemies. The Nazis established anti-Jewish laws that significantly altered the reality of life in Germany and its surrounding countries.

The new laws, called the Nuremberg Laws, were introduced in 1935. This set of laws banned Jewish people from professions, deprived Jewish people of citizenship, and allowed the Nazis to seize Jewish property,

among many other things. In the following years, the Nazi regime created even more laws that increasingly segregated Jewish people from the rest of German society.

In 1941, the violence against Jews escalated. Nazis and the Gestapo, the secret state police, began rounding up Jews in Germany and in countries that Germany's army had invaded, such as the Netherlands. The Nazis sent Jewish people to concentration camps. At these camps, the Nazis either killed people immediately in gas chambers or forced them to perform hard labor. Conditions in the camps were brutal, and the vast majority of the people held in them died of starvation or disease.

The Nazis' systematic persecution of Jews lasted from 1933 until 1945. This genocide, known as the Holocaust, resulted in the death of an estimated six million Jewish people and millions more from other groups targeted by the Nazis.

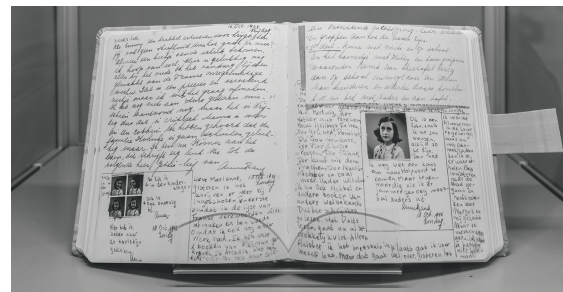


IMAGE: Anne Frank's original diary