

CLIFFS NOTES on

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**FRANK'S DIARY OF
ANNE FRANK**



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NOTES INC.

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Diary of Anne Frank	Joseph Andrews	The Pearl	

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A NOTE TO THE READER

THESE NOTES ARE NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE TEXT ITSELF OR FOR THE CLASSROOM DISCUSSION OF THE TEXT, AND STUDENTS WHO ATTEMPT TO USE THEM IN THIS WAY ARE DENYING THEMSELVES THE VERY EDUCATION THAT THEY ARE PRESUMABLY GIVING THEIR MOST VITAL YEARS TO ACHIEVE.

These Notes present a clear discussion of the action and thought of the work under consideration and a concise interpretation of its artistic merits and its significance.

They are intended as a supplementary aid to serious students, freeing them from interminable and distracting note-taking in class. Students may then listen intelligently to what the instructor is saying, and to the class discussion, making selective notes, secure in the knowledge that they have a basic understanding of the work. The Notes are also helpful in preparing for an examination, eliminating the burden of trying to reread the full text under pressure and sorting through class notes to find that which is of central importance.

These critical evaluations have been prepared by experts who have had many years of experience in teaching the works or who have special knowledge of the texts. They are not, however, incontrovertible. No literary judgments are. There are many interpretations of any great work of literature, and even conflicting views have value for students and teachers, since the aim is not for students to accept unquestioningly any one interpretation, but to make their own. The goal of education is not the unquestioning acceptance of any single interpretation, but the development of an individual's critical abilities.

The experience of millions of students over many years has shown that Notes such as these are a valuable educational tool and, properly used, can contribute materially to the great end of literature (to which, by the way, the teaching of literature is itself only a subsidiary) — that is, to the heightening of perception and awareness, the extending of sympathy, and the attainment of maturity by living, in Socrates' famous phrase, "the examined life."

THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK NOTES

including

- *Introduction*
- *Historical Background*
- *List of Characters*
- *Critical Commentaries*
 - The First Year
 - The Second Year
- *Character Backgrounds and Fates*
 - Anne Frank
 - Margot Frank
 - Otto Frank
 - Mrs. Frank
 - The Van Daans
 - Mr. Düssel
 - The Dutch "Protectors"
 - Lies
- *Essay Topics*
- *Selected Bibliography*

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ISBN 0-8220-0390-2

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Printed in U.S.A.

1995 Printing

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Cliffs Notes, Inc.

Lincoln, Nebraska

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THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK

Notes

*" . . . ideals, dreams, and
cherished hopes rise within us
only to meet the horrible truth
and be shattered . . . yet in
spite of everything I still believe
that people are really good at heart."*

Anne Frank
July 15, 1944

INTRODUCTION

Anne Frank's *Diary* is not a novel or a tale of the imagination. It is the diary kept by a young Jewish girl for the two years she was forced to remain in hiding by the Nazi persecution of the Jews of Europe. Between June 1942 and August 1944, from Anne's thirteenth birthday until shortly after her fifteenth birthday, Anne Frank recorded her feelings, her emotions, and her thoughts, as well as the events that happened to her, in the diary which her father had given her as a birthday present. Together with her parents and her sister, Margot, the Van Daan family (consisting of a husband, a wife, and a son, Peter, two years older than Anne) and, later on, an elderly dentist named Mr. Düssel, Anne lived in a set of rooms at the top of an old warehouse in Amsterdam, Holland, concealed behind a hidden door and a bookcase. During the day, when people worked in the office and in the warehouse below, Anne and the others had to keep very quiet, but at night they could move around more freely, though of course they could not turn on any lights nor show in any way that the house was inhabited.

The *Diary* is many things at one and the same time. It is an amusing, enlightening, and often moving account of the *process of adolescence*, as Anne describes her thoughts and feelings about herself and the people around her, the world at large, and life in general. It is an accurate record of the way a young girl grows up and matures, in the very special circumstances in which Anne found herself throughout the two years during which she was in hiding. And it is also a vividly terrifying description of *what it was like to be a Jew*—and in hiding—at a time when the Nazis sought to kill *all* the Jews of Europe.

