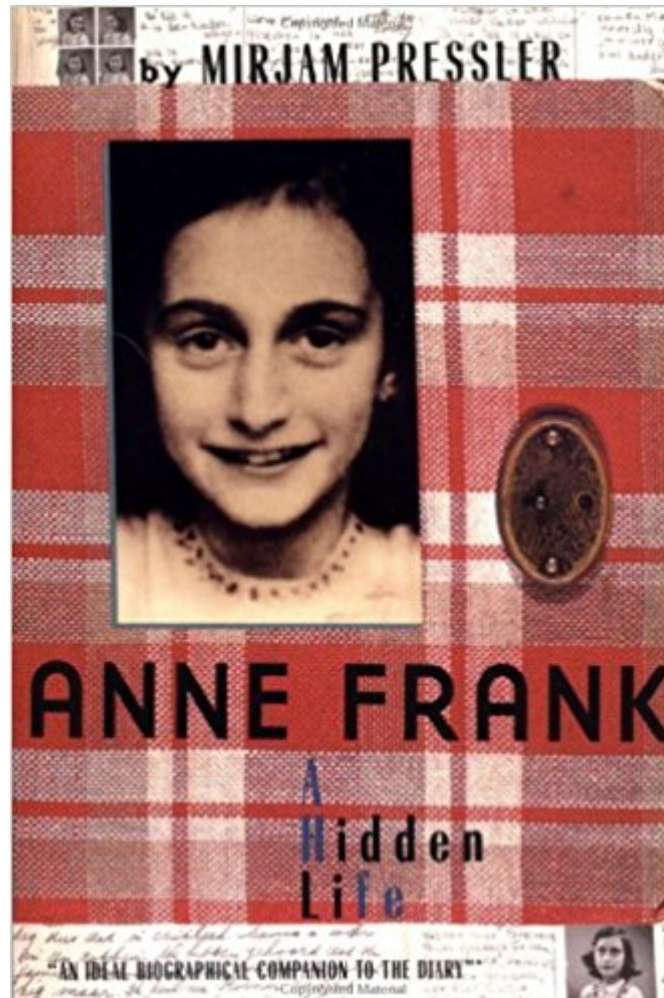




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Anne Frank: A Hidden Life



Synopsis

Anne Frank's diary, an enduring symbol of the tragedy of the Holocaust, also serves as an introduction to a very real, fascinating girl. But the best-known version of Anne's diary is missing many entries. Just last year, more entries came to light. Here the editor of the diary's definitive edition shows us a much more complicated and appealing girl than we have known before. Mirjam Pressler pays particular attention to the new diary entries and what they tell us about Anne's sexuality and her feelings about her parents. The other residents of the secret annex have a fuller life here, too. Careful portraits give us information that Anne couldn't. We learn how they came to the annex, why they may have behaved as Anne described, and their feelings about Anne. And, finally, this book reaches beyond the end of the diary to the terrible events after the annex was discovered--the family's imprisonment in Auschwitz, followed by Anne's and her sister's deaths in disease-ridden Bergen-Belsen. This insightful look at Anne Frank and her world gives readers a new understanding of the girl behind one of the best-loved books of all time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Many young people first encounter the terrible reality of the Nazi Holocaust through reading the diaries of Anne Frank. Teens who cherish that unforgettable literary and emotional experience will be fascinated by the additional insights in *Anne Frank: A Hidden Life*. Mirjam Pressler draws on her background as editor of *Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition* to explain the three versions of

the Anne Frank diaries, to discuss newly revealed material, and to speculate on Anne's spiritual and sexual development during her three-year confinement in the secret annex. Pressler's title takes on a double meaning as she analyzes Anne's "hidden life," the "much deeper, purer, and finer" self the young girl wrote about wistfully but concealed from the others with a façade of cheerful outspokenness. Pressler also uses the eyewitness testimonies of the Frank family's helper Miep Gies, Anne's school friend Hanneli Goslar, and Otto Frank's stepdaughter Eva Schloss to expand our understanding of the other inhabitants of the Annex and to follow them through those unfathomable seven months in the death camps. Anne Frank's remarkable diaries have been the subject of many other books, from learned essays to historical studies to picture books and poetry. Teens with an interest in the life of this cultural icon may also want to read *Anne Frank: The Biography*, *The Last Seven Months of Anne Frank*, and *Memories of Anne Frank*. (Ages 11 and older) --Patty Campbell

