TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST
A Guide to ANNE FRANK: HER LIFE IN WORDS AND PICTURES, A FAMILY SECRET, and THE SEARCH
from the Anne Frank House
World War II and the Holocaust are difficult but important subjects to read about. Between 1939 and 1945, an estimated 50 to 70 million people died—soldiers and civilians, young and old, intended victims, and accidental casualties. In Germany and other European countries, Nazis targeted and pursued Jewish people; about six million Jews were killed, and approximately one and a half million of that number were children. Other groups were also targeted: political opponents, disabled people, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, and Gypsies. Thousands were killed. History teaches us these facts, and timelines enumerate the hideous trail of destruction.

It is through the narratives of victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and survivors that we become aware of the human side of these events. Every person who lived in Europe during that terrible time has a unique, personal story, an individual account that forces the reader or listener to alter his or her vision of the period from that of large-scale devastation and impersonal numbers to real-life tragedy. Statistics tell us what happened, but the stories let us know how it felt.

Fortunately, these stories survive, thanks in part to museums, archives, libraries, and more. One such place is the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. Recently published by the Anne Frank House, Anne Frank: Her Life in Words and Pictures is a book to read and pore over, as it includes many photographs of the Frank family never published before. In A Family Secret, we read about the experiences of a fictional Dutch family during World War II. Powerful storytelling, combined with the narrative energy of the graphic novel format, convey the details of this horrific moment in world history. In another equally powerful graphic novel, The Search, the main facts about the Holocaust are revealed through the eyes of another fictional family affected by the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. Based on meticulous historical research, each of the latter books presents information related by eyewitness accounts.

These books, appropriate for students in middle school and up, may be used individually or as a unit. As such, this guide provides discussion questions and activities for each book, and closes with cumulative questions and activities that may be used to link the three books.
Anne Frank was born in 1929 to loving, educated, middle-class parents in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. On her thirteenth birthday, June 12, 1942, she received a red-and-white plaid diary. The subsequent events of her life, recorded assiduously, filled up this little book and innumerable notebook pages, and resulted in the literary classic The Diary of Anne Frank. Anne became a symbol of the horror of the Holocaust. Anne Frank: Her Life in Words and Pictures is the perfect companion to her diary as it presents photographs of the family alongside excerpts from the diary and explanations of corresponding historical events. Such complete documentation of everyday life from the standpoint of one family enhances students’ ability to comprehend the scope of the catastrophe to millions. For more information about Anne’s story and others, please visit:
http://annefrankguide.net/
http://annefrank.com

The visual format of the graphic novel blends text and images in a way that appeals to young people. The printed words work in unison with the illustrations to tell the story. This is most clearly seen in panels where the text provides information that isn’t available in the pictures, or where the pictures show important details that are intentionally absent from the text. These books are most suitable for middle school and high school students of all academic levels and backgrounds, for they give a fresh perspective to a new generation of learners. The reader can move from one panel to the next at his or her own pace, which allows for the opportunity to notice nuances of the storyboard, including background images, colors denoting mood, and other nontextual information.

To learn more about graphic novels and how they can enhance your students’ learning experience, refer to the following resources recommended by the National Council of Teachers of English:
www.readwritethink.org/beyondtheclassroom/summer/podcastsvideos/TextMessages/15IntroGraphicNovels_detail.asp
www.ncte.org/magazine/archives/12203
1. Find Frankfurt am Main, Germany, on a map, and research information about its standard of living. What kind of neighborhood does it appear the Franks lived in? What city here in the United States would you compare it to? How far is Amsterdam from Frankfurt? How different were these cities in the 1930s?

2. What can you determine about the Frank family from these photos? What do you see that indicates how they lived? What can you tell from the photographs about the historical context of the time in which they lived?

3. Find reports in current newspapers of religious intolerance, racism, genocide, and threats to individuals’ civil rights. The anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” List five ways you would change the world to rid it of such abuse.

4. Compare the photos of the Frank family prior to 1942 with the images of their attic hiding place. “Who would have guessed three months ago that quicksilver Anne would have to sit so quietly for hours on end, and what’s more that she could?” (p. 94) Do you think you could behave so well under similar circumstances? And why?

5. After about a year of living in hiding, Anne writes, “We long for Saturdays because that means books . . . Our only diversions are reading, studying and listening to the wireless.” (p. 110) How would you pass the time in such a situation? Imagine you have thirty minutes to pack a bag with your most cherished possessions. Draw pictures of the items.

6. There is a saying that “one picture is worth a thousand words.” Which picture in this book is worth that, in your estimation? Why?

7. Otto Frank said that he was not interested in pursuing the person who betrayed his family. Make a chart listing the advantages and disadvantages of engaging in such a quest.

8. What has most shaped your understanding of World War II: Anne’s diary, popular films such as The Boy in the Striped Pajamas, history class, or other books?