Above all, Anne was an ordinary girl, growing up, and eventually dying, but she was an *ordinary* girl growing up in *extraordinary* times. She loved life and laughter, was interested in history and movie stars, Greek mythology, and cats, writing, and boys. In the few entries which she wrote before the family went into hiding, we discover something of the world of a child growing up in Holland in 1942. Anne went to school, had girl friends and boyfriends, went to parties and to ice-cream parlors, rode her bike, and *chattered* (an understatement) in class. In fact, Anne chattered so much that, as a punishment for her talkativeness, she had to write several essays on the subject of "A Chatterbox." Much of this chatty quality of hers, however, spills over onto the pages of her diary, where we often feel as if she is a good friend who is confiding in us. Although the world of that period is divided from us by more than mere years, Anne's voice is very contemporary, and many of her thoughts and problems are very much like those of any youngster growing up both then and now.

Anne Frank did *not* survive the concentration camps to which she was sent after her little group was discovered. Of all the eight people who hid in the "Secret Annexe" in Amsterdam, only Anne's father survived. The pages of Anne's diary, which the Nazis left scattered on the floor when they arrested the group in hiding, were kept by the two young women who had worked in the office and had faithfully supplied the little group with food and other provisions. When Mr. Frank returned after the war, they gave him the pages of Anne's diary, and he eventually published them. And so, although Anne died, as the Nazis had intended, her spirit lives on, through her *Diary*, stronger and clearer by far than any brute force or blind hatred.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The events recounted in Anne Frank's diary take place during World War II, in which almost all the countries of Europe, as well as the U.S.A. and Japan, were involved to a greater or lesser extent between 1939 and 1945. The reasons for the war are many and varied, and even the historians are not fully in agreement as to the precise causes, some blaming the harsh conditions and economic penalties imposed on Germany after its defeat in World War I, others claiming that it was the weakness of the European countries after Hitler's rise to power in Germany that was the indirect cause. All are agreed, however, that had it not been for Hitler and his policies, the war would *not* have taken place.

In addition to the various military engagements, however, the Nazis were engaged in a systematic attempt to kill off certain sections of the population—primarily Jews and Gypsies—both within Germany and in the countries which they occupied, claiming that they were "racially inferior." The murder of mentally retarded and psychologically disturbed people, as well as homosexuals, was also official Nazi policy. In some cases, these people were made to work as slaves before they were killed, so that the Germans could benefit as much as possible from their labor. To implement this scheme, the Germans established huge "concentration camps," or death camps, throughout Europe. Jews and other people were sent there in cattle trains, and upon arrival, their heads were shaved and their arms were tattooed with numbers; in addition, they were stripped of their clothes and whatever possessions they still had. They were made to work and were subjected to the strictest discipline and the most inhumane conditions before they were gassed in special chambers and their bodies burned. In those parts of Europe which were occupied by the Nazis, but where these methods of killing large numbers of people had *not yet* been established, the Nazis assembled large numbers of Jews and machine-gunned them all as they stood on the edge of huge pits which they had dug themselves, or beside natural, deep ravines, as was the case at Babi Yar, in Russia. In other places, the Nazis herded all the local Jews into the synagogue and then set it on fire.

Throughout World War II, the Nazis devoted considerable thought, equipment, and manpower to the wholesale slaughter of Europe's Jewish population, and by the time the war had ended, they

had succeeded in killing six million of them, two-thirds of the total number of Jews in the world.

How could it come about that one nation regarded itself as *racially superior* to another, to the extent that it felt that it was its *right* and its *duty* to kill all the members of that other nation? How could huge "factories of death," manned by thousands of people, systematically kill off millions of people in the midst of inhabited areas without anyone protesting or even knowing what was happening? How could Hitler, a homicidal maniac, become the ruler of a country whose civilization had produced some of the world's greatest thinkers, writers, composers, and statemen? In order to obtain answers to these questions, we have to go back to the nineteenth century.

