

## ***Through the Eyes of a Friend* study guide**

**Objective:** Through the viewing of and participation in the live presentation of *Through the Eyes of a Friend*, as well as the use of this packet for pre and post performance exploration, students will gain a greater understanding of the life and experiences of Anne Frank and of the Holocaust in general. Students then will be able to make connections between this period and other current and historical events and issues.

### **Story synopsis**

*Through The Eyes of a Friend* is the story of Sarah Weiss, the daughter of an average German family in the 1930s. Sarah's family is Jewish, so when Hitler and the Nazis come to power in Germany, their home suddenly becomes a very dangerous place for them to live. After Sarah's older brother Mathew is attacked by a gang of Hitler youth, their parents decide to move the family to Holland.

In Amsterdam, Sarah meets Anne Frank, a girl her own age whose family has also escaped Germany. Anne helps Sarah to learn Dutch, and the girls are soon inseparable friends. Sarah dreams of being an artist, as Anne dreams of being a writer, and the two girls work on many projects together. But the war looms over their childhood, and when Anne and Sarah are 11 years old, the Nazis invade Holland. Holland surrenders, and Sarah, Anne and their families are once again under Nazi rule.

The Nazis impose many restrictions on the lives of the Dutch, and particularly on the Jews. Jews are given a curfew, sent to separate schools, forbidden from most public events and places, and required to wear a yellow star on their clothing at all times. At school, Sarah and Anne watch as their classmates and even teachers are taken away by the Nazis—or simply disappear. No matter how hard they try, living a normal teenage life is impossible for Sarah and Anne. Then, at the end of the school year, a warrant arrives for Mathew to report to a Nazi labor camp. Sarah's parents tell her that they have already made plans for their entire family to go into hiding—separately. Before she leaves, Sarah tries to say goodbye to Anne, only to discover that the Frank family is gone too.

Sarah spends two years in hiding, alone, in the basement storeroom of a clock store run by members of the Dutch Underground. After a year, she is offered the chance to be adopted by a Swedish family, but she feels that she cannot desert her own parents and refuses. She spends her time drawing her memories of the outside world. An older couple is brought in to join her, and although it is crowded, Sarah is grateful for the company and for news of what has been happening in the war.

Then one day, their hiding place is discovered. Sarah and her companions are captured and sent to Westerbork, a prison camp. Sarah is once again alone—until she is reunited with Anne, who tells Sarah about her own experiences in hiding. Sarah stays close to Anne and her family while they are at Westerbork. After a few weeks, their names appear on a list to be deported. Sarah and the Franks are put on a train to Auschwitz.

Auschwitz is known as a death camp. Starved and exhausted from days of traveling in a cattle car, they are tattooed with numbers, shaved, stripped, and forced to stand in the cold for long roll calls before beginning their day of forced labor. The men and women are separated, but Sarah is able to stay with Anne, Anne's mother and her sister Margot. Anne becomes ill with scabies, and Sarah tries to distract her with stories. Then Anne, Margot and Sarah are called for transport to another camp, Bergen-Belsen. Anne's mother must stay behind in Auschwitz as the girls are forced into another journey by cattle car.

At Bergen-Belsen, Sarah is separated from Anne and Margot. They can only speak to each other in secret, through a fence stuffed with straw that divides the two sides of the camp. On Sarah's side, the Red Cross provides some supplies, and Sarah tries twice to get a package to Anne. Then Anne and

Margot both become sick with typhus, and Sarah is unable to reach them anymore. Sarah learns from a nurse that both girls have died. A few months later, the war is over.

Sarah is liberated from Auschwitz and, when she is finally able to return to Amsterdam, is reunited with her brother. Their parents are gone. Sarah and Mathew decide they must leave Holland, and eventually emigrate to the United States. Living a new life in America, Sarah receives a copy of Anne's published diary. Sarah vows to honor her friend by surviving, by remembering and by sharing her memories, just as Anne has, through her words

### **Historical Context: What was the Holocaust?**

Sources: [www.holocaust-history.org](http://www.holocaust-history.org), [www.annefrank.com](http://www.annefrank.com)

The Holocaust was the genocide or mass murder of European Jews by the Nazi party, which took place from 1939-45. Within the context of World War II, Hitler and his followers waged a separate war against the Jews, with the goal of total extermination of the race. From the beginning of the Nazi party, their propaganda was very specifically anti-Semitic, building on popular anti-Jewish superstitions and beliefs in order to gain public support for their plan. It worked. Six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust, approximately one-third of all Jews in the world at that time. In addition, the Nazis targeted for persecution and murdered another 6 million people from other ethnic and social groups. How were events like these allowed to happen in the modern world?