9. Since we have computers now, very few people keep diaries (or even write letters!). Have you ever read the diary of one of your ancestors? Would you like to? Keep a journal for one week in which you relate all your feelings as well as your activities; then consider how you would like someone else to read it.

10. In the course of keeping a diary, Anne learns about herself and makes astute observations about her situation and others’, such as:

   “It’s amazing how much these generous and unselfish people do, risking their own lives to help and save others. The best example of this is our own helpers . . . Never have they uttered a single word about the burden we must be, never have they complained that we’re too much trouble.” (p. 98)

   “Even though I’m only fourteen, I know what I want, I know who’s right and who’s wrong, I have my own opinions, ideas and principles, and though it may sound odd coming from a teenager, I feel I’m more of a person than a child—I feel I’m completely independent of others.” (p. 140)

   “Can you tell me why people go to such lengths to hide their real selves? Or why I always behave very differently when I’m in the company of others?” (p. 141)

(Continued on page 4)
"What’s the point of the war? Why, oh, why can’t people live together peacefully? Why all this destruction?” (p. 152)

"It’s a wonder I haven’t abandoned all my ideals, they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart. It’s utterly impossible for me to build my life on a foundation of chaos, suffering and death. I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness, I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us too, I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too will end, that peace and tranquillity will return once more.” (p. 159)

Is there any quotation from Anne’s diary that particularly moves you? Is there one that you feel you could have written yourself? Consider your own diary: Did you learn something about yourself? Were you able to see a situation more clearly having written about it?

This engaging graphic novel opens on a contemporary scene in Amsterdam as a teenage Jeroen prepares for Queen’s Day festivities. In his effort to gather items to sell at the flea market, he explores his grandmother Helena’s attic, discovering items from her past that spark an initial conversation about the war years, her youth, her family, and her friends. She reveals a deeply held family secret, her father’s complicity with the Nazis, and further describes how terribly divided her two brothers were politically, while she did everything in her power to protect her dear Jewish friend Esther. Later, when Jeroen fortuitously finds Esther at a Dutch Memorial Day ceremony, he is able to bring about a most joyful reunion and a revelation that reverberates through time.

Graphic novels are the perfect genre for introducing young people to historical events they might otherwise avoid. The images speak a kind of shorthand, depicting what would take many words to say, as they are read in conjunction with the text.
1. Helena’s narrative begins with the meeting of her new neighbor Esther, a Jewish girl from Germany who gives a brief history of the Nazi rise to power. What was Kristallnacht? How did it affect the average German? How was it portrayed outside of Germany? Find newspaper accounts of that time using http://news.google.com/archivesearch.

2. The Nazis needed collaborators to carry out their goals. What would have influenced someone to become a Nazi collaborator? What factors would have encouraged someone to join the Resistance?

3. After the Nazi takeover of Holland, there were deep divisions in Helena’s family regarding resistance and collaboration. What was Helena’s father’s decision, as depicted on page 16? Would you have been supportive of such a decision?

4. What actions did the Dutch people take to resist the Nazi occupation? What was the price of resistance during the war? Was it worth the risk? Imagine your school principal has just established a new policy that everyone must attend Saturday morning classes. Discuss with your classmates the likelihood of everyone going along with it. Break into groups to determine the actions to take.

5. The Nazis abolished some human rights in every place they conquered. Which rights would it be hardest for you to lose? To which losses could you readily adapt? Consider the right to go to school, to see a doctor, to use public transportation, and to go to the movies. List your most important human rights.

6. Why did Helena prefer being at Esther’s house to being at her own (p. 21)?

7. Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbor marked a turning point in the war. How was this news received by the Dutch? Were Europeans aware of the German plan to exterminate the Jews? How do we know what they knew and when they knew it? Create a time line of World War II events.

8. The Nazis carefully organized razzias, in which Jews were rounded up and taken away to concentration camps. How would you react to seeing neighbors suddenly taken away by government agents? Could this happen today?

9. After the long and very cold Hunger Winter of 1944-45, Amsterdam was finally liberated, but the transition back to normalcy wasn’t completely smooth. What do you think about the way collaborators were dealt with? What happened to Helena’s father? What was the price of collaboration?

10. Were you surprised at Jeroen’s interest in his grandmother’s history? Interview the oldest members of your family to learn the stories of their past. What about your own experiences do you hope to pass on to your future children and grandchildren?

From the interior of A Family Secret
1. What were some of the first signs of discrimination against the Jews? When Hitler rose to power, he changed certain laws; therefore, he acted “legally.” How important is it for average citizens to be fully informed of changing laws? To have the ability to go to court or publish their opinions?

2. Helena’s father, the policeman, gives Esther the choice to go with her parents or somewhere else (p. 19). Bob chose to stay with his parents (p. 34), while Esther chose to flee. What would you have chosen? Why?

3. Where did Esther go after the war? She was still a teenager—who helped her make that decision? Where would you have gone?

4. Do you agree with Daniel and Jeroen that the allies should have bombed the concentration camps (p. 52)? What would have been the consequence of such an action?

