UNIT 11 : ANNE FRANK: SELECTED ENTRIES FROM *THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

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11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- provide an introduction to the Anne's diary writing
- gain an insight into the life of Anne Frank
- discuss the writings of Anne Frank as an avid diarist
- explain the context in which Anne Frank wrote her diary
- appreciate the significant genre of diary writing
- explain the content of both her introductory entries in her personal diary
- grasp the times in which she lived and wrote
- further explore the experiences recorded in the diary

11.2 INTRODUCTION

The present unit takes up selected entries from the diary of Anne Frank published as *The Diary of a Young Girl,* with the aim of stirring deep interest in the learner towards exploring the life of this young soul and her

timeless diary. Anne's diary records some of the precious moments of her short-lived life, her moving experiences during the time of Jewish persecution and remains as a testimony written duringone of the darkest periods of world history- the holocaust. It stands as a priceless document that not only records her own personal experiences but also that of those around her and the grave crises that had shattered the lives of the Jewish people. Thus, the unit discusses Anne Frank's diary entries in the context of this period and takes up selected entries from her diary to reflect on the experiences that she had recorded.

The learner may have certainly read or heard about the 'Holocaust' which by far is one of the greatest human tragedies that involved mass genocide of the Jewish people by the Nazis under the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler during the time World War II. The Nazis had persecuted over six million European Jewish people and also those of Romani and Slavic origins as well from the period of 1941 to 1945. Antisemitism or in simple words racial and religious hatred was an acute problem among the Germans who considered themselves racially superior and politically powerful enough to decide on arriving at what they referred to as a 'final solution' of exterminating or in other words eliminating an entire race i.e. Jews in particular in German occupied Europe.

11.3 ANNE FRANK: THE DIARIST

Diary writing is a form of reflective writing that falls under the broad category of life writing. The personal diary is like a record of one's subjectivity that includes a person's feelings and experiences, intellectual thoughts and ideas, information and observation among a range of other significant aspects. The person who maintains a diary with relevant diary entries or records is known as a diarist. Where it concerns a personal diary, it is more like a personal journal or account that is generally written without the intent of publication or a wide readership. Diaries are in a way autobiographical in terms of its content although autobiography as an established literary genre differs from the same. This spontaneous form of self-expression is

interesting in its own way and provides sufficient material or information for various literary forms and genres both fictional and non-fictional. Although, diary writing is an age old practice, one of the most important diarists in the history of English literature is Samuel Pepys who worked for the English navy and his diary entitled *Diary of Samuel Pepys* (1660) had provided sufficient information on some of the major events that took place during the Restoration period. There were many other posthumous (after the demise of the diarist) publications in the 19th century which included journals of the English novelist Fanny Burney published in and the diary of an English lawyer, Henry Crabb Robinson's *Diary Reminiscences and Correspondences Henry Crabb* (1869). The 20th century saw an increase in political diaries and one of the incredible diaries to have emerged from the century was the diary of Anne Frank whose personal diary accounted the socio-political turmoil of the Second World War.

What is it that makes Anne Frank such an inspiring figure of optimism and good cheer even in the face of all odds? To answer this question- the life of Anne Frank (12 June 1929- February or Mach 1945) is exemplary and extremely inspiring given the fact that her diary records the voice of a young person who held such optimism and courage despite the multiple odds that had ruined her family life and that of her community during the Holocaust. Anne's diary is incredible given the fact that it is one of the informative documents to have survived and emerged from this period. The excruciating experience of the Jewish people finds a representation in her writings and therefore Anne Frank represents the collective voice of her people and that of the many Anne's who had had similar experiences. Her life and writing shall always continue to inspire readers across time and space, through the passing of years and decades to come.

Let us gain an insight into the inspiring life of Anne Frank, her approach towards life and the times in which she lived. The following subsection traces those difficult years under the German occupation of Netherlands in the Second World War that brought about drastic changes in the lives of countless Jewish families like her own family.

