Anne Frank Biography

“It’s difficult in times like these; ideals, dreams and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. It’s a wonder I haven’t abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart.”

– Anne Frank 21 July 1944

Anne Frank could easily have just become another statistic in the holocaust of the Second World War. But after the war, her father Otto Frank, discovered his daughters diary. Struck by her maturity and depth of feeling, he published her diary – originally under the title ‘Diary of A Young Girl’. It became one of the most famous records of the holocaust, and helped to give a human story behind the dreadful holocaust statistics.

Anne Frank was born on 12 June 1929 in Frankfurt, Germany, In 1933 (the same year as the Nazi’s rise to power) her family moved to Holland, where her father ran a successful business.

However, after the fall of Holland to the Nazi’s in 1940, the Jewish population experienced ever increasingly repressive measures.

“After May 1940…the trouble started for the Jews. Our freedom was severely restricted by a series of anti-Jewish decrees: Jews were required to wear a yellow star; Jews were required to turn-in their bicycles; Jews were forbidden to ride trams or in cars, even their own…Jews were forbidden to go to theatres, cinemas or any other forms of entertainment; Jews were forbidden to use swimming pools, tennis courts, hockey fields or any other athletic fields…You couldn’t do this and you couldn’t do that, but life went on…”

– Anne Frank 20 June 1942
Finally, to escape arrest, Otto Frank took his family into forced hiding, behind one of his business premises in the heart of Amsterdam. Her family were later joined by the Van Pels family who were also trying to avoid arrest.

Anne’s diary tells of the difficulties of living in a confined space with so many people. The atmosphere was at times suffocating, but despite the hardships and difficulties of her situation, she also expressed her optimism and positive view of life and a natural joie de vivre.

I long to ride a bike, dance, whistle, look at the world, feel young and know that I’m free, and yet I can’t let it show. Just imagine what would happen if all eight of us were to feel sorry for ourselves or walk around with the discontent clearly visible on our faces. Where would that get us? (December 24, 1943) – Anne Frank

Unfortunately, on August 4th, 1944 (with the allies closing in on a retreating Germany army), an anonymous source gave a tip off to the German secret police. The families were arrested and sent on the last convoy train to Auschwitz. After surviving the selection process (most people under 15 were sent straight to the Gas Chambers) Anne was selected to be sent to Bergen Belsen concentration camp. It was here that Anne contracted typhoid fever and she died in March 1945, just one month before the camp was liberated by the advancing allied armies.

Except her father Otto, all her family died in various concentration camps. After the war, Otto returned to the place where they had hidden for two years. It was here that he found Anne’s diary and he decided to try and get it published.

Her diary was published in 1947 and, following a glowing article by Jan Romein, in the newspaper Het Parool, became a best seller with people fascinated by her writing and what she managed to convey in the most difficult of situations.

Her book has become an important symbol of how innocent people can suffer from intolerance and persecution.