5. In Amsterdam, as well as in many other cities after the war, newspapers constantly ran ads for people trying to find surviving family and friends. Can you imagine such a scenario today? It is of course something very different, but after Hurricane Katrina displaced many people and destroyed much of New Orleans, how did family members find each other?

6. Today Auschwitz-Birkenau remains an emblem of evil, a site of historical remembrance, a vast cemetery. Hundreds of thousands visit the camps each year to learn, to grieve, or to reflect on the past. Is this appropriate? State reasons why you would visit Auschwitz-Birkenau today or why you think you would not visit the former concentration camp.

7. How far back do you know your family’s history, its stories? When did the first members of your family come to this country? Why did they come? What was their journey like? How were they met once they arrived? Are there photographs? Have you visited the places where your ancestors lived?

(Continued on page 7)
The sequel to A Family Secret, The Search takes us back to Helena’s home, where she is reconnecting with her old friend Esther, whom she hasn’t seen since 1944. Esther’s own family is on their way to join the gathering; she, too, has a teenage grandson—Daniel—and he is equally eager to explore his family’s past. As they head off together to reunite with the family that saved her, Esther continues to relate the story of her childhood and survival, a parallel to Helena’s tale. From there she finds (with the help of the Internet) the only person who witnessed her parents’ last days, and so she finally learns the entire truth. When the whole group is once again together, mourning their respective losses, Helena’s memory is triggered and she presents Esther with her family’s sixty-year-old family photo album.

The colors and hues of each frame expand the mood of the story as it unfolds and bounds from the Netherlands to Germany to Israel and back, from city to country, from beauty to horror. The graphic format is the perfect vehicle for relating this saga.

(Continued from page 6)

8. Every day thousands of family photographs are taken without regard to future generations’ views of them. Yet family photographs can be considered cultural artifacts because they document the events that shape families’ lives. How does Esther’s album do just that? Can scholars benefit from researching family photo albums?

9. Nowadays, many families simply keep and display photographs on their computers. Does the rapidly changing technology endanger the potential for photographic documentation, or does it improve it? It’s now possible to alter photographs almost undetectably. Does this pose a threat to future historians?

10. Compare and contrast Helena’s experience during the war with Esther’s. Are they similar even though one girl was not Jewish, while the other was? Pretend you are a reporter for television and you have the chance to interview each of the characters involved in this story (Helena, her brothers, Esther, the farmer, the policemen, et al.). Write the script for your questions and their answers.
Culminating Questions and Activities

1. In *A Family Secret* and *The Search*, the grandmothers, who were teenagers during the war, obviously had not shared details of their pasts with their own children. A generation was skipped, as it was their teenage grandchildren who unlocked their pasts. It is not unusual for some survivors to refrain from discussing the past. Read stories of other survivors at www.holocaustsurvivors.org/survivors.php and identify the reasons why some are compelled to share their experiences or, conversely, withhold them.

2. It is said that for democracy to survive, there is nothing more important than a free and open press. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, at the United Nations General Assembly, 1948, states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” Do you agree? Is this still an issue today?

3. Compare what we know now with what was known as the events of World War II were unfolding. Go to www.newspaperarchive.com/ or http://nytimes.com/ to read newspapers from those years. How much news were Americans getting? What was on the front pages and what was buried in subsequent pages? Who decides which stories appear on which pages?

4. Were Nazis able to influence world opinion? Look at newspapers today and find reports of prejudice, hatred, and anti-Semitism, as well as heroism, resistance, rescue, etc. Are there any noticeable trends? Is there something that you can do yourself about what annoys you?

Additional Web Resources

The following Web sites will be helpful to teachers:

www.ushmm.org

www1.yadvashem.org/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/mutimedia/index.html

http://fcit.usf.edu/Holocaust/

www.holocaust-trc.org/edures.htm

www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/resources/links.htm

www.jr.co.il/hotsites/j-holoc.htm

About the Anne Frank House

The former hiding place where Anne Frank wrote her diary is now a well-known museum. The museum tells the history of the eight people in hiding in the Secret Annex and those who helped them during the war. Anne Frank’s diary is among the original objects on display. In addition to the historic rooms, where the history of Anne Frank is central, there are other exhibitions in the museum; and the Anne Frank House develops educational products and activities to promote tolerance and mutual respect in society. For more information, visit: www.annefrank.org.
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This guide was prepared by Etta Gold and Roni Medvin. Ms. Gold is a Reform Jewish Educator and holds a master of library science. She has been Library Director at Temple Beth Am since 1996 and is active in the national Association of Jewish Libraries, where she has served on various committees including the AJL Accreditation Committee, the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, and the Chapter Relations Committee, and where she is a past president of the Synagogue, School, and Center (SSC) Division. Ms. Medvin has been a teacher in public and private schools for almost twenty-five years. While she began her career with first graders, she now works with middle school students, and has spent time with every grade in between.
HOLOCAUST:
a word of Greek origin meaning sacrifice by fire