After World War I, Germany became a republic for the first time in its history. Germans were shocked by losing World War I and angered by the terms of the Versailles Peace Treaty. Worldwide depression, unemployment, and inflation added to their general dissatisfaction. These conditions created a situation that was ripe for the rise of fascism.

The Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party, founded in 1920, began as a small radical fascist party. The Nazis planned to abolish the Versailles Treaty and the Weimar republic, promising to restore greatness to Germany. Adolf Hitler was their leader, the Fuhrer; Hitler's autobiography, published in 1924, describes the Nazi party's platform: constant attacks on the Jews, the importance of the Fuhrer's absolute authority, the use of propaganda and terror, the purity and superiority of the Aryan race, and the hatred of both communism and democracy. Hitler came into power as Chancellor of Germany in 1933. By 1937, the Nazi regime was fully in control.

Anti-Semitism was essential to Hitler and the Nazis' goal of world domination. Nazi propaganda made the Jews scapegoats, depicting them as evil and threatening to the Aryans. Other groups persecuted by the Nazis included political opponents, social democrats, communists, homosexuals, gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics, Poles, and the mentally or physically disabled. By segregating and denying these people of their rights, the Nazis made them non-human. The 1935 Nuremberg laws legally defined Jews as non-citizens. Elimination was the next step.

As part of Hitler's plan for world domination, the Nazis annexed Austria and then part of Czechoslovakia. By March 1939, German armies also occupied Bohemia and Moravia. On September 1, 1939, the German Army invaded Poland; two days later, France and Britain declared war, the beginning of World War II. France, Britain and 26 other countries, including the Soviet Union and the United States, became known as the Allied Powers. The Axis powers were Germany, Italy, Japan and their allies. All sides experienced huge military losses, as well as many civilian deaths. In 1940, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway, then Holland and Belgium, and finally France, breaking through the Allied front and taking control of the majority of Western Europe. Germany next moved into Eastern Europe, capturing millions of Jews who had escaped from earlier invasions.

The Nazis targeted the Jews for total genocide and destruction. By the end of the war, they had murdered two out of every three Jews in Europe—a total of six million people. In each country, the Nazis set up Jewish ghettos, transit and forced labor camps, as well as concentration and death camps, rounding up and deporting Jews, political opponents, resistance fighters, Gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and any other so-called "enemies" of the Nazi party.

By 1941, Hitler fully dominated Europe. Under his regime, Germany would be the homeland of his superior race, the Aryans. Inferior races would be used as laborers for the Aryans; the Jews were to be completely eliminated. To implement this final solution, the Nazis expanded the camp system and researched faster and more efficient methods and systems of mass murder. Jews were transported to concentration camps in sealed cattle cars from all over Europe. At death camps, everyone was immediately killed upon arrival. At labor camps, individuals were chosen to live or die: those selected were the prisoners who looked healthy enough to work for the Nazis as slave labor. These prisoners worked until they were no longer useful, and then were sent to their deaths. Most people died from shootings, starvation, disease or poison gas; some were tortured to death or died as guinea pigs in medical experiments. Those who lived did so under inhumane conditions: crowding, disease, lack of food and hygiene, and constant terror.

Although resistance to Nazism was punishable by death, there were small groups of people in Europe who refused to join the party and who risked their lives to help in many different ways. There were incidents of uprisings in Jewish ghettos and armed revolts in death camps, as well as smaller acts of solidarity and resistance. Throughout the Holocaust, the Jews faced the challenge of maintaining their will to live, as well as their human dignity.