11.3.1 Her Life and Works

Born as Annelies Marie Frank and better known as Anne Frank was the youngest daughter of Edith and Otto Hienrich Frank. She was raised in a liberal Jewish family along with her sibling Margot Frank in the peaceful neighbourhood of mixed communities in Frankfurt, Germany. In a mass migration that took place in between the years 1933 to 1939, like many other Jewish families, the Frank family had shifted to Amsterdam with Anne's father joining a new company known as the Opekta Works. The family thus, had settled down in Amsterdam and the girls were enrolled in local schools. Anne joined the Montessori School in Amsterdam with a penchant for creative writing and a love for books that stemmed from her early years of being surrounded by books at home in Frankfurt. Both, Edith and Otto who shared a love for reading had their own personal library and a good collection of books. Eventually, Anne's father had joined a new company and the Frank family had an easygoing and comfortable life until the socio-political turmoil swept across Germany and drastically changed the lives of the Jewish people.

With the invasion of Netherlands by the Germans in May 1940 in the wake of the second World War, the Jewish people had turned subject to the mindless persecution and segregation from the non-Jewish people by the new government in power. This was the time that spelled a doom for the Jewish communities and as the learner can imagine, many Jewish families were distressed with the consequences of being identified and listed by the government that was bent on stripping them of their fundamental rights. During this time, it was risky for the American embassy or consulate to process any application for Visa given the changing circumstances and even as Otto Frank had officially applied for a Visa to emigrate with his family to America, it did not actualise.

Therefore, with the turn of circumstances, the Frank family took to hiding in an abandoned office building above the Opekta office

at Prinsengracht that housed the 'Secret Annexe' also referred to as the *Achterhuis*, a bookcase that hid a passage which led to a secret hiding place underground, with space enough for two families to hide. They received the generous help of their close acquaintances and four trustworthy friends (employees of Opekta) who kept it all a secret. The learner will certainly agree that even under such shattering circumstances with the Frank family compelled to leave behind their home, their possessions and their loving pet Moortje behind

The one incredible work that Anne Frank as a young diarist had left behind in her short-lived years was her personal document- *The Diary of a Young Girl* which was originally written in the Dutch language entitled *Het Achterhuis* before being translated into English. The diary accounts for the years that she hadspent in the Secret Annexe with her family and records her personal reflections, experiences during that period and the dreams that she had envisioned for the future. The original version of her diary in Dutch was published in Holland in the year 1947.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. Write a few lines on Anne Frank's early life.

Q2. Why were the Jewish people subject to segregation in 1940?

Q3. Where did the Frank family hide to protect themselves from the persecution of the Nazis?

11.4 THE CONTEXT OF ANNE FRANK'S DIARY

Before we gain an insight into Anne's experiences recorded in the select entries for this unit, let us gain a brief idea on the Holocaust which remains one of the darkest chapters in the pages of world history.

Het Acterhuis which literally translates as "the house behind" refers to the hiding place that Anne's family had taken during these difficult times.

The diary which was gifted to her by her parents was her constant companion through the two years in their hiding. At the beginning of her diary here is what she lovingly writes, "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". Let us then read into the reflections of this brave heart whose writings reveal that a little candle can light the darkness, that there is a reservoir of strength and courage in the human heart.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4. In language did Anne Frank originally write her diary?

Q5. Write a few lines on the tragedy of the Holocaust.

Q6. What does the original Dutch title *Het Acterhuis* mean?

11.5 SELECTED ENTRIES FROM ANNE FRANK'S DIARY

The unit takes up two selected entries from the diary of Anne Frank which shall provide the learner with an idea on her personal thoughts and feelings, her everyday experiences and observations as well as her little joys and dreams. The first diary entry selected for the unit is dated Sunday 14 June, 1942 followed by the entry on Saturday 20 June, 1942 which reflects some of the happier times that she had known with her family.

Sunday, 14 June, 1942: Anne Frank recalls the 12th of June, when she woke up at six in the morning and it was her birthday. However, she was not expected to wake up at that early hour and therefore, she had to hold her excitement until it was quarter to seven. After that Anne got out of bed and went in to the dining room where her little cat named 'Moortje' snuggled up to her and gave her a warm welcome. She took note of the time and went into her parent's room at seven and to her delight brought the presents that she received from them to the sitting room in order to unwrap them in her curiosity. To her surprise Anne found that the first one to greet

her was a new diary, "possibly nicest of all" (1). Bunches and bouquets of flowers had poured in throughout the day filling their tables with roses and peonies that must have made their home fragrant on the special day.