Germany was not always one united country. During the Middle Ages, Germany consisted of a series of small kingdoms and principalities, often rivals, and often even at war with one another. The language which they all shared was German, but the people differed on matters of religion, so much so that these differences occasionally erupted into wars between the Catholics and the Protestants. In the mid-nineteenth century, Bismarck (the Chancellor of Prussia, the largest German state) made it his objective to unify the various German states. This he achieved by judicious policies, arranging marriages between various royal families and obtaining treaties which were mutually beneficial to the parties concerned. By the end of the nineteenth century, Germany was united under one monarch, Kaiser Wilhelm I; it possessed colonies in Africa and was ruled by an Emperor (the German term *Kaiser* is derived from the Latin word *Caesar*).

World War I, in which Germany fought against France and England, from 1914 to 1918, was largely a result of the structural weakness of many European states and the growing military and economic strength of Germany. After four years of bitter fighting, Germany was defeated, the Kaiser fled to Holland, and a peace treaty, the Treaty of Versailles, was drawn up. This stripped Germany of its foreign colonies, imposed heavy economic penalties on the country in the form of fines and disarmament, and it changed many of the borders of the countries of Europe. This policy gave rise to severe economic problems in Germany. Hunger and poverty were widespread, and galloping inflation caused prices to rise at a dizzying rate. The middle class, which had been the chief support of the German

Republic, which was established after World War I, became embittered, and many Germans longed for the old autocratic kind of government that had formerly dominated the country.

It was during the years after World War I that Adolf Hitler, a house painter who had experienced the bitterness of defeat as a soldier in the German Army, developed his ideas of the Master Aryan Race, the need to rid Germany of "inferior" peoples, such as Jews and Gypsies, and the need to expand Germany's borders and build a Germany that was militarily strong. He gathered around him a group of people who supported his ideas and used the tactics of bullying and terrorism to obtain publicity and intimidate his opponents. His National Socialist—or Nazi—party advocated the establishment of a totalitarian state, the redistribution of the nation's wealth and the provision of jobs for everybody.

Hitler used inflammatory rhetoric in his speeches, and he was able to arouse huge audiences to hysterical enthusiasm. He claimed that Germany's problems and the decline in its power were the fault of Jews and radicals, and that the German, or Aryan, race was the Master Race, the creators of all civilization, and fitted by *nature* to rule the world. In order for this Master Race to have adequate living space, *Lebensraum*, Hitler intended to expand Germany's frontiers in the East, taking from the lands of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Russia. The inhabitants of those countries, the Slavs, were also "inferior," according to Hitler, fit only either to serve the Master Race as slaves—or to be killed.

Hitler's Nazi party, regarded initially by most Germans as merely a lunatic fringe, began to gain ground and support within Germany after the world's economic depression, which began in 1929. In the German parliament, the *Reichstag*, the Nazis were represented alongside the various other political parties. Hitler continued to fulminate against the Jews, describing them as an alien, inferior race despite their distinguished contribution to German cultural and economic life throughout many centuries. He regarded them as being responsible for all the movements which the Nazis opposed, communism, pacifism, internationalism, and Christianity, as well as being a threat to "German racial purity." The Jews, who had resided in Germany for a thousand years and constituted half a million people, a small fraction of the population, watched in horror as Hitler's party gained power throughout the country. Many believed that the political

hysteria would soon pass, that the common people would soon see Hitler for what he really was, or that, once in power, Hitler would modify his extreme views. After all, they seemed to think, Germany is a civilized country; anti-Semitic riots could never happen here. They could not imagine that millions of people would be murdered for no other reason than that they were Jews.

Hitler's racial theories and nationalism had deep roots in Germany's past. The Christian tradition of anti-Semitism and Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus also played a role in the reluctance to regard Jews as equal members of society. When, through various parliamentary maneuvers, Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany in 1933, he immediately took measures to establish an absolute, totalitarian regime. He outlawed *all* political parties other than his own, banned *all* literature that did not support his party or that was written by Jews or communists, and introduced a set of laws, the Nuremberg Race Laws, prohibiting Jews from interacting with, or marrying, Aryans. Most Germans quietly accepted Hitler's regime, and those who did not were confronted with arrests, beatings, torture, and imprisonment.

