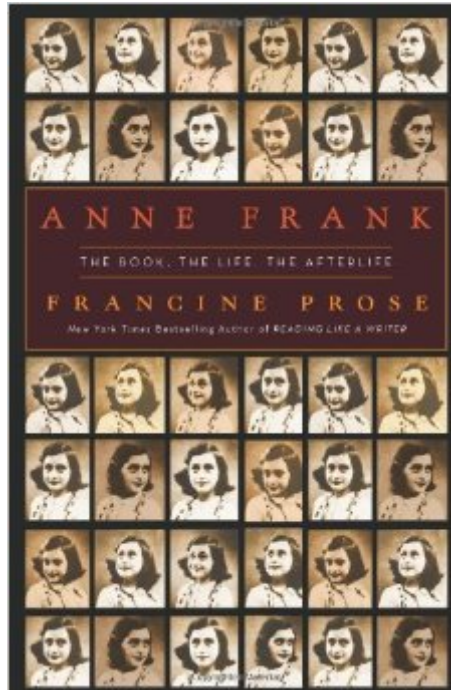


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Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife



Synopsis

â œA definitive, deeply moving inquiry into the life of the young, imperiled artist, and a masterful exegesis of Diary of a Young Girlâ |Extraordinary testimony to the power of literature and compassionâ • â “Booklist (starred review)In Anne Frank: The Book, the Life, the Afterlife, Francine Prose, author of Reading Like a Writer, deftly parses the artistry, ambition, and enduring influence of Anne Frankâ ™s beloved classic, The Diary of a Young Girl. Approved by both the Anne Frank House Foundation in Amsterdam and the Anne Frank-Fonds in Basel, run by the Frank family, this work of literary criticism unravels the complex, fascinating story of the diary and effectively makes the case for it being a work of art from a precociously gifted writer. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

It appears that when an occurrence or person attains a certain fame, increasingly more is read into it. Author Prose does so perhaps to the utmost. As a Holocaust survivor myself, I would like to bring things down to earth some. Anne Frank was one of the millions of victims of Nazism, and her plight happened to be recorded by her to a reasonable extent, and that recording happened to survive and become known along with attending circumstances. Her story is particularly poignant, because she was a child, representative of the many others eventually brutally murdered. However, Prose portrays her as so exceptional in personal qualities that it diminishes in merit other victims (I hope not to be self-serving, but objective). The author characterizes her as a "literary genius" (p.69), a

"prodigy" (p.131), her writing a "masterpiece" (p.69), "that the seeming artlessness of her style is an artistic achievement" (p.264). Could it be that her style was genuinely artless, unpretentious? It seems author Prose only weakens her credibility by such superlatives, when Anne Frank deserves a sober account of her tragic misfortune in order to be appreciated. Author Prose heightens the reader's sense of insufficient reliability by describing young Anne (p.84) as "beautiful", as "photogenic", while readers are themselves enabled to make such a judgment. No doubt many will not see the child as beautiful and photogenic, unless every child can be so described. Rather, little Anne projects (as I see it) sweetness and innocence, which should arouse more sympathy than the preceding descriptions. I don't want to fault author Prose too much, since she informs well in many aspects, as in calling attention to Nazi inhumanity in many forms, like the language they used.

Francine Prose, in "Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife," takes a comprehensive look at an individual who, more than six decades after her death, remains an iconic figure all over the world. Prose considers "The Diary of Anne Frank" to be "the greatest book ever written about a thirteen-year-old girl." After rereading the diary as an adult, she concludes that it is not merely "the innocent and spontaneous outpourings of a teenager," but rather "a consciously crafted work of literature," one that Anne revised thoroughly, hoping to reach a wide audience someday. Between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, Anne developed from a girl into a mature adolescent whose keen self-awareness, understanding of human nature, and moral vision were remarkable in one so young. The author pays homage to Anne's technique, characterization, detailed descriptive writing, and skillful use of dialogue, all of which contribute to the diary's widespread appeal. Anne Frank is divided into four sections: The Life, The Book, The Afterlife, and Anne Frank in the Schools. Prose recounts the events leading up to the Franks' decision to go into hiding. Otto Frank, his wife, Edith, and their two children, as well as four other people, stayed in the annex for two years and one month. They were helped immeasurably by a compassionate Dutch woman named Miep Gies, who did what she could to make the residents as comfortable as possible. Ultimately, however, someone betrayed them and they all perished, with the exception of Otto Frank. In part two, Prose recounts the genesis of the diary and provides details about Anne's revisions, Otto Frank's edits, the controversies that the diary generated, and its reception by the publishing industry.

When originally released in the United States, Anne Frank's *THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL* met with unmitigated enthusiasm, inspiring everyone who read it with its call to understanding and forgiveness. In a new era, civilized people tolerate the intolerable and allow the same book to be

labeled false and pornographic by a vocal few. Yet still the book inspires, speaking a universal language with a wisdom that exceeds the years of its writer, teenaged journalist Anne Frank. This is a book about the book --- a highly favorable critique of its remarkable content and style, and the story of how it came to be. Anne, as it is famously known, was the child of a prominent Dutch Jew, Otto Frank, who converted the attic of his small factory into a cramped hiding place for his family when the deportation of Jews began to take place during the Nazi regime. For two years, the small group woke up, interacted during the night, slept during the day, and successfully kept themselves from discovery with the help of Otto's trusted factory staff, who brought in supplies and maintained total secrecy. At some point, however, their ruse was discovered and the Nazis finally ripped the Frank family apart. For the average teenage girl the confining conditions would have been intolerable, and had Anne not been a most unusual teenager, it easily could have been hell. But Anne's rare talent for writing helped her focus most of her time on composing the story of the everyday events she observed in the attic, along with her musings about love and war.

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