Anne Frank Characters

Otto Frank
Character Analysis

Anne sees her father, Otto Frank, as a kindred spirit. Like Anne, Otto is a perpetual student, inhaling books, history, and news, and he encourages these interests in Anne. Also like Anne, he is a clown, frequently trying to amuse those around him and lighten up the mood of the Annex. Unlike young Anne, Otto seems to be basically even-tempered and eager for peace in every situation. In the claustrophobic and tense living situation, Otto often served as the peacekeeper between the Franks, van Daans, and Dussel.

As much as Anne adores her father, she occasionally voices her concern that her father doesn't recognize her for the mature young woman she feels herself to be.

*I model myself after Father, and there's no one in the world I love more. He doesn't realize that he treats Margot differently than he does me: Margot just happens to be the smartest, the kindest, the prettiest and the best. But I have a right to be taken seriously too. [...] I'm no longer satisfied with the meaningless affection or the supposedly serious talks. I long for something from Father that he's incapable of giving. [...] It's just that I'd like to feel that Father really loves me, not because I'm his child, but because I'm me, Anne. (10/30/1943.5)*

Anne turned out to be right to some extent: her father didn't realize the depth of her emotion or maturity. As he said after the war:

*It took me a very long time before I could read it [Anne's diary]. And I must say, I was very much surprised about the deep thoughts that Anne had, her seriousness, especially her self-criticism. It was quite a different Anne than I had known as my daughter. She never really showed this kind of inner feeling. She talked about many things, criticized many things, but what her real feelings were, that I could only see from the diary. (Source)*

Their fiercest rift, which actually leads to much growth in Anne, is over Peter van Daan. When Anne asks her father if he approves of her relationship with Peter, he initially gives a somewhat grudging yes. You can almost hear him thinking that her romance with Peter might just be the only one she ever has.

But then he changes his mind. Why? If Otto "settles" for Peter as Anne's "final boyfriend," then he would be admitting that Anne is going to die – an unbearable thought. It is also giving in to the idea that the Nazis ultimately would win their war against the Jews – another horrific thought. Refusing to support Anne's relationship with Peter, then, would mean Otto is refusing to accept either of those dreadful outcomes. We will never know exactly why Otto changed his mind, but we think these are plausible explanations. What do you think?

As the only member of the Annex that survived the Holocaust, Otto Frank bore the burden of history. After Anne's death, he fulfilled his daughter's wish to have her words published.

Otto Frank Timeline and Summary

- Anne’s father prepares a hiding place for his family and others.
- Mr. Frank serves as peacemaker in the Secret Annex. Occasionally, he stands up for Anne when criticism of her becomes especially harsh.
- With the other men, Mr. Frank occasionally leaves the hiding place and goes downstairs to investigate possible burglars.
• Pim is hurt when Anne writes him a letter, expressing her independence from her parents and her wish that they would grant her liberty to develop her relationship with Peter as she wishes.
• Pim is the one person who survives the labor camps. He returns to Holland and publishes Anne’s diary two years after the war ends.

**Margot Frank**
Character Analysis

Margot Frank, Anne’s older sister, is sixteen at the start of the story and eighteen at the end. At least through Anne’s eyes, Margot is smarter, quieter, prettier, and more grown-up than Anne. The two sisters don’t often get along, are not close friends, and don’t confide in each other much. Margot doesn’t get much attention in Anne’s diary, but we do know from a letter that Margot sends Anne that Margot wishes she had a friend to confide in. She envies Anne’s relationship with Peter, but only the idea of having such a friendship, not actually the boy himself. Margot shows that she is mature and caring by encouraging Anne’s relationship with Peter, and by not being bitter with Anne for having a close friend. Whenever we get glimpses of Margot’s personality, we can’t help but think that she’s probably underappreciated by Anne.

**Margot Frank Timeline and Summary**
• Margot, sixteen, receives the call-up from the Nazis, and the family enters into hiding.
• Margot begins her school at home. She is considered an intelligent, responsible young woman by the adults in the house.
• Their parents constantly compare Margot and Anne and Margot is considered the more virtuous.
• Margot expresses minor jealousy that Anne has a romantic relationship with Peter van Daan. Margot hopes that she, too, can be there for Peter when he needs a friend – but in a sisterly way. She advises Anne how to approach their father about her relationship with Peter.
• Margot goes to the same labor camp as Anne and dies of typhus just a few days before Anne during late February or early March of 1945.

**Edith Frank**
Character Analysis

Anne accuses her mother, Edith Frank, of being cold and tactless. Although it’s clear to the reader that Anne’s mother is hurt by her daughter’s rebuffs, Anne accuses her mother of instigating that dynamic in their relationship. Mrs. Frank does appear to be similar to Anne – outspoken and frank (guess the last name fits!). She often responds to Mrs. van Daan’s provocative comments, and the two women frequently end up fighting. Sometimes, it appears that Mrs. Frank initiates the fights. Anne thinks there is nothing about her mother that is actually motherly, but often wishes she could have a caring, warm mother to turn to. Anne and her mother never develop the kind of close relationship that exists between many mothers and daughters.

**Edith Frank Timeline and Summary**
• Edith Frank enters the Secret Annex like everybody else.
• Anne rarely mentions her mother but when she does, it is frequently in the context of her mother fighting with Mrs. van Daan or being hurt by something Anne said or criticizing Anne for something.
• Anne’s mother is hurt when Anne refuses to say her prayers at night with her, instead of with her father.
• Like all the others, Edith Frank is discovered when the police raid the Secret Annex. She dies in a concentration camp.
Peter van Daan
Character Analysis

Peter’s actual historical name was Peter van Pels.

