Anne Frank received her diary on June 12, 1942, for her 13th birthday. Her initial entries express her delight in the gift and she writes, “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.”

Anne’s initial motivation for keeping a diary was her sense of loneliness despite being surrounded by those who loved her. The process of keeping a diary gave her a sense of freedom and independence, but Anne’s intended audience changed during the time she was in hiding. On March 29, 1944, 14-year-old Anne Frank tuned in to a radio broadcast that would change her life—and the lives of millions of readers around the world.

Speaking on the BBC, Gerrit Bolkestein, a member of the Dutch government in exile, urged citizens living under the Nazis to preserve ordinary documents—including letters and diaries—so that future generations would fully understand the horrors they had endured during the war. Bolkestein’s remarks inspired Anne Frank to dream of publishing the diary she had been keeping for nearly two years. She began transforming what she had formerly thought of as an intensely private journal into a memoir intended for publication.

Miep Gies discovered Anne’s diary and kept it, unread, in a desk drawer before returning it in 1945 to Otto Frank. Following rejections by numerous publishers, the diary (which had been edited by Otto) was published in Holland in 1947 and in the United States in 1952. A stage version opened on Broadway in 1955 and won the Pulitzer Prize; a Hollywood adaptation, released in 1959, won three Academy Awards. Later editions, containing previously deleted entries and untangling Anne’s original and
revised versions, have helped to shed new light on Anne’s process and abilities as a writer.

Like many writers before her, Anne finds writing in her diary to be both creative and therapeutic. Having a place to pour out her feelings, desires, thoughts, and concerns helps her to cope with the extraordinary circumstances that she and the others in the “secret annex” endure for two years. Her descriptions of daily life and the challenges they face are sharply observed, filled with vivid details and insights, and often quite humorous. She writes movingly about her relationships with her family and others, the joys and heartbreak of love, and the confusing process of growing up. In addition to the diary, Anne also wrote short stories, fairy tales, and essays. Some of these have been interwoven with the diary in previous editions.

In 1943, Anne becomes even more self-critical and introspective. As screenwriter Deborah Moggach notes, “During those two years, cramped into that tiny space, she discovered herself as a writer, she pondered good and evil and questioned the very meaning of being human.” Articulate and passionate, Anne writes about important issues—war and peace, the role of women in society, the cost of prejudice and intolerance, and the nature of hope.

The value of *The Diary of Anne Frank* is not only as a literary classic and a rich and illuminating first-person account of life in hiding during World War II. In the introduction to the first American edition of the book, Eleanor Roosevelt described Anne’s diary as “one of the wisest and most moving commentaries on war and its impact on human beings that I have ever read.”