Even when the Axis Powers began losing the war, the Nazis continued deportations until the very end, demonstrating the extent of their hatred and obsession. As the Allies moved into German-occupied territory, the Nazis began to cover up the evidence of their work, destroying camps and sending prisoners on death marches toward Germany to prevent their liberation. Many died from cold, hunger and exhaustion during these marches. In April 1945, when it was clear that Germany had lost the war, Hitler committed suicide. In May, Germany surrendered and the war in Europe ended. The Japanese surrendered in August, and World War II was finally over.

As the concentration camps were liberated, the world began to see the magnitude of the brutality of the Holocaust. Even after they were freed, prisoners continued to die of disease, starvation and exhaustion. Displaced persons camps were set up for the several hundred thousand people who had survived or escaped the Nazis, who now needed to recover and figure out what to do next. Jews who tried returning to their homes were often met with hostility and anti-Semitic outbursts. Some were met with only silence: few people wanted to hear about the genocide, let alone acknowledge their own role in it. Many Jews were eager to leave Europe and looked for opportunities to emigrate to the United States, Palestine or elsewhere. These survivors re-built their lives despite the terrible physical, psychological and economic damage they suffered under the hatred and discrimination created by the Nazi regime.

In later years, Nazi leaders and workers were brought to court and convicted. During the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials in 1945, some high-ranking Nazis were prosecuted for crimes against humanity. Their numbers are nowhere near the total of those involved in the genocide of 12 million people, including 6 million Jews.

### **Chronology of the life of Anne Frank and World War II/the Holocaust**

Source: [www.annefrank.com](http://www.annefrank.com)

June 1929

Anne Frank is born in Germany.

January 1933	Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany.
February 1933	The Nazi government suspends freedom of speech and assembly.
March 1933	The Gestapo is created; Dachau, the first concentration camp, is built.
April 1933	The Nazis establish a boycott of Jewish doctors, lawyers and businesses, and remove Jews from jobs in government and as teachers.
May 1933	In rallies across Germany, book burnings are held to destroy books written by Jews and other enemies of the Nazis.
July 1933	Hitler bans all political parties except for the Nazi Party.
September 1933	Otto Frank, Anne's father, sets up his company in Holland.
September 1934	Anne Frank begins kindergarten in Amsterdam.
September 1935	The Nuremberg Laws are passed in Germany.
March 1938	Germany occupies Austria.
November 1938	Kristallnacht (the night of broken glass) takes place in Germany and Austria
March 1939	Germany occupies Czechoslovakia.
September 1939	Hitler invades Poland; France and Britain declare war on Germany, beginning World War II
April/May 1940	Germany invades and occupies Denmark, Norway, Holland, France, Belgium, and Luxembourg.
February 1941	Mass arrests of Dutch Jews take place.
Summer 1941	Anne and her sister Margot attend the Jewish School in Amsterdam.
March 1942	Death camps are established at Sobibor, Belzec, and Auschwitz-Birkenau; more follow.
June 1942	Anne receives a diary for her thirteenth birthday.
July 1942	Margot Frank receives a call-up notice to report for duty in a labor camp.
July 1942	The Frank family goes into hiding in the Secret Annex.
July 1942	The van Pels (Van Daan) family joins the Franks in the Secret Annex.
November 1942	Fritz Pfeffer (Mr. Dussel) goes into hiding in the Secret Annex.
February 1943	Germany advances into the Soviet Union and the war begins to turn in favor of the Allies.
June 1944	D Day: the Allies move into Western Europe.

August 1944	The members of the Secret Annex are betrayed, discovered and deported to Westerbork, a transit camp.
September 1944	The members of the Secret Annex are sent to Auschwitz on the last transport ever to leave Westerbork.
October 1944	Anne and Margot Frank are sent from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp in Germany.
January 1945	Anne's mother dies at Auschwitz.
January 1945	The Russian army liberates Auschwitz and Anne's father is freed.
February/March 1945	Anne and Margot Frank die at Bergen-Belsen camp.
April 1945	Hitler commits suicide.
May 1945	Germany surrenders, ending the war in Europe.
June 1945	Otto Frank returns to Amsterdam.
October 1945	Otto Frank learns of the deaths of Anne and Margot.
Summer 1947	Anne's diary is first published.

## Glossary

Source: [www.annefrank.com](http://www.annefrank.com)

**Allies:** twenty-six countries, including the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union, united to oppose the **Axis** powers, including Germany, Italy and Japan, during World War II.

