

General Discussion

Questions and Activities

Discussion Questions

1. Beginning in July 1942 and continuing for the next 25 months, Anne Frank and her seven companions hid in the secret annex above Otto Frank's office in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam. How do the filmmakers translate the sense of confinement and constriction, about which Anne writes frequently in her diary, into visual terms? In what contrasting ways did Anne and the other annex residents cope with life in hiding? Did Mr. Frank's companions share his view that their ability to hide from the Nazis meant that they were "[L]ucky, really very lucky"? For Anne, what physical spaces and activities provided a sense of freedom and independence within the hiding place?
2. To portray Anne Frank, the producers of the new film adaptation cast Ellie Kendrick, a young British actor, age 17 at the time of the filming, who also appears in the newly released film *An Education*. Though Kendrick reported that she was "absolutely terrified" at the prospect of playing Anne Frank, she went on to explain that her approach to the role was "to peel back the layers of idolization and to think of the characters just as normal people." What details did you find most memorable about Kendrick's portrayal? Most moving? Most startling or unexpected? How does Kendrick dramatize the changes and growth that Anne experienced—as an adolescent, a daughter, a native of Germany, a Jew, and a writer—between the ages of 13 and 15?
3. In her acclaimed new book *Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, the Afterlife* (HarperCollins, 2009), the author and literary critic Francine Prose stresses that Anne Frank's diary is not the "innocent and spontaneous outpourings of a teenager" but rather "a consciously crafted work of literature." According to Prose, "Anne Frank thought of herself not merely as a girl who happened to be keeping a diary, but as a writer." What is the turning point when Anne decides that she wants to publish her diary and share her once-private reflections with the world? At what moments in the film do we see that Anne has begun to think of herself as a writer? How does this change in her perception of herself affect Anne's relationships? How do her companions view Anne and her diary? Do they respect her as a writer?

4. What role did Miep Gies play in protecting Anne Frank and the other annex residents and in preserving Anne's diary? How do you respond to this statement that Gies made: "I don't want to be considered a hero. [I] imagine young people would grow up with the feeling that you have to be a hero to do your human duty. I am afraid nobody would ever help other people, because who is a hero? I was not. I was just an ordinary housewife and secretary." Can you imagine agreeing to put your own life at risk if you had been asked by Otto Frank to hide him and his family?
5. In thinking about Anne Frank's character, Deborah Moggach, the screenwriter of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, made the following observation: "Having recently adapted another iconic book, *Pride and Prejudice*, I reflect that Anne Frank has a lot in common with Jane Austen's heroine. Like Elizabeth Bennet, she's a witty, intelligent girl who rebels against her mother, and whose older sister is more beautiful, obedient and just a bit duller than she is." What is your reaction to the comparison between Anne Frank and Elizabeth Bennet? What other characters in literature or film do you see as kindred spirits of Anne Frank? What figures from life—either contemporary or historical—share Anne Frank's most salient qualities?
6. Anne Frank is widely known for her statement that "people are really good at heart," a line that appears at the end of Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett's stage adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (which opened on Broadway in 1955 and won the Pulitzer Prize the next year). Yet this line comes from a diary entry, dated July 15, 1944, in which Anne also writes: "I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness, I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too, I feel the suffering of millions." Based on your viewing of the film or your reading of the print version of the diary, how would you characterize Anne Frank's view of human nature?

Activities

1. In 2009, the only film footage of Anne Frank known to exist was posted online by the Anne Frank House. Shot in July 1941, this 21-second snippet shows 12-year-old Anne leaning out the window of her house in Amsterdam to look at a bride and groom who were getting married next door. To watch this footage, go to The Anne Frank Channel on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/annefrank> and click on “Anne Frank: the only existing film images.” Does seeing footage of the actual Anne Frank—even for only a few seconds—change your perception of her story? How?
2. If you have seen a previous stage or film adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (such as the 1959 Hollywood film directed by George Stevens), discuss how it is similar to and different from the new MASTERPIECE adaptation. If time permits, bring in the script of the play or a video of the film and share an excerpt with your Book and Film Club. How are Anne and the other annex residents portrayed? In what ways is the work a reflection of the era in which it was created?

