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Historical Essay: The Diary of Anne Frank

As the title of the book suggests, Anne Frank's diary is the published diary of the titular Jewish girl in the 1940s. It begins before the Holocaust hit the world on her thirteenth birthday in June 12, 1942 and abruptly ends two years later on fifteenth birthday after the capture of her family by the Nazis. The diary begins with descriptions of the experiences and thoughts of a Jewish girl on the brink of womanhood in an anti-Semite atmosphere. It then describes the life of the Franks in hiding after the Nazis reached their home in the Netherlands. The thoughts of a young girl presented so candidly makes one feel like an intruder and at the same time, the veracity of expression and the beautiful writing style fills the mind with wonderment. The transition from a young, intelligent, Jewish girl living her life in Nazi-occupied Netherlands to that of a girl dealing with the pressures of hiding for her life is disturbing. However, Anne brings out smiles as well as spirit into the pages that relate the dismay of being confined to a couple of boarded rooms for two years. More than one million Jewish children died in the Holocaust and Anne was one of them. Anne Frank's diary had a profound impact on the world and the views regarding the Holocaust for years to come. It exposed the daily torment of the Holocaust to the rest of the world and showed the persecuted individuals approach toward life. This paper analyses the book in question as well as the circumstances leading to it being written and the world's reaction to its publication to confirm the above statement.

Anne Frank's Diary speaks the mind of a growing child in the days of the war. In spite of the circumstances surrounding her, Anne seemed considerably optimistic about the future. For instance she says " In spite of everything, I believe that people are truly good at heart" (Frank 241). When the pessimistic feelings begin to emerge, she tells herself, " I don't think of all the misery but of the beauty that still remains" (Frank 153). It is heart-rending when a child chastises herself to be strong, such as when she comes to the conclusion that her childhood has been unexpectedly taken away from her: " Looking back, I realize that this period of my life has irrevocably come to a close; my happy-go-lucky, carefree schooldays are gone forever. I don't even miss them. I've outgrown them. I can no longer just kid around, since my serious side is always there" (Frank 153). However, her girlish thoughts changed into those of a mature woman in the days of her confinement. Her thoughts about her looks, personality, and demeanor are a constant feature of the book. She believes in having a purpose in life and dealing with the subject of death, states " don't want to have lived in vain like most people. I want to be useful or bring enjoyment to all people, even those I've never met. I want to go on living even after my death! And that's why I'm so grateful to God for having given me this gift, which I can use to develop myself and to express all that's inside me!" (Frank 182).

She definitely has a writing talent, which she perhaps recognizes and wishes to nurture. Her writings often depict comical situations in the hideout with flair; for example, comical situations with the cat, Mouschi. It can thus be concluded that she was a serious, introspective, young woman with a sensible and analytical bent of mind. Her approach to life is contemplative—

although she lacks no spontaneity. She attempts to be straightforward in her opinions—“ This world is a crazy place” and “ by no means has everyone we think of as ‘ good’ Dutch people kept their faith in the English, not everyone thinks the English bluff is a masterful strategical move. Oh no, people want deeds-great, heroic deeds. No one can see farther than the end of their nose, no one gives a thought to the fact that the British are fighting for their own country and their own people; everyone thinks it’s England’s duty to save Holland, as quickly as possible. What obligations do the English have toward us?” (Frank 210, 219). She tries thus deal with difficult questions that emerge in her mind in her introspective and analytical way. However, toward the end, in confinement, she begins to question her identity as a woman and a Jew and wonders if she thinks of herself as Dutch as they do not seem to be fond of Jews.

The dwindling optimism and constant threat of horrors that she and her family and friends faced is characteristic of several Jews that survived by hiding with friends and relatives in cramped spaces for years. The story of the Frank family is the story of the millions of Jews that have been massacred in the Nazi era and their surviving loved ones. The Franks were among the many Jews that had fled from Germany to the Netherlands once the persecution of the Jews began (Frank father sent aid pleas to U. S.). When the Jews began to be rounded up by the Nazis in the Netherlands as well, Otto Frank’s—Anne’s father—various attempts to leave Netherlands were foiled; unfortunately he was too late in realizing the need to escape (Frank father sent aid pleas to U. S.). The family was thus forced to go into hiding. They were captured two years later and family was separated (Anne

Frank). Anne and her sister Margot were sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany, where they both contracted typhus and died, but they were only two of the millions that perished (Anne Frank).

Miep Gies, one of the people who had kept the Franks hidden at the risk of their lives, had kept Anne's diary for Otto when he came back (Anne Frank protector Miep Gies dies aged 100). She helped Otto in publishing the diary with the certainty that the story would reach out to the world and show the pain and the sufferings of the persecuted (Anne Frank protector Miep Gies dies aged 100). It is indeed important that the world remembers the story of those who had suffered such criminal acts, for it is a warning to the current generation about the atrocities of the war. While the book has been worldwide hit, it was not accepted by many publishers all over the world, as they were afraid of the reminding the world of the ghastly incidents of the war (Graver xiii). The book continues to touch lives in many ways. A couple that read the book has called it " an offering that would haunt both of them in different ways for the rest of their lives" (Graver 1). Few readers—and not only the Jews who have felt the importance of identity touch their very souls—would be able to shed the importance of humanity after reading this tale of a thirteen-year-old girl (Graver 2). Since its publication, the book has become the saga of many others who have strived to garner a higher recognition for it. Meyer Levin, an American, Jewish journalist is well known for his obsession with Anne Frank's Diary (Graver 22).

Anne Frank was a self-analyzing, perceptive young girl with a great potential for writing. While she appears to be a regular teenager, she does have a

reserved aspect to her personality that makes her confide in her diary. Anne also seems to have been a very emotionally stable girl with a positive attitude. She lost her childhood to the war and yet dealt with it in calm and composed manner. The various accounts related in this paper and the research on the book and its reception show that it was an important documentation of the Holocaust. It should be remembered that her book is not simply a tale that shocks; it is a story that the world has to remember in order to refrain from committing its past mistakes. Several people continue to find strength in the mental vigor shown by this child in extremely adverse conditions.

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