

# Before You Read The Play

## The Diary of Anne Frank

### Literary Focus

#### Theme

Plot answers the question "What happens?" Theme answers the question "What does this reveal?" **Theme** is the general idea or insight about human existence that is revealed in a story, poem, or play. It's what the writer is saying about life. Most works of literature have more than one theme; a long work will often reveal many themes. See what themes you discover in this play as you experience with the characters the terror of hiding from enemies who want to destroy you.

### Reading Skills

#### Using Resources

In the following pages you'll find many **resources** that contain facts about the true story of Anne Frank and about the play. Those resources include **maps**, a **time line**, historical **photographs**, and entries from Anne Frank's diary. (The diary is an example of a **primary source**, that is, firsthand information.) As you read, use those background resources to deepen your understanding of what is happening in the play. The time line especially will help you trace what is going on in the war-torn world beyond Anne's attic. The stage design will help you visualize the action of the play.

#### SKILLS FOCUS

#### Literary Skills

Identify and analyze themes.

#### Reading Skills

Use resources to understand the historical background of a play.

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#### INTERNET

Vocabulary  
Activity

Cross-curricular  
Connection

Keyword: LE7 8-4

### Vocabulary Development

These are some of the words you will learn as you read the play:

**conspicuous** (kən·spik'yoo·əs) *adj.*: noticeable. *The Nazis required all Jews to wear a conspicuous yellow Star of David on their clothing.*

**unabashed** (un'ə·basht') *adj.*: unembarrassed. *Anne's unabashed comments sometimes embarrassed her mother.*

**loathe** (lōth) *v.*: hate. *Anne loathed having her mother treat her like a baby.*

**indignantly** (in·dig'nənt·lē) *adv.*: with anger caused by something felt to be unjust. *Anne indignantly claimed she had not been rude.*

**fortify** (fōrt'ə·fī') *v.*: strengthen. *Mr. Dussel took pills to fortify himself.*

**zeal** (zēl) *n.*: great enthusiasm; devotion to a cause. *The Maccabees showed great zeal in their fight against tyranny.*

**tyranny** (tir'ə·nē) *n.*: cruel and unjust use of power. *The Maccabees' fight against tyranny and oppression two thousand years ago still inspires people today.*

**gingerly** (jin'jər'lē) *adv.*: cautiously. *Peter held Anne's gift gingerly, afraid it might jump out and hit him.*

**ostentatiously** (äs'tən·tä'shəs·lē) *adv.*: in a showy way. *Peter held his coat ostentatiously to pretend he was hiding his cat there.*

**appalled** (ə·pöld') *v.* used as *adj.*: horrified. *Dussel's alarming news was met with a moment of appalled silence.*

**disgruntled** (dis·gruntl'd) *v.* used as *adj.*: displeased; annoyed. *Mr. Dussel, disgruntled, listened to the conversation.*

**inarticulate** (in'är·tik'yoo·lit) *adj.*: unable to speak. *Peter was so furious at Dussel that he became inarticulate.*

**forlorn** (fôr·lôrn') *adj.*: abandoned and lonely. *Dussel felt forlorn when Peter and Anne both closed their doors on him.*

**animation** (an'i·mā'shen) *n.*: liveliness. *Anne's animation could both delight and annoy her family.*

**remorse** (ri·môrs') *n.*: deep feeling of guilt. *Mrs. Frank felt remorse for her angry outburst.*

## Background

### Literature and Real Life

“I hope I shall be able to confide in you completely, as I have never been able to do in anyone before, and I hope that you will be a great support and comfort to me.”

So begins the diary of a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl named Anne Frank. Anne's diary opens in 1942 with stories of boyfriends, parties, and school life. It closes two years later, just days before Anne is captured and imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp.

Anne Frank was born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1929. When she was four years old, her family immigrated to Amsterdam, the Netherlands, to escape the anti-Jewish measures being introduced in Germany. In Amsterdam, Otto Frank, Anne's father, managed a company that sold pectin, a substance used in making jams and jellies. Anne and her older sister, Margot, enjoyed a happy, carefree childhood until May 1940, when the Netherlands capitulated

(surrendered) to the invading German army. Anne wrote in her diary about the Nazi occupation that followed:

“After May 1940, good times rapidly fled: first the war, then the capitulation, followed by the arrival of the Germans, which is when the sufferings of us Jews really began. Anti-Jewish decrees followed each other in quick succession. Jews must wear a yellow star, Jews must hand in their bicycles, Jews are banned from trains and are forbidden to drive. Jews are only allowed to do their shopping between three and five o'clock and then only in shops which bear the placard 'Jewish shop.' Jews must be indoors by eight o'clock and cannot even sit in their own gardens after that hour. Jews are forbidden to visit theaters, cinemas, and other places of entertainment. Jews may not take part in public sports. Swimming baths, tennis courts, hockey fields, and other sports grounds are all prohibited to them. Jews may not visit Christians. Jews must go to Jewish schools, and many more restrictions of a similar kind.

So we could not do this and were forbidden to do that. But life went on in spite of it all.”