Through Anne’s eyes at the beginning of her diary, Peter is lazy and has a weak character. He’s also shy and extremely awkward, hardly a person worth her notice. But a year and a half after they’ve been in hiding, Anne suddenly starts to notice that Peter looks at her with longing. Soon she has a crush on him, and decides that he is very sweet and desperately in need of affection, which she tries to give. But Anne is soon disappointed with Peter. He doesn’t like religion and he is too lazy and weak to improve himself. He seems satisfied with mediocrity and takes the easy path in life rather than one of work and personal growth. Further, he either isn’t as deep as she wanted him to be or he doesn’t know how to open himself up to her. He promises Anne he will never fight with her, because neither one of them wants things to get uncomfortable if they fight and then have to continue living together. He doesn’t fight with her, but it is never clear if that’s because he’s keeping his promise or he just doesn’t have any fight in him. It is not that he is a peacemaker – rather, he is a passive person.

Peter van Daan Timeline and Summary

- Anne thinks Peter is lazy and weak. She has little use for him.
- Two years later, Anne begins to desire a friendship with Peter. She appreciates the easy way he talks about sex and gender differences with her.
- Peter appears to be infatuated with Anne. He shyly invites her to spend more time with him.
- Although Peter becomes physically involved with Anne, he does not seem capable of emotional intimacy. He still hides his real feelings deep inside.
- After the Secret Annex is raided, Peter dies when the Germans evacuate Auschwitz to transfer the inmates to another camp closer to the heart of the Nazi power.

Alfred Dussel
Character Analysis

Dussel’s actual historical name is Fritz Pfeffer.

Alfred Dussel is a fussy old dentist and Anne’s roommate in the Secret Annex. He doesn’t respect Anne at all; he demands Anne’s compliance with all of his absurd wishes while never considering hers. He is generally very selfish, never thanking the Franks or van Daans for sharing their hiding spot with him or showing any gratefulness to their protectors. He frequently endangers the other members of the Secret Annex by breaking their security rules and even hoards food, which he refuses to share. Overall, he fights with everyone in the Secret Annex and often gives people the silent treatment. Anne paints a very negative picture of this fellow.

Alfred Dussel Timeline and Summary

- Mr. Dussel joins the Secret Annex in November 1942. He is grateful for a hiding place but does not seem to realize the immediacy of the danger, putting off coming until he can get his affairs in order.
- Mr. Dussel angers Anne when he refuses to listen to her polite request to use the desk in their shared room two afternoons a week. He is only convinced when Mr. Frank intervenes on Anne’s behalf.
- On the anniversary of his first year in the Secret Annex, Mr. Dussel does not thank anybody for opening up the Secret Annex to him.
- After the Secret Annex is raided, Mr. Dussel does not survive the concentration camps.
Mrs. van Daan
Character Analysis

Mrs. Van Daan’s actual historical name is Auguste van Pels.

Mrs. van Daan is one person that Anne can’t stand. She’s belligerent and selfish, always instigates fights, and rarely helpful. Her character does not seem to change over time. She is jealous of Anne’s relationship with her son, wanting Peter to confide in her rather than in Anne. However, Mrs. van Daan does have a few strong points. She occasionally can be reasonable and back down from fights, is generally neat and tidy, and is often easier for Anne to approach than her own mother.

Mrs. van Daan Timeline and Summary
- With her husband and son, Mrs. van Daan enters the Secret Annex a week after the Franks.
- Quickly, Mrs. van Daan reveals her true colors: she’s a trouble-maker. She likes to criticize Anne’s upbringing, fight with Mrs. Frank, flirt with Mr. Frank, hoard her own personal items and use the Franks’ instead (such as sheets), and complain.
- When Alfred Dussel arrives, Mrs. van Daan starts to flirt with him instead of Anne’s father. Mr. Dussel seems more receptive.
- Mrs. van Daan is jealous of Anne’s relationship with Peter.
- Like the others, Mrs. van Daan is sent to a concentration camp and does not survive.

Mr. van Daan
Character Analysis

Mr. van Daan’s actual historical name is Hermann van Pels.

Mr. van Daan is rarely mentioned in Anne’s diary, except when he is fighting with his wife or trying to pacify her. We get the impression that he’s your stereotypical "hen-pecked husband," with occasional bouts of standing up for himself. He shows his usefulness when the family receives a large amount of meat. Formerly in the meat business, he grinds the meat and makes sausage so it can be preserved.

Mr. van Daan Timeline and Summary
- Mr. van Daan, along with his family, enters the hiding place on July 13, 1942 – only a week after the Franks.
- Mr. van Daan frequently fights with his wife.
- He seems to be a pessimist – he will frequently express his opinion that the Germans will win the war.
- Along with the other occupants, Mr. van Daan is sent to a concentration camp and does not survive.

Mr. Kugler
Character Analysis

Mr. Kugler is one of Mr. Frank’s and Mr. van Daan’s business associates who helps them during their time of hiding and keeps the business running.

Mr. Kleiman
Character Analysis

Mr. Kleiman, a business associate of Mr. Frank’s and Mr. van Daan’s, helps keep them supplied and keeps the business running while they are in hiding.
**Miep**

Character Analysis

Miep works in the office below the Secret Annex. She helps keep the occupants of the Secret Annex supplied with food, news, and happiness.

**Bep**

Character Analysis

Bep works in the office below the Secret Annex. She helps keep the occupants of the Secret Annex supplied with food, news, and happiness. Margot and Anne occasionally help her with office work.