

## **“So why did they go into hiding?” Anne Frank in her historic and social context.**

### **Introduction and rationale**

All too often Anne Frank becomes a symbol; there is a rose, an asteroid, a stage play and a musical all named after her, as well as a rock album recorded in her honour and numerous biographies written for children of various ages. She is used to show "the triumph of hope over evil", even though she was killed during the Holocaust, she died from the horrific conditions in Bergen-Belsen. Sometimes she is quoted utterly out of context to provide uplifting sentiments, or short phrases with redemptive messages.

What this lesson sets out to do is to show that Anne Frank was a real teenage girl in a real historical context, and if we are to understand her brilliance we need to look beyond the simplistic clichés that are associated with her. We should look at the life of this girl whose family left Germany as refugees, to live in Amsterdam; who worked hard at being Dutch, addressing her diary to Kitty, a character from a famous Dutch children's novel. We need to see the importance of her father Otto, he planned their move from Frankfurt to Amsterdam then later the preparations for their hiding place on Prinsengracht. This lesson explores the events of Anne's life as well as the events in Nazi Germany and in the occupied Netherlands to show the real world in which Anne lived.

### **Curriculum links**

There are a number of important curriculum links that come out of studying Anne Frank. Clearly by putting her Diary in a historical context there is an overlap between English and History, in that this diary was written during World War Two and is full of references to the war. However there is also a complex geography here too; she was born in Germany but her diary was written in Amsterdam, she was sent to Auschwitz in Poland but died in a camp in Germany.

It is important to get the pupils to work together, armed with sugar paper and marker pens. They will generate their own questions then explore the materials to attempt to answer them. This will support their speaking and listening skills as well as build their confidence in using the technical language of history. It also requires them to define terms like refugee and migrant that relate to population movement in Geography.

Constructing a timeline also supports the application of number lines from Maths to a different subject.

### **The Lesson**

There are five stages in the lesson, though some of these can be combined towards the end

**Stage One.** Introducing the diary and generating the questions.

Use the three extracts from Anne Frank's diary. These have been selected to show three key moments early in the story; 14<sup>th</sup> June as this was about her birthday, presenting an innocent happy scene, 9<sup>th</sup> July the day the family went into hiding and 19<sup>th</sup> November as this gives an idea of what was happening and what the Franks were trying to avoid.

The pupils read these quotes and discuss what is going on and what more do they want or need to know. These questions will vary from ones we cannot answer such as "What biscuits did she take in to school?" or "Why volleyball?" to ones that are demanding more knowledge "Who was Margot?" or "What is a call up notice?" Some questions will need more expansive answers such as "Why were they going into hiding?" or "Why did they move to the Netherlands?" (A sample of questions is in box A)

It is useful to discuss the various questions the groups have come up with and agree on a class set of questions. To do this they will talk about what makes some questions more important to answer than others and they will see that History is a process of enquiry rather than a body of knowledge.

## **Stage Two.** Anne Frank's life.

The pupils, still in their groups, sequence the 13 blue cards. These give an overview of Anne Frank's life as well as her parents' marriage and the publication of her diary. As they sequence these they see which of their questions they can now answer and if there are any more questions that have arisen or aspects of this story that surprise them. The most common question to arise is "Why would the Frank family leave Germany?"

## **Stage Three** Treatment of the Jews in the Netherlands

The second set of cards (green) are inserted in the sequence. Once again the pupils look to see if there is any information that helps them to answer questions or if there are any new questions that arise here.

## **Stage Four** a wider context

The students repeat the activity with the cream coloured cards. This set refers to the Nazis coming to power in Germany and to the liberation of the Netherlands. This is where the pupils start to formulate an explanation for Otto and Edith Frank's decision to move away from their home city of Frankfurt and start a new life in Amsterdam. There is a danger here of back-shadowing our knowledge onto the Frank family. Whilst we know that in 1940 the Netherlands was invaded and occupied by Germany, the Frank family could not have known that in 1933. Furthermore throughout World War One the Netherlands had been neutral, so it would have appeared a safe country in which Jews fleeing Germany could seek refuge.

## **Stage Five** the response of Dutch people

The final three cards (purple) show the response of the Dutch population to the persecution of the Dutch Jews. It is important to point out that these protests were met with repression, the strikes in February 1941 led to the occupying Germans calling a State of Emergency and on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1942, Jews who had converted to Catholicism were arrested as a response to the letter of protest read out in churches.

## **Conclusion**

Here the ideas are pulled together around three themes;

What do we now know? Why did they leave Frankfurt? Why did Otto and Edith plan to go into hiding? And what triggered it? What does this tell us about Otto and Edith?

Which of our questions can we answer from the information we have collected?

Are there any elements of the story that surprise us?

## **Why choose Anne Frank**

- She is a famous person. Her diary has been translated into 67 languages and sold over 31 million copies, she is a major figure in world literature, there are numerous books about her life written for primary age children. In their 2016 research the Centre for Holocaust Education found, that amongst year 7 pupils, "...the diary of Anne Frank was the most regularly cited book read by students."
- Studying Anne Frank helps children to see others as real people. Anne was a refugee but she was so much more. It helps the pupils see that the Jews persecuted and murdered under the Nazis were all people with their own hopes and fears, loves and dislikes. This helps them to confront the nature of diversity in history.
- It introduces pupils to ideas of migration, refugees, diversity and persecution. Ideas that are as important now as they were in the 1930's.

- Her diary explores a range of complex and challenging issues, whilst at the same time being an accessible text. The pupils can discuss the real ethical problem about whether we have the right to read another person's diary. They can also explore how the diary has been edited, as the translation published in 1952 is shorter than the one published 1995. Throughout I have used Anne Frank **The Diary of a Young Girl** The Definitive Edition translated by Susan Massotty published by Penguin in 1997.
- She can cause controversies even now. This can be about the content of the diary, in some parts of America recent translations of her diary are banned as they include her reflections upon puberty. Some people read the diary and draw optimistic messages from it whilst others see it as showing how easy it is to crush the human spirit.
- The Prime Minister's commission into Holocaust education advocated a spiral curriculum, by siting Anne Frank in her historic context pupils are taking the first steps on the spiral curriculum that leads to growing understanding of the Holocaust.

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