Anne recollected the plenty of presents that her parents and some of her close friends had gifted her which included Camera Obscura, a party game, jigsaw puzzle, brooch, money, sweets, chocolates and books namely *Tales and Legends of the Netherlands* by Joseph Cohen and Daisy's *Mountain Holiday*. The next purchase that she had planned was *The Myths of Greece and Rome* which highlights her love for reading. That morning she went to school with her good friend named Lies and treated her school friends to sweet biscuits during break time and attended her regular classes. Following this she had summed up her first entry for the day by expressing her sweet hope in her new friend, her birthday diary with the promise- "we're going to be great pals!" (1).

In the entry that follows her first diary entry Anne had recounted the joyful time she had spent the Sunday afternoon following her birthday when she had watched films like the 'Lighthouse Keeper' and 'Rin-Tin-Tin' with her school friends. Also, she had expressed her innocent and secret liking for one of her school friends named Peter Wessel. Her mother often teased her wanting to know whom would she wish marry if she were given the choice and although Anne had often shied away from that question, in her heart she undoubtedly wished it was him. Her best friends were Lies Gossen and Sanne Houtman and they went to school together.

Saturday, 20 June, 1942: In this new entry Anne had expressed her guilt for not having written for a couple of days. It was perhaps, one of those pensive moods when she chose to ponder about her little diary. She thought to herself that it was rather strange for her to start writing a diary of all things not only owing to the fact that she had not done so before but also due to her wondering on who would possibly be interested to know about the "unbosomings" (2) of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl. However, at such demotivated moments like these,she would again reassure herself that she wanted to 'write' wholeheartedly and pour out all the secrets that were buried deep in her heart. One of the profound thoughts that had struck her on one

of her sad days when she was bored all by herself yet undecided on whether to remain in her room or step out for a breath of fresh air that "paper is more patient than man" (2). Anne thus wrote, "I don't intend to show this cardboard-covered notebook bearing the proud name of "diary", to anyone, unless I find a real friend, boy or girl, probably nobody cares. And now I came to the root of the matter, the reason for my starting a diary: it is that I have no such real friend" (2-3).

Anne felt that no one had or would take her seriously and that a girl of her age could feel so lonely in spite of being surrounded by friends. These were perhaps the gradual and early stirrings of Anne's intellectual maturity that waited to unfurl and blossom way before her age. Those who were close to her were her doting parents and her elder sister Marguerite who was sixteen years of age. She thought of her school friends and in her imagination counted around thirty friends which included several boys who secretly admired her. Anne had loving aunts and uncles too and a happy home filled with abundant blessings that one could ask for, yet she felt incomplete. This was perhaps because in her opinion she had never found the opportunity to share her true inner world with anyone.

Even with the friends of her age, Anne never found the scope to open up or do anything other than indulge in their jokes and light hearted fun. Although, she thought that it was perhaps, owing to her lack of confidence in herself, yet if we analyse her reflections Anne comes across as a sensitive and a matured person without knowing that this were the special qualities that had set her apart from others girls and boys of her age. Her pervading sense of loneliness and self-directed guilt that she was perhaps at fault made her feel that her diary filled in that gap. Thus, she had decided to open herself to being best friends with her dairy as she writes, "I don't want to set down a series of bald facts in a diary like most people do, but I want this diary itself to be my friend, and I shall call my friend 'Kitty'. No one will grasp what I'm talking about if I begin my letters to Kitty just out of the blue…" (3). Thus, she had started by providing a brief idea about her family. Anne's father Otto Van Frank had married her mother with an age gap of several years and were blessed with a daughter in 1926 whom they named Margot

born in Frankfort-on-Main and another in 1929 i.e. Anne herself. As they were of Jewish descent, the family had moved to Holland for a more secured life in the year 1933 where her father was appointed Managing Director of Travies N.V. Firm which was also associated with another firm that he partnered named Kolen& Co located in the same place. By this time their lives were considerably affected with Hitler's anti-Jewish laws which constantly troubled and worried the family with regard to their security. In fact, in 1938, two of her maternal uncles had escaped to America while her old grandmother who was seventy-three years old had joined their family. In her observations of the rapid changes that were taking place she wrote, "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 began" (4). This captures the tension that came to prevail in their lives following the declaration of the anti-Jewish laws.