While the tragically short life of Anne Frank has elsewhere been carefully documented and inventively researched, this astonishing biography succeeds in delivering fresh and provocative insights. Editor of the definitive edition of *The Diary of a Young Girl* and author of the novel *Halinka*, Pressler brings to her task a scholar's skill for textual analysis and a novelist's empathetic imagination. Pressler begins by inviting readers to imagine Otto Frank upon liberation in Auschwitz: the exercise reminds readers of what is obvious but easily forgotten, that history is a retrospective art, and that Anne Frank's death and the discovery of her diaries were by no means inevitable. From there, Pressler draws on eyewitness accounts as well as Anne Frank's diary to shape a remarkably clear-eyed portrait of the girl, ending with her death in Bergen-Belsen. Rather than highlighting Anne's idealism, the author examines the tensions in her diary, performing a critical reading of Anne's descriptions of herself and the others in hiding, and analyzing how Anne edited and reworked her diary in hopes of postwar publication. Incisive and vigorously imaginative in its interpretations, Pressler's work could serve as a model for how to read a subjective narrative. The writing is also very personal; Pressler freely shares her strong feelings, sympathies and antipathies ("What I do admit to finding rather hard to take is Anne's arrogance in making her demands on life"). Anne and the people surrounding her are clearly real to Pressler; she teases their lives out of the diaries and makes them real for readers. Photos not seen by PW. Ages 11-up. (Feb.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

In this book the author seems to have magical insight into Anne's hidden thoughts and desires. She

also interprets one of Anne's passages to mean that Anne was describing her first orgasm during a petting session with Peter. I read all editions available as well as the newly released "missing pages" and I did not draw this same conclusion. She also believes that Peter did not love Anne. How would she know? I did find interesting little known information about the other members in hiding and do trust facts provided by eyewitnesses (Miep Gies for example) But overall I would recommend Melissa Muller's biography over this book. The biography provides a great deal more detailed facts about Anne's life and does offer a new theory as to who betrayed the Franks. Pressler's book is more like a psychoanalysis of Anne Frank's mind than a detailed account of her life.

This is a fine, well -written account of the famous diary and the writing thereof, including information that I have never seen before. She describes exactly what Anne used for her diary (the famous red and white checked book did not begin to hold it all), and describes life in hiding as it must have been for all of the people in the Secret Annexe, not just Anne. The author speculates on Anne's writing and some of the choices she made--to have a romance with Peter, for instance. I recommend this highly to anyone who loves Anne Frank, but it is definitely for older young adults and adults as opposed to children.

With so much that has been written about Anne Frank it can be difficult to find a new angle on a life cut short. "Anne Frank: A Hidden Life" by Mirjam Pressler is not a straightforward biography, but rather a sketch that includes aspects of Anne's life, her diary entries, and the author's wonderings as well. She has set a wide net to fill a small canvas, and the writing too often reads like extended (and sometimes repetitive) footnotes. There is not a lot of new information that is given in "Hidden Life". For anyone who has read beyond the diary (like Miep Gies memoir or Carol Ann Lee's exceptional "The Hidden Life of Otto Frank"), much of what Pressler relates is not new. What she does add to the Anne Frank lexicon, as an expert on Anne's life and editor of the definitive edition of her diary, is her own thoughts and analysis into life within the Secret Annex. She tries to round out the lives of the other occupants and of their helpers but there is too little firsthand information to do so. The best point she makes is in examining Anne's desire and craft as a writer: one must remember that Anne began editing her diary for eventual publication and may have crafted her fellow Annex companions into characters, or sometimes even caricatures, and may not have captured the real person. It is indeed a shame that Anne Frank's life was cut short, and while we have her voice, it would be nice to know these people beyond her words; (and a better attempt was

made by Barry Denenberg in "Shadow Life", where he crafted a diary that Margot Frank might have kept while in hiding). That seems to be the point Mirjam Pressler makes, but "Anne Frank: A Hidden Life" doesn't deliver on that premise. At best, it is a companion piece to the diary for young adults (its targeted audience) that expounds upon that final sentence "Anne's diary ends here" with details of her life before and after going into hiding.

"A Hidden Life" A book is worth a thousand words, this is worth 10,000. Mirjam Pressler has created a chapter book that includes the others who affiliate with Anne's story, and personalities through the whole book. This book is not just about how Anne suffered it's about everyone and what they had to do to survive. It gives deeper insight on whom Otto Frank was, Margot and other people I didn't even know, who also shared the same agony. This book is the final chapter to all books; it gives every event from beginning to end; past to present. You can easily tell this book took time to write, most books you read on Anne are usually just bits and pieces taken out Anne's diary, there is no mention of anyone else, any mention of who Anne was before the Secret Annex or as a person for that matter. This book was different. I know that the author's purpose for writing this book is the same reason I decide to read this book. She wanted to give everyone a chance to know the whole story, and not from one point of view. The story doesn't just surround the horrible event taken place it let us to know Anne before the Secret Annex, during the changing of the Jewish laws, and after, when all was done. To me it's the "missing link" to all Anne Frank biographies. Anne Frank herself could only write a better book.

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