

The Power of Children: Making a Difference

Script for Anne Frank: *On Again with Fresh Courage*

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Context: This scene takes place in the Secret Annex in Amsterdam at Otto Frank's company Opetka in March of 1944. Anne Frank is in her room writing at her desk.

Character Description: Anne Frank is three months away from her fifteenth birthday in this scene and has been in hiding in the Secret Annex with her family for almost two years.

Materials/Props: a writing desk, loose paper and pen

PROGRAM/ACTIVITY SCRIPT:

Anne enters, closing the door and breathing a sigh of relief. She sees her desk and smiles at the thought of having some time alone in which to write. She crosses to the desk, arranges her things, and begins to work.

(She holds up a piece of loose paper and reads.)

(reading) "Dear Kitty. I get along quite well with all my teachers. But Mr. Keesing, the old math master, was very annoyed with me for a long time because I chatter so much. So I had to write a composition about "A Chatterbox". A chatterbox! Whatever could I write? *(She marks on the page, as if crossing two "t's")* I thought and thought and then, suddenly, filled three sides and felt completely satisfied. My argument was that I would do my best to keep it under control, but I will never be cured because my mother talks as much as I do, probably more, and what can I do about inherited qualities?"

(She smiles and turns to address the audience.)

When I look at my diary today, one and a half years later, I can't believe that I was ever such an innocent young thing. These entries were written by a different Anne Frank, very different from the Anne who has grown wise within these walls.

(Beat.)

But enough of that! Yesterday, March 29th, 1944! The Minister of Education, Art and Science, said this on the radio:

(She picks up another loose sheet and reads.)

“History cannot be written on the basis of official documents alone. If our descendants are to understand fully what we as a nation have had to endure and overcome during these years, then what we really need are ordinary documents—a diary, letters!”

Letters. . . and diaries, preserved for history! I immediately started revising my earlier entries. I’m careful not to change too many things, no matter how embarrassed I am, because. . . well. . . that wouldn’t seem right. There are a good many pages where I could cross out things and write “past and done with!” in the margins, but my moods are as much a part of me as everything else. *(Indicates her diary)* And this is my story—“The Secret Annex.”

I regard our hiding as a dangerous adventure, romantic and interesting at the same time. It started almost two years ago, when the doorbell rang.

(She reads from her diary.)

“July 8th, 1942. My older sister Margot found me reading on the veranda. “The S.S. has sent a call-up notice,” she said. It was a great shock. . . everyone knows what a call-up means. Concentration camps. Forced labor. Lonely cells. Margot turned to me and said, “Anne, the call-up isn’t for Daddy. . . it’s for me.” *(Pause. She looks up.)*

That was the end of life as I knew it.

(She reads again.)

“Mummy and Daddy told us we were going into hiding. We couldn’t be seen leaving our house with suitcases, so I wore two vests, three pairs of pants, a dress, a skirt on top of that, a jacket, a summer coat, two pairs of stockings, lace up shoes, woolly cap, a scarf and more. I was stifled before we started off. We stripped the beds, left the breakfast things on the table, threw a pound of meat on the floor for the cat, all to give the impression that we had left in a hurry.”

The hiding place itself turned out to be right here, in the building where Daddy has his office, and the only entrance is disguised by this special bookcase.

(She reads.)

“There is no bath—we use a washtub because there is hot water only in the office on the lower floor. Last week when the plumber was at work downstairs we couldn’t draw water or use the bathroom *for 10 hours!*”

(She looks up.)

It was bad, but not as bad as having to sit still and be silent. We have to whisper on ordinary days, but not being able to speak or move while the plumber was here was ten times worse! Imagine me. . . the chatterbox. . . not talking at all! Things we took for granted. . . everyday things like throwing out the garbage. . . must be carefully monitored. Everyone complains, but deep down I believe we all know that things could be much, much worse.

My mother, father, sister and I are here in hiding with Mr. and Mrs. Van Pels and their son Peter. The Van Pels family lives upstairs and we have the lower level. Unfortunately, I have to share my room with Mr. Pfeffer, who joined us a year ago-- eight Jews in all, crammed together in a very small space. Relations between us here move from pleasant to barely tolerable. Some days it seems we’ve almost forgotten how to laugh.

When that happens, we remind each other of what we’ve shared. We remember. . .

(She stops herself. Pause.)

But who would want to remember this? Why should we remember this? It’s terrible outside! Day and night more miserable people are dragged off. Families are torn apart; children come home from school and find that their parents have disappeared. Women return from shopping to find their homes shut up and their families missing. Every night hundreds of planes fly over Holland on their way to Germany, where the earth is plowed up by bombs, and every hour hundreds and thousands of people are killed.

We often ask ourselves, “What is the use of the war, why can’t people live peacefully together, why all this destruction?” Why are millions spent daily on the war and not a penny on medical services, artists or on poor people? Why are people so crazy?

Sometimes at night, when I’m in bed, I see myself alone in a dungeon, without Mummy and Daddy. Sometimes I dream that our “Secret Annex” is on fire, or they come and take us away at night.

I ask myself if it would not have been better for us if we hadn’t gone into hiding, if we were dead now and not going through all of this misery. I mostly worry about our

helpers; they are in terrible danger for hiding us. Let the end come, even if it is hard, then at least we shall know whether we are finally going to win through or go under.

I'm longing—so longing—for everything. . . to talk, for freedom, for friends, to be alone. I feel as if I'm going to burst! I'm restless. I go from one room to the other, breathe at the bottom of a window, feel my heart beating, as if it's saying, "Can't you satisfy my longings at last?"

I look out through a tiny crack in our black curtains, over all the roofs and on to the far distance, fading into purple. As long as that exists and I may live to see it, the sunshine, the cloudless skies, while that lasts, I can't be unhappy. If only I could go outside! I believe that nature sets all fear at rest for every trouble, even when there are bombs or gunfire.

So I write; not just to record these events, but to temper this longing within me. I don't want to have lived for nothing. I want to be useful or give pleasure to the people around me—I want to go on living even after my death!

I must work, so as to get on and become a journalist, because that's what I want! Anyone who doesn't write doesn't know how wonderful it is; and if I find that I haven't any talent for writing books or newspaper articles, well, then I can always write for myself.

I can shake off everything if I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn.

Writing is a powerful act. It is an act of significance, of remembrance. As terrible as it all is, we must remember. So others won't have to experience what I have.

Share your stories. . . write them down. Shared stories preserve our dreams, they record our history, and they encourage us to make a promise for the future.

So. . . on again with fresh courage!

Anne crosses back to her desk, tucks the loose sheets into her diary and touches it for a moment. She takes a deep breath and looks to the door. She opens it slowly, then exits into the darkness outside the room.

SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- **How many of you knew about Anne and her diary before seeing our exhibit today? And where did you learn about her?**

- **Based on what you heard today, and what you already knew, can anyone tell me what Anne had to face that made her life different from our lives today? What did she have to go through that most kids today haven't lived through?**
- **Almost everything you heard in our show today was taken directly from Anne's diary; a diary that has affected millions of people around the world. Why do you think that Anne's diary has meant so much to so many people?**