**Anti-Semitism:** prejudice against and/or fear of Jews.

**Aryan:** anyone with a pure Teutonic German background, the race considered superior by Hitler and the Nazi party. The Nazi goal was to exterminate all races they considered inferior and/or threatening to Aryan racial purity, including the Jews.

**Auschwitz-Birkenau:** the largest of the Nazi death camps, near Krakow, Poland, where more than one million Jews and others died.

**Bergen-Belsen:** a Nazi concentration camp in Germany used for prisoners of war, where 30,000 people died of diseases such as starvation and typhus.

**Call-up notice:** an order to report to the military or police, which usually meant deportation to some kind of camp.

**Concentration camp:** places of imprisonment for the Jews and other enemies of the Nazi party. There were two kinds of concentration camps: labor camps, where prisoners were put to work as slave labor and died from abuse, starvation and disease; and extermination or death camps, established in 1941 for the purpose of murdering large numbers of people in gas chambers.

**Crematorium:** the section of a death camp where prisoners were actually killed, which included the gas chamber, where people were asphyxiated with poison gas, and the incineration chamber, where their bodies were burned.

**Deportation:** the Nazi's forced removal of Jews from their homes to labor and death camps.

**Fascism:** the totalitarian philosophy of government that glorifies the state and nation and gives state control over all parts of national life.

**Final Solution:** the Nazi's euphemism for their plan to exterminate the entire Jewish race, also known as the Total Solution.

**Genocide:** the intentional and systematic murder of a specific racial group or group of people.

**Gestapo:** the Nazi secret police, who organized the arrests and deportation of Jews.

**Ghetto:** the Nazi-created Jewish Quarter of a city, where all Jews from surrounding areas were rounded up and forced to live, often as a step before deportation to concentration camps.

**Gypsies:** the nomadic Roma or Sinti people, also considered an inferior race by the Nazis and targeted for extermination during the Holocaust.

**Holocaust:** the Nazi-driven genocide of six million Jews, and the murder of six million other people, during World War II. **Shoah** is another term used to describe the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis.

**Judenrein:** German, meaning "Jew-free."

**Kristallnacht:** German, meaning "crystal night," the night of broken glass: the Nazi pogrom (riot) that destroyed thousands of Jewish shops and synagogues in Germany and German-occupied territory during November 9 and 10, 1938.

**Liquidation:** the removal of all Jews, either through mass murder or deportation.

**Mein Kampf:** German, meaning "My Struggle;" the title of Hitler's autobiography, written in 1924.

**National Socialist German Worker's Party:** the official name of the Nazi party, a radical fascist party led by Adolf Hitler from 1921-1945.

**Nuremberg Laws:** a set of laws passed in Germany during the fall of 1935, which rendered Jews non-citizens and removed all of their political and civil rights.

**Nuremberg War Crimes Trials:** an international tribunal in November 1945 to try military and civilian Axis leaders for violations of the laws of war, including aggressive warfare, the extermination of the Jews and civilian populations, use of slave labor, looting of occupied areas, and maltreatment and murder of prisoners of war.

**Prejudice:** discrimination against a specific individual or group through stereotypical and unsubstantiated ideas.

**Refugee:** someone who leaves his/her native land because of expulsion, invasion, oppression or persecution.

**Resettlement:** the Nazi's euphemism for the deportation and transport of Jews to concentration camps.

**Scapegoat:** a person or group targeted by others to take the blame and responsibility for certain actions or events.

**Selection:** the Nazi's euphemism for the process of choosing which prisoners in a concentration camp would live to work or immediately be put to death.

**SS (Schutzstaffel):** the elite guard of the Gestapo, who ran the concentration camps.

**Swastika:** a hooked cross, used as the official symbol of the Nazi Party and still used today by neo-Nazi groups.

**Third Reich:** the Nazi term for Germany and its occupied territories in Europe from 1933-1945.

**Totalitarianism:** a form of government in which the state is involved in and strives to control all aspects of society, with the goal of eliminating the difference between the state and its citizens and creating a perfect society.

**Underground:** a term for going into hiding, or for a group acting in secret resistance.

**Versailles Peace Treaty:** the treaty signed at the end of World War I which deemed Germany and its allies responsible for the war, imposing reparations payments, restoring German-occupied territories to other countries, and limiting the German military.