According to the newly introduced law, it was mandatory for Jews to wear yellow six pointed stars on their arms so that they could be easily identified. All Jews had to hand over their bicycles and were prohibited from riding in trams and driving. There were strict timings within which they had to complete their marketing or shopping and the same in "Jewish only" shops. Jews were expected to remain indoors by eight in the evenings which meant they could not step out even into their own gardens after that hour. They were not permitted to have access to any place of entertainment, public-sports or facilities. The segregation or separation was so rigid that Jews were not even allowed to visit Christian homes and schools were not spared of such discrimination either. Gradually, the Jewish population began to experience the weight of these oppressive laws. Anne took consolation in the fact that they tried to live within these restricted laws to the best of their abilities and adapt to such drastic changes as best they could.

Sadly, she had lost her grandmother in January 1942, who had left a gap in their lives that no one could fill in. Anne missed her terribly and expressed her love for the departed soul. She had been to Montessori Kindergarten in 1934 but owing to the school segregation had to bid farewell to her school friends and teachers that had deeply saddened her heart.

Thus, she joined the Jewish Secondary School along with her sister Margot like many other Jewish children. One can imagine the kind of difficulties that had come to envelope their lives and the sadness that tugged at her tender heart and yet the expression that we meet are her words of optimism despite the odds as she wrote, "So far everything is all right with the four of us and here I come to the present day" (4).

Thus, from the cheerful account of her opening diary entry to the rapidly changing circumstances for her family in midst of the Anti-Jewish laws and segregation, we notice the quick succession of changes that took hold of their lives. Let us quickly find out a little about the unbelievable accounts of the 'Secret Annexe' which had turned into their secret retreat for two families. The learner may find it interesting to read through the 'Secret Annexe' rules as recorded in the entry dated Tuesday, 17 November, 1942 to simply gain an inkling of the limited provisions and safety rules that the hiding members were to follow as given below:

PROSPECTUS AND GUIDE TO THE "SECRET ANNEXE"

Special Institution as temporary residence for Jews and suchlike.

Open all the year round. Beautiful, quiet, free from woodland surroundings, in the heart of Amsterdam. Can be reached by trams 13 and 17, also by car or bicycle. In special cases also on foot, if the Germans prevent the use of transport.

Board and lodging:Free

Special fat-free diet.

Running water in the bathroom (alas, no bath) and down various inside and outside walls.

Ample Storage rooms for all types of goods.

Own radio center, direct communication with London, New York, Tel Aviv, and numerous other stations are forbidden, on the understanding that German stations are only listened to in special cases, such as classical music and the like.

Rest hours: 10 o'clock in the evening until 7.30 in the morning. 10.15 on Sundays. Residents may rest during the day, conditions permitting, as

the directors indicate. For reasons of public security rest hours must be strictly observed!!

Holidays (outside the home): postponed indefinitely.

Use of language: Speak softly at all times, by order! All civilized languages are permitted, therefore no German!

Lessons: One written shorthand lesson per week. English, French, Mathematics, and History at all times.

Small Pets: Special Department (permit is necessary) Good treatment available (vermin excepted).

Mealtimes: breakfast, every day except Sundays and Bank Holidays, 9 A.M. Sundays and Bank Holidays, 11.30 A.M. approximately.

Lunch: (not very big): 1.15 P.M. to 1.45 P.M.

Dinner: cold and/or hot: no fixed time (depending on the news broadcast).

Duties: Residents must always be ready to help with office work.

Baths: The washtub is available for all residents from 9.A.M. on Sundays. The W.C., kitchen, private office or main office, whichever preferred, are available.

Alcoholic Beverages: only with doctor's prescription.

(pg. 51-52)

The above guidelines are a reflection of the shrinking space and quality of their lives from the happy lives that they had known earlier. Anne had also provided a blueprint or rather a layout of the building and the hiding place that it housed in one of her entries. Life in that hiding place must have undoubtedly been extremely difficult given the fact that they had to take extra care of all the little details of their secret existence so that none of the hiding members would give away even the slightest hint to the outside world. The world outside this hiding place was rife with torment and hostilities with many Jewish people suffering the tragedies of forced separation from their families and transportation off to concentration camps. In one of her entries she thus wrote, "It seems like the slave hunts of olden times. But it's certainly no joke, it's much too tragic for that. In the evenings when it's dark, I often see rows of good, innocent people accompanied by crying children, walking

on and on, in 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" (52-54). Therefore, the learner can imagine the atrocities that had affected the lives of the persecuted Jewish population by the Nazis, about which we shall reflect further in the following unit on Anne's diary entries.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q7. What were some of the gifts that Anne had received for her birthday as recorded in her first diary entry?

