

Name _____

Date _____



Who Was Anne Frank?

For my 13th birthday, my aunt sent me a blank book with a red and white plaid cover. On the first page, she'd written out a quote by Anne Frank: "'When I write, I can shake off all my cares. My sorrow disappears, my spirits are revived!'" Under this, she'd written, "May your writing be a source of comfort for you, as Anne Frank's was for her. PS: Anne's diary looked a lot like this one."

I'd heard the name Anne Frank, but I didn't know anything about her. I had a lot of questions, like: Who was she? And why did she need comfort?

So I did a search. Anne Frank lived in the Netherlands. She turned 13 on June 12, 1942, and received a diary for her birthday, just like I did. This diary would become more important than Anne ever could have imagined—important not only to her, but to the world.

A few weeks after her birthday, Anne, her sister Margot, and their parents had to go into hiding. They packed their belongings—including Anne's diary—and moved into the attic of Mr. Frank's office building.

They stayed there for 761 days. Anne turned 14, and then 15, without once stepping foot outside.

I couldn't imagine spending over two years in an attic.

The Franks probably couldn't either. But they didn't have a choice. World War II was raging, and Germany had taken over the Netherlands. Adolf Hitler, Germany's ruler, blamed Germany's problems on Jewish people—and the Franks were Jewish.

Under Hitler, Jews in the Netherlands faced numerous unfair laws. For example, they weren't allowed to drive—or even to ride bicycles—and Jewish children had to attend separate schools.

Then things got worse. The Germans began imprisoning Jews in concentration camps, where many of them

died.

I'm Jewish too. If I'd been living there, I would have moved away.

Actually, the Franks did try to move—to the United States. But there was a long waiting list to get in, and they didn't get a spot. Going into hiding was safer than being sent to a concentration camp, though it was still risky. Anne often feared being discovered.

What was the attic like?

The attic—or the secret annex, as Anne called it—wasn't a terrible hiding place. There were two floors, plus a loft at the very top, where Anne would often go for privacy. In fact, the annex was big enough for eight, so the Franks were joined by another family—Hermann, Auguste, and Peter van Pels—as well as a man named Fritz Pfeffer.

But if they couldn't go outside, how did they get food?

They had helpers: Miep Gies, Johannes Kleiman, Bep Voskuijl, and Victor Kugler. All four were employees of Mr. Frank's spice company, and their offices were downstairs from the secret annex. These brave individuals, along with Miep's husband, Jan, and Bep's father, Johan, worked tirelessly to keep the hiders safe. "That's something we should never forget," Anne wrote in her diary. "While others display their heroism in battle or against the Germans, our helpers prove theirs every day by their good spirits and affection."

Anne must have had a lot of time to write.

She did. In fact, she filled several diaries. Living in hiding was scary and stressful, but it was also pretty boring. Anne's writing was a creative outlet and helped lift her mood. "After the war I'd like to publish a book called *The Secret Annex*," she wrote. "My diary can serve as the basis."

But on August 4, 1944, tragedy struck. Police broke into the annex, arrested all eight residents, and sent them to concentration camps.

Miep found Anne's diaries. After the war, she gave them to Mr. Frank, the only annex resident to survive. Eventually, he published the diaries as a book, fulfilling Anne's dream.

World War II ended over 75 years ago! Why is Anne's diary still so important?

Anne's diary lets us witness a horrific time in history through the eyes of a creative, witty teenager. It puts a human face to the atrocities. It may seem better, or at least more comfortable, to sweep World War II under the rug and never speak of it again. But if we did this, we'd be missing an opportunity. Facing history, even the painful parts, forces us to reflect on it—and this reflection can prevent us from repeating our mistakes.