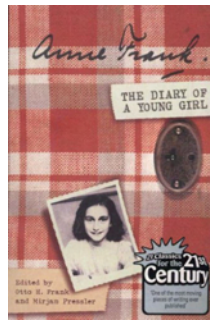


## Exploring the Holocaust



*Anne Frank : The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank

“I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support.”

The Diary of A Young Girl remains the single most poignant true-life story to emerge from the Second World War. Born in 1929, Anne Frank received a blank diary on her 13th birthday, just weeks before she and her family went into hiding in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam. Over the next two years she vividly describes in her diary the frustrations of living in the confined quarters of their warehouse accommodation, the constant threat of discovery, the hunger and fear. Her diary ends abruptly when, in August 1944, she and her family were discovered by the Nazis.

1. Have pupils list the names of all the people that they know from the period of the Holocaust on the board (Anne Frank, Adolf Hitler, etc). Ask students why Anne Frank's name is so recognizable? Do they think that it's amazing that one 13 year old girl could be that well known?
2. Talk with pupils to determine what they know about the Anne Frank story (brief synopsis). Have them describe why Anne went into hiding, how long she was there, what happened to her.
3. Create a series of timeline cards including events generally from the Holocaust, the Gypsy Holocaust (see pdf file Sinti.lessons on our website) and Anne Frank's story. Display these as a wall frieze for discussion sessions.

Ask pupils to look for events after 1945 which demonstrate the continuation of violence and aggression on a grand scale such as Cambodia, Bosnia etc. Add these to the frieze above and discuss.

## Exploring discrimination

4. Explore discrimination today. Have we learnt anything from the atrocities committed during the Holocaust? Ask pupils to look for stories about discrimination, including those against Gypsies and Travellers (see pdf file on the media on our website). These can be taken from newspapers, magazines or the internet. Establish a class scrapbook of these articles and have pupils write a synopsis of each article to go into the scrapbook. Ask pupils to critically examine the conflict between the opposing groups in each story.

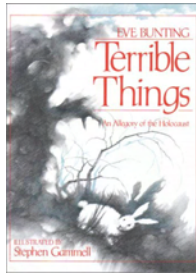
In small groups set pupils the task of acting as arbitrators or peacekeepers for the conflicts within each story. What are the facts in the story? How would they try to resolve the conflict?.

5. Set pupils the task of creating a timeline of events throughout history when people struggled for independence or rights. What methods did people use to gain their rights? Compare and contrast for example the Anti Slavery Movement (in UK and/or USA), the Civil Rights Movement (in USA), Apartheid (in South Africa). They could set these alongside the Jewish resistance and Rescuers during WW2 from their Holocaust timeline above.

6. Have pupils write a pledge to combat racism or draw/paint their vision of peace. This work can be added to the class scrapbook or displayed in class. Provide copies of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and the *UN Rights of the Child* to help inspire them.

7. Discuss that sometimes people who are well known are surrounded by myth. Ask what kind of myths, legends, etc, students have heard about currently famous people (David and Victoria Beckham, etc.). Ask where these myths came from (television, movies, articles written by people who may or may not know the person, stories heard from friends, gossip, etc). Discuss that the Holocaust is also surrounded by some myths, and that the class will attempt to show these myths and what is true about the Holocaust. Explain that the only way to do that is to look at the evidence - define primary versus secondary source.

## A useful American alternative to using the Anne Frank story



### *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust*

Eve Bunting (Author), Stephen Gammell (Illustrator), The Jewish Publication Society – can be ordered through bookshops or online.

“In Europe, during World War 2, many people looked the other way while terrible things happened. They pretended not to know that their neighbours were being taken away and imprisoned in concentration camps. They pretended not to hear cries for help. The Nazis killed millions of Jews and others in the Holocaust. If everyone had stood together at the first sign of evil would this have happened? Standing up for what you know is right is not always easy. Especially if the one you face is bigger and stronger than you. It is easier to look the other way. But if you do, terrible things can happen.”

*Eve Bunting*

*Terrible Things* tells the story of a young rabbit who watches as time after time the "terrible things" swoop in and take away different groups of animals living in the forest, until the rabbits are last to remain. It is only when the rabbits are subsequently taken away by the "terrible things" that the reader learns that if all the animals of the forest had initially stood together against the "terrible things", perhaps they would have all survived. This picture book models for young minds what can happen when people (or animals) do not stand up and help one another in the face of evil.

Using this allegory of the Holocaust, the teacher can help students distinguish between being good persons and choosing to act ethically/morally. Whether the approach is to introduce an historical series of events like the Holocaust; to contrast those times with the Anti Slavery Movement or Civil Rights Movement; or to teach literary devices this book provides a strong framework for highlighting ethical thinking.

### **Lesson 1**

1. Write the phrase "**terrible things**" on the board. Elicit comments from students about what they would consider terrible things. Students may respond with words like war, bombs, terrorism, hate, fear, prejudice, and death. List their responses on the board and then allow a 15-minute discussion for students to discuss the "terrible things" that they have seen or heard. Ask them to think about whether or not "terrible things" can be avoided.

2. Read the story *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust* by Eve Bunting. The author dramatically uses the animals of the forest to demonstrate how fear and indifference lead to the destruction of the forest's inhabitants. All of the animals fear the "terrible things" that come and take away the animals one by one until no one is left, but they do not say or do anything to help.
3. Compare the animals in the book to people. Who or what do the different animals represent? The Terrible Things? Discuss the reasons why people hurt one another. Discuss why the animals in the story did not help one another. What excuses did they give?
4. Ask students to select an animal mentioned in the story. Could that animal have done anything to stop the "terrible things" from happening? What are some possible things that the animals could have done to help the others who were being taken away?
5. End the session by asking students why they sometimes tease each other. Ask them what they do when they see another student being teased? What should they do?

## **Lesson 2**

1. Begin this session by asking students to do a retelling of the story *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust*.
2. Ask students if anything "terrible" has ever happened in their own country. Students may be reluctant to discuss the horrors they have witnessed. However, usually they will begin to feel more comfortable as they listen to their peers. As soon as one student tells his or her account, many others will soon follow.
3. At this time, it is often helpful to allow students to write in a journal about things they have not yet verbalized. Allow 15 minutes for students to write silently. At the end of the writing period, allow a 10-minute session for students to read aloud and share what they have written.
4. Homework: Have students select a book about the Holocaust from their school or local library and begin reading. Ask student to read the first chapter and write a short commentary about what they have read in their reading journal. Additionally, you may ask them to select a short passage from the reading and interpret its meaning.

## **Lesson 3**

1. Prepare the following questions in a handout:
  - a. Which is more important? Freedom or safety?

- b. Would you be willing to turn in a friend or a relative to the police even if they had not committed a crime, but the government asked you to?
  - c. What things in your life would you refuse to give up even if your life was threatened?
  - d. What items are necessary for your survival?
  - e. Would you speak up if you saw someone being treated in a manner that you felt was inhumane?
2. Discuss each of these questions individually. Listen to students' responses and then ask them, "Based on what you have read so far, how would the character in the story you are reading answer these questions?"
3. Allow students 15 minutes to review the book that they are reading and cite specific examples from the book to support their answers.
4. Follow-up discussion. After students have finished reading their book (i.e., approximately 2 weeks later), you may reuse the questions from this session and allow students to respond from their own perspective. Ask students to think about how their responses were affected by what they have learned and read during this lesson.