Resources

Books

Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition*. Edited by Otto H. Frank and Mirjam Pressler. Translated by Susan Masotty. New York: Puffin, 2002. This edition of the diary restores a significant number of diary entries that were omitted from the original publication.

Frank, Anne. *Tales from the Secret Annex: Fables, Short Stories, Essays, and an Unfinished Novel by the Author of “The Diary of a Young Girl.”* Translated by Michel Mok and Ralph Manheim. New York: Bantam, 1994. This is a complete collection of Anne Frank’s lesser-known writings.

Prose, Francine. *Anne Frank: The Book, the Life, the Afterlife*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. Praised by *The New York Times* as “edifying and entertaining,” this book characterizes Anne Frank’s diary as “a consciously crafted work of literature” written by a brilliant stylist.

Web Sites**MASTERPIECE Classic: *The Diary of Anne Frank***

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/annefrank/index.html>

Explore the making of the most accurate ever adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, get insights from the screenwriter and stars, and find out more about Anne Frank, her family, and legacy.

The Anne Frank Center

<http://www.annefrank.com>

The Anne Frank Center USA, a partner organization of the Anne Frank House, uses the diary and spirit of Anne Frank as unique tools to advance her legacy, to educate young people and communities about the consequences of intolerance, racism and discrimination, and to inspire the next generation to build a world based on mutual respect.

Anne Frank Channel on YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/annefrank>

This video resource is designed to allow viewers to explore the life and meaning of Anne Frank through images. The channel contains the only known existing film footage of Anne Frank (shot during the wedding of her neighbor on July 22, 1941); information about Miep Gies (the woman who made hiding in the Annex possible); and a collection of photos.

Anne Frank House

<http://www.annefrank.org>

The web site of the Anne Frank House, now a museum in Amsterdam, presents a richly illustrated, interactive history of Anne Frank and the hiding place in which she wrote her diary. Links to international traveling exhibitions on Anne Frank and a broad range of activities are also included, along with extensive information on Miep Gies.

The Anne Frank Internet Guide

www.weijima.com/annefrank.html

This guide presents an in-depth collection of Web resources on Anne Frank, with sections on Anne Frank's life, diary, and background; organizations related to Anne and her family; teaching materials; and listings of books, articles, and films.

Facing History and Ourselves

www.facinghistory.org

Known for creating comprehensive curricula on the Holocaust, civil rights, genocide, and human rights, FHAO offers classroom strategies, resources, lesson plans, online modules, and professional development that help classrooms and communities link the past to moral choices today.

Interviews, Reviews and Other Resources**“Anne Frank’s message for modern times”**

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article5429569.ece

In this essay, published in *The Times* of London, Gillian Walnes, director of the Anne Frank Trust, reviews the new film adaptation of Anne Frank’s diary—which she argues “speaks to today’s young people [and] strips Anne of her sainthood”—and discusses the global reach of Anne’s story, along with its potential to challenge stereotypes and foster tolerance.

Miep Gies, Who Helped Hide Anne Frank, Dies At 100

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122476082>

This National Public Radio resource on Miep Gies, the Dutch office worker who hid Anne Frank and her family for two years and preserved the young writer’s diary, includes an obituary along with several radio stories and interviews.

“My part in Anne Frank’s Diary...”

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1104752/My-Anne-Frank-8217-s-Diary--Writer-Deborah-Moggach-insight-stroppy-rude-boy-obsessed-teenager.html>

In this series of journal entries, published in *The Daily Mail* of London, British screenwriter Deborah Moggach describes the emotions she experienced as she adapted Anne Frank’s diary and watched her screenplay being filmed.



ANCHOR BOOKS, A DIVISION OF RANDOM HOUSE, INC., PUBLISHES
THE COMPANION BOOK TO *THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK*.

Credits

The MASTERPIECE CLASSIC
Book & Film Club: *The Diary
of Anne Frank* was produced
by the Educational Outreach
Department of WGBH.

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Manager, Editorial Content
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Associate Manager, Editorial Content
Print Project Director
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Facing History and Ourselves

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