Hitler's new laws prevented Jews from holding public office, being teachers, practicing law or medicine, working in journalism or engaging in business. Jews were forbidden to employ Aryans, and Aryans were discouraged from patronizing Jewish stores. Jewish property was confiscated, collective fines were imposed on Jewish communities, and even emigration was made difficult for Jews. The countries of the world gathered at Evian, France, in 1938 to discuss ways of absorbing the Jewish population of Germany, but no country was willing to provide a home for more than a handful of Jews. The U.S. government declined to increase its immigrant quotas, and the British, who controlled Palestine, refused to allow large numbers of Jews to go there, fearing Arab opposition to this move. Even countries like Australia and Canada, with vast tracts of uninhabited land, refused to allow large numbers of Jews to enter.

After gaining power, Hitler set about rearming Germany, even though this was *strictly prohibited* by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. In doing so, he strengthened Germany's economy, created full employment, and restored a sense of pride to the German population. The countries of Europe, however, turned a blind eye to this

flagrant disregard of the Versailles Treaty, refrained from taking any action, and thereby allowed the stage to be set for Hitler's next acts.

In 1938, encouraged by the inaction of the European nations, Hitler proceeded to invade and annex, first, Austria, and then Czechoslovakia, each time assuring the world that all he wanted was "peace," and that this would be his "last demand." By the end of 1939, when Hitler was obviously preparing to adopt a similar take-over policy toward Poland, and the efforts of Chamberlain, Britain's prime minister, to find a peaceful solution had evidently failed, France and Britain declared war on Germany.

The years since 1933 that Hitler had spent rearming Germany had not been militarily paralleled by the Allies (the European countries, the United States, and Russia) so that the outbreak of World War II found Germany vastly superior in military strength. This enabled German forces to rapidly overrun Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France within a short space of time in 1939 and 1940, so that *within less than a year*, most of Europe was occupied by Germany. The German troops were highly mobile and mechanized, strictly disciplined, and motivated by theories of national and racial superiority. Britain's island status enabled it to withstand German threats, and although it suffered considerable devastation as a result of German bombardments, its people rallied, manufacturing arms and defending its shores and skies.

Not content with being master of most of Europe, Hitler then launched an attack against Russia in June, 1941, *despite* the non-aggression pact that Hitler had signed with Stalin in 1939. For over five years, Europe was a virtual slave empire under the Nazis. The people of Europe worked long, hard hours in farms and factories, receiving little more than subsistence rations in return, and millions of people were taken to Germany to work there. In occupied countries, any resistance was crushed ruthlessly; hostages were executed in retaliation for the killing of a single Nazi soldier, listening to British broadcasts, or possessing anti-Nazi literature were all made punishable by death. Harboring Jews was punishable either by death or by being sent to a concentration camp.

The Nazis were as efficient in setting up the machinery of death as they were in manufacturing arms. Over the years, they perfected a system of obtaining lists of *all* the Jewish inhabitants of a particular

place and making them all wear a distinguishing mark in the form of a yellow star, herding them into "ghettoes" and then loading them into crowded cattle cars and dispatching them by train to concentration camps. There, they were either worked until they dropped, starved to death, or were gassed. All through the war, the long trains of Jewish prisoners rolled through Europe, taking their human cargo to be killed. Even at the end of the war, when Germany's defeat was obvious to everyone, the death trains continued to cross Europe, and the gas chambers continued to operate. Later, Jews were marched, or transported, from concentration camps outside Germany to other camps farther inland, many dying on these forced marches. The Nazis made sure that these Jews would be dead before the Allies could rescue them.

Both prior to the war and throughout the war years, the Nazis continuously depicted the Jews as "vermin" and as "sub-human." Their propaganda machine produced endless articles, caricatures, and films portraying Jews as greedy, grasping people who secretly "ruled the world," or as criminals who should be exterminated. It did not matter that the events of the war years proved decisively that the Jews were poor, weak, and powerless. In many countries of Europe, the inhabitants were rewarded for handing over Jews who had not yet been arrested. Here and there, however, some Europeans *did* risk their freedom, and even their lives, in order to help Jews and help conceal them from their Nazi oppressors. In Denmark, the king himself declared that he and the entire population would wear the yellow star, in sympathy with the Jews.