Soon, however, the situation in the Netherlands grew much worse. As in other German-occupied countries, the Nazis began rounding up Jews and transporting them to concentration camps and death camps, where prisoners died from overwork, starvation, or disease or were murdered in gas chambers. Escaping Nazi-occupied territory became nearly impossible. Like many other Jews



See also the maps on page 443.

trapped in Europe at the time, Anne and her family went into hiding to avoid capture. Others were not so lucky, as Anne knew:

“Countless friends and acquaintances have gone to a terrible fate. Evening after evening the green and gray army lorries [trucks] trundle past. The Germans ring at every front door to inquire if there are any Jews living in the house. If there are, then the whole family has to go at once. If they don’t find any, they go on to the next house. No one has a chance of evading them unless one goes into hiding. Often they go around with lists and only ring when they know they can get a good haul. Sometimes they let them off for cash—so much per head. It seems like the slave hunts of olden times. . . . In the evenings when it’s dark, I often see rows of good, innocent people accompanied by crying children, walking on and on, in the charge of a couple of these chaps,

bullied and knocked about until they almost drop. No one is spared—old people, babies, expectant mothers, the sick—each and all join in the march of death.”

The Frank family and four other Jews lived for more than two years hidden in a few cramped rooms (now known as the Secret Annex) behind Mr. Frank’s office and warehouse. In August 1944, the Nazi police raided their hiding place and sent all eight of its occupants to concentration camps. Of the eight, only Otto Frank survived. Anne died of typhus in a camp in Germany called Bergen-Belsen. She was fifteen years old.

When she began her diary, Anne didn’t intend to show it to anyone unless she found a “real friend.” Through its dozens of translations and the stage adaptation you are about to read, Anne’s diary has found her generations of friends all over the world.

## ANNE FRANK'S LIFE

**June 12:** Anne Frank is born in Frankfurt, Germany.



Anne in 1933.

The Franks decide to leave Germany to escape Nazi persecution. While Mr. Frank looks for a new home in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, the rest of the family stays with relatives in Aachen, Germany.



Anne with her father at Miep Santrouschitz and Jan Gies's wedding.

**Summer:** The Van Pels family (called the Van Daans in Anne's diary) flee Germany for the Netherlands.

**December 8:** Fritz Pfeffer (called Albert Dussel in Anne's diary) flees Germany for the Netherlands.



Anne playing with her friend Sanne Ledermann in Amsterdam.

The Granger Collection, New York.

## WORLD EVENTS

**1929**

**1930 to 1932**

The National Socialist German Workers' (Nazi) party begins its rise to power. The Nazis proclaim the superiority of the German "master race" and blame Jews for the German defeat in World War I and for the troubled economy.

**1933**

**January 30:** The Nazi party leader, Adolf Hitler, becomes chancellor (head of the government) of Germany.

**March 10:** The first concentration camp is established by the Nazis, at Dachau, Germany.

**April:** The Nazis pass their first anti-Jewish law, banning the public employment of Jews.



Adolf Hitler.

**1934**

**1935**

**September 15:** The Nuremberg Laws are passed, denying Jews German citizenship and forbidding marriage between Jews and non-Jews.

**1936**

**October 25:** Germany and Italy form an alliance (the Axis).

**1937**

**1938**

**March 12–13:** The German army invades and annexes Austria.

**September 29:** The Munich Agreement, granting Germany the right to annex part of Czechoslovakia, is drafted and signed by representatives of France, Great Britain, Italy, and Germany.

**November 9–10:** Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass). Led by the SS, the Nazi special police, Germans beat and kill Jews, loot Jewish stores, and burn synagogues.

## ANNE FRANK'S LIFE



Anne, second from left, with friends on her tenth birthday.

The Granger Collection, New York.

**June 12:** Anne receives a diary for her thirteenth birthday.

**July 6:** The Franks go into hiding after Margot receives an order to appear for deportation to a labor camp in Germany. The Van Pels family joins them one week later.

**November 16:** Fritz Pfeffer becomes the eighth occupant of the Secret Annex.

**August 4:** Nazi police raid the Secret Annex; the occupants are sent to concentration camps.

**September:** Mr. Van Pels dies in Auschwitz.

**December 20:** Fritz Pfeffer dies in Neuengamme.

Anne's mother, Edith Frank, dies in Auschwitz. Three weeks later Otto Frank is freed when Auschwitz is liberated by the Soviet army. Anne and Margot die in Bergen-Belsen a few weeks before British soldiers liberate the camp. Peter Van Pels dies in Mauthausen. Mrs. Van Pels dies in Theresienstadt.

## WORLD EVENTS

**1939** **March:** Germany invades and occupies most of Czechoslovakia.

**September 1:** Germany invades Poland; World War II begins. France and Great Britain declare war on Germany two days later.

**1940** **Spring:** Germany invades Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France.

**September 27:** Japan joins the Axis.

**1941** **June 22:** Germany invades the Soviet Union.

**December:** The United States enters the war on the side of the Allied nations (including Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and other countries) after Japan attacks the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor.

**1942** **January:** The "Final Solution" is secretly announced at a conference of Nazi officials: Europe's Jews are to be "exterminated," or murdered. Construction of death camps begins in Poland. Millions of people (Jews and non-Jews) will die in those camps.

**1943**

**1944** **June 6:** D-day. Allied forces land in Normandy, in northern France, and launch an invasion of western Europe.

Bombing of Hiroshima.



**1945** **May 8:** The war in Europe ends with Germany's unconditional surrender to the Allies.

**September 2:** Japan surrenders after the United States drops atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. World War II ends one week later.