Q8. Why did Anne feel incomplete despite all the blessings that she had?

Q9. What were the prohibitions stated in segregation laws for Jewish people?



11.6 LET US SUM UP

After having studied the unit thoroughly, the learner will be able to discuss the life and the times in which Anne Frank had lived as well as her writings that had inspired millions of readers across the world through her remarkable story of optimism and courage that was recorded in her diary which shall always remain a timeless literary treasure. Also, the learner will be familiar to the context in which Anne Frank wrote her diary which will supplement the learner's reading of the selected diary entries in the present and the following unit. The unit will enable the learner to trace the rapid changes that had stealthily invaded the lives of many Jewish families like Anne's. In the next unit, the learner will find three more diary entries that reveal the more on the escape of the Franks and their family friends and their experiences in hiding before they fell into the clutches of the Nazis.



11.7 FURTHER READING

1) Frank, Anne. (1967) *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Doubleday. New York.

11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q1: Born as Annelies Marie Frank and better known as Anne Frank was the youngest daughter of Edith and Otto Hienrich Frank. She was raised in a liberal Jewish family along with her sibling Margot Frank in the peaceful neighbourhood of mixed communities in Frankfurt, Germany. In a mass migration that took place in between the years 1933 to 1939, like many other Jewish families, the Frank family had shifted to Amsterdam with Anne's father joining a new company known as the Opekta Works.

Ans to Q2: With the invasion of Netherlands by the Germans in May 1940 in the wake of the second World War, the Jewish people being subject to persecution and segregation from the non-Jewish people by the new government in power.

Ans to Q3: The Frank family took to hiding in an abandoned office building above the Opekta office at Prinsengracht that housed the 'Seecret Annexe' also referred to as the *Achterhuis*, a bookcase that hid a passage which led to a secret hiding place underground, with space enough for two families to hide.

Ans to Q4: The diary was originally written in the Dutch language.

Ans to Q5: The Holocaust was one of the darkest chapters in world history.

Ans to Q6: *Het Acterhuis* which literally translates as "the house behind" referring to the hiding place that Anne's family had taken during these difficult times.

Ans to Q7: Anne had received plenty of presents that her parents and some of her close friends had gifted her which included Camera Obscura, a party game, jigsaw puzzle, brooch, money, sweets, chocolates

and books namely *Tales and Legends of the Netherlands* by Joseph Cohen and Daisy's *Mountain Holiday*.

Ans to Q8: Anne had all the blessings in the world that one could ask for yet she felt incomplete, perhaps because she had never found the opportunity to share her inner world with anyone. Even with the friends of her age, she had never really found the scope to open up or do anything other than indulge in jokes and light hearted fun.

Ans to Q9: According to these segregation laws, Jews were to wear yellow six pointed stars on their arms so that they could be easily identified. They had to hand over all their bicycles and were forbidden to ride trams or to even drive. There were strict timings in between which they were to complete their marketing or shopping that too in "Jewish only" shops. Jews were expected to remain indoors by eight in the evenings which meant that they could not step out into their own gardens after that hour. They were not permitted to have access to any place of entertainment, public sports or facilities. In fact, the segregation or separation was so rigid that Jews were not even allowed to visit Christian homes and schools were not spared either from such discrimination.

Ans to Q10: The guidelines meant for the 'Secret Annexe' are a reflection of the shrinking space and quality of their i.e. the lives of the Franks and their friends in hiding from the happy and comfortable lives that they had known earlier.



11.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Give a brief introduction to Diary Writing as a literary practice.

Q2. Describe the life of Anne Frank and the times in which she wrote her diary.

Q3. Discuss the literary merit of Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*.

Q4. Explain the context in which Anne Frank wrote her diary.

Q5. Explain the content of the introductory diary entries by Anne Frank dated14 June, 1942 and 20 June 1942.