**Weimar Republic:** the post-World War I German democratic state, which existed from 1919 until the election of Hitler as Chancellor in 1933.

**Westerbork:** a transit camp for Dutch Jews in Holland, from which 100,000 Jews were deported to concentration camps; including Anne Frank and the others from the Secret Annex.

**Yellow star:** the Jewish symbol of the six-pointed Star of David, which the Nazis forced Jews above the age of six to wear in public.

## Integration Activities

The following activities are designed and adaptable for students of all levels, in accordance with the Washington State standards for history and social studies. They aim to explore the issues and events of this production through a dynamic, hands-on approach. Students may address the following topics and questions through any of the suggested mediums or a combination of them:

*Writing:* write a story, a poem, a report, an article, a scene, a play, a song, a caption

*Art:* draw or paint a picture; create a collage, a sculpture, a comic strip; take a photograph; make a video

*Drama:* create a still image, a dance or movement activity, a series of images, an improvisation, a scene, a play

*Discussion:* partner or small group talk, oral report or presentation

1. Supplement a specific scene in the script with work in another medium.
2. Supplement a specific image from the video with work in another medium.
3. Interview a character from the piece.

4. Research historical documents to find a real person's description of an event from Sarah's story. Share what you learn.
5. Read and explore selections from other fictional or first person perspectives (see bibliography for suggestions).
6. Re-create a scene from the piece from another character's point of view.
7. Who were the people who helped Sarah, Anne, their families, or other Jews? Research and share what some people did to resist the Nazis or assist the Jews during this time.
8. Explore the idea of the scapegoat. How is the treatment that the Jews received during World War II related to the treatment other ethnic groups have received during other periods or history, including today? Research and compare.
9. Choose a part of Sarah's story that you'd like to know more about and research it. Share what you learn.
10. Research another event in history and how it is related to this one.
11. Imagine you could get in touch with Sarah. What would you want to tell her or show her about the future?
12. How did watching *Through the Eyes of A Friend* make you feel?
13. Choose a quotation from Anne Frank's diary to use for discussion or exploration.
14. Imagine and explore what it would be like to be in hiding like Anne or Sarah: What would you miss? What would you do each day? What would the constant threat and fear do to you?
15. Collect newspaper clippings about neo-Nazi activities and racist or hate crimes.
16. Discuss with students whether they think there is a racial problem in their own school or community.
17. Discuss students' own experiences with racism: What was their role in the incident? Were they victims, bystanders, spectators or offenders? What did they do? What did other people do?
18. What would you do/how would you feel if these events were happening now? Could today's racism lead to something like the Holocaust?
19. Discuss the poem by Martin Neimoller:

*First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out — because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for the Communists and I did not speak out, because I was not a Communist.  
Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out, because I was not a trade unionist.  
Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.*

### **Supplemental drama activities:**

*Role-on-the-wall*: a character is represented in the form of an outline of a person, on which the group writes or draws information about that character: on the inside of the figure is written what the character thinks or feels about herself; on the outside, how she appears or how others perceive her. This activity can be repeated for multiple characters, including other fictional or real-life people. This activity can be

used as a jumping point for further discussion and exploration of character choices, motivation, perceptions and prejudices.

*Still images/tableaux*: Image work can be used to explore any theme, idea or topic. It can be literal or symbolic, can depict actual events from the piece or imaginary ones, and can also focus on different points of view. Students may then select characters from the images to interview or scenes to bring to life or explore further in other ways.

*Voices in the Head*: students form two lines facing each other to make a path for Sarah as she leaves to go into hiding. As Sarah passes through (played by the teacher, a student or series of students), students creating the path offer her a piece of advice. Alternately, or in addition, they may speak as her family, friends, acquaintances or personal thoughts and feelings.

*Forum Theatre*:

- a. In partners or small groups, students share personal experiences of racism or prejudice.
- b. For each personal story, students work separately to create their image of the situation (images may be visual or dramatic). The images are then shown to the whole group to compare and discuss.
- c. Situations are selected and played as improvisations, in which other members of the group can freeze the scene at a crucial moment, take on the role of the main character and experiment with different ways the scene could have happened.