The Nazis used special terms, or euphemisms, to disguise their intentions and their treatment of the Jews. These constituted a "code," which sounded fairly harmless to those—including the victims—who were not fully aware of their real meaning. Thus, the cattle trucks and trains in which Jews were sent to the concentration camps were only "transports." Jews who had been designated for death in the camps underwent a "selection process," and the mass murders in the gas chambers constituted "special treatment." The total annihilation of the Jews of Europe was the "final solution of the Jewish problem."

Clearly, throughout World War II, from September 1939 until June 1945, Europe was ravaged by incessant war, its human and natural resources used by the German occupiers for their own ends,

its cities bombarded and laid waste, and its population terrorized. By the time that the war had ended, millions of people had been killed or made homeless, exiled from their homes and separated from their families. Meanwhile, the systematic murder of six million Jews by the Nazis continued steadily and with brutal efficiency throughout all this chaos. When the war ended, the Jewish populations of Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Italy, France, Holland, Yugoslavia, and part of Russia, embodying a unique and age-old culture, had been virtually wiped out.

Despite the efforts which the Nazis made to keep their systematic murder of the entire Jewish and Gypsy populations of Europe secret, most people knew, at least in rumored theory, if not in detail, what fate awaited those Jews who were "sent East." The Nazis' brutality, their disregard for the sanctity of human life, as well as their efficiency and ingenuity, made it obvious to anyone of even moderate intelligence that the Jews were being sent to a bitter fate. Many people closed their eyes to the truth, refusing to admit even to themselves the full horror of what was happening, or perhaps unable to grasp to what depths human bestiality could descend, while others, such as the Franks' "protectors," did what they could to help Jews evade the Nazis. Anne writes in her diary that it was apparent to a number of "outsiders" – for example, the man who supplied their bread, as well as the greengrocer who provided their vegetables – that people were in hiding, but these Dutch people kept the group's secret, and even added extra rations when they could. Throughout Holland, some Jews, whether as individuals or as families, were kept in hiding in circumstances similar to those of the Frank family. There was a fairly active Dutch resistance movement, and this also played a part in ensuring that Jews were kept hidden and that their whereabouts did not become known to the Nazis. In every country which was occupied by the Nazis, a handful of that country's courageous individuals concealed Jews, and this happened even inside Germany itself, but the individuals who were capable of putting conscience above fear, prejudice, or envy were few and far between. In some cases, Jewish people managed to place children who looked "Aryan" – that is, those who were fair-haired and blue-eyed – in the homes of non-Jews who, whether for money or out of humanitarian considerations, sheltered them in their homes.

The Germans' euphemistic phrase, "the final solution of the Jewish problem," in fact, referred to the *total annihilation* of the Jewish population of Europe. Anne Frank's family, having moved to Holland from Germany in an attempt to escape Nazi persecution, and after living in hiding in the middle of Nazi-occupied Holland for two years, was discovered by the Nazis and sent to various concentration camps. All the members of the group in hiding, with the exception of Anne's father, Otto Frank, perished in those camps.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

The Group in Hiding

Anne Frank

The thirteen-year-old Jewish girl who writes a diary while she is hiding in Amsterdam from the Nazis during World War II.

Margot Frank

Anne's sister; she is three years older than Anne.

Otto Frank

Anne's father; he is a Jewish businessman who left Germany after Hitler's rise to power, hoping to find refuge in Holland.

Mrs. Frank

Anne's mother; she is the source of many conflicts with Anne during the two years that the family spends in hiding.

Mr. Van Daan

A Jewish businessman and an associate of Mr. Frank's. He and his family share the "Secret Annexe" with the Franks.

Mrs. Van Daan

Mr. Van Daan's wife; a rather interfering person. Anne finds it difficult to get along with her.