

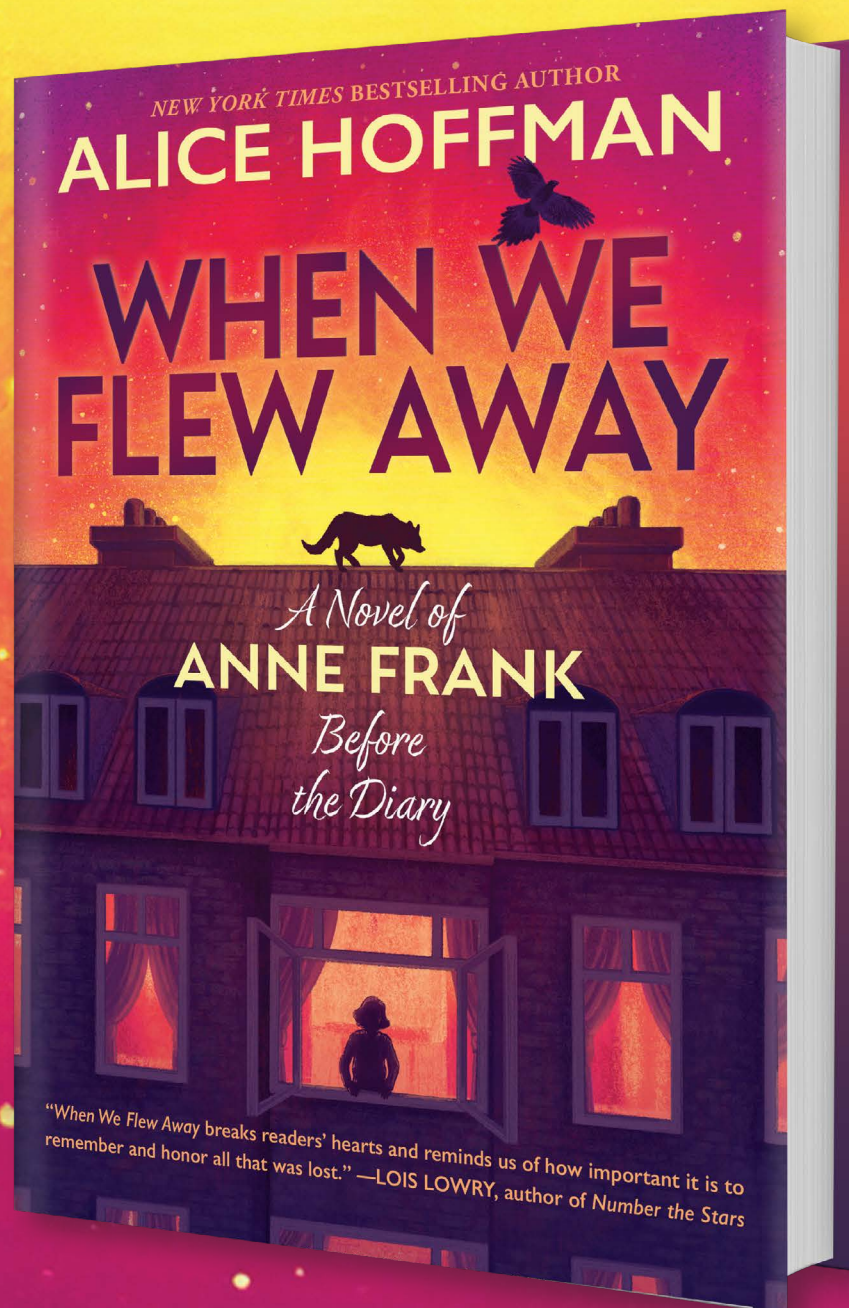
DISCUSSION GUIDE

WHEN WE FLEW AWAY

A Novel of **ANNE FRANK** *Before the Diary*

BY ALICE HOFFMAN

AGES
8-12
GRADES
3-7



The
Power
of Story

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ABOUT THE BOOK



Bestselling author Alice Hoffman delivers a stunning novel about one of contemporary history's most beloved figures, exploring the little-known details of Anne Frank's life before she went into hiding. Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* has captivated and inspired readers for decades. Published posthumously, Anne's journal, written while she and her family were in hiding during World War II, has become one of the central texts of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust.

With the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, the Frank family's life is turned inside out, blow by blow, restriction by restriction. Prejudice, loss, and terror run rampant, and Anne is forced to bear witness as ordinary people become monsters, and children and families are caught up in the inescapable tide of violence. In the midst of impossible danger, Anne, audacious and creative and fearless, discovers who she truly is. With a wisdom far beyond her years, she will become a writer who will go on to change the world as we know it. Critically acclaimed author Alice Hoffman weaves a lyrical and heart-wrenching story of the way the world closes in on the Frank family from the moment the Nazis invade the Netherlands until they are forced into hiding, bringing Anne to bold, vivid life. Based on extensive research and published in cooperation with the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, *When We Flew Away* is an extraordinary and moving tour de force.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Throughout the book, Anne references moths. As the story unfolds, more and more moths appear until they almost seem to have taken over. Do you think they are real? Why do you think only a few people, including Anne and eventually Margot, seem to see the moths? Consider the points in the story at which the moths appear, and what is happening in Anne's life. What do you think the moths represent?
2. Anne and her sister Margot are very different. Anne is feisty and often feels misunderstood or like she doesn't belong. Margot is seemingly perfect. How does their relationship change over the course of the novel? How does Anne come to a deeper understanding of Margot? How do they support one another in the face of the challenges around them? What are some ways to support friends and family through challenging experiences?
3. *When We Flew Away* imagines what Anne's life might have looked like before she and her family were forced into hiding. In real life, we know how Anne's story ends. What is the importance of imagining, writing, and reading "prequel" stories even when we know how they end? Why is it valuable to imagine what happened to Anne before her diary starts?
4. The novel includes not just Anne's story but a significant amount of information about what daily life was like in Amsterdam and how it changed, as well as information about the rise of Nazism and the Third Reich. How does integrating this information deepen our understanding of Anne's story? Why is it important to understand the context around her life?
5. Memory, or, in Hebrew, zikaron, is a vital component of Judaism. Zikaron comes from the Hebrew root Zachar, meaning remember, and Anne Frank's diary, along with countless other testimonies (see resources in this guide), provide us with the ability to remember and learn from the past to ensure it never happens again. What are the most critical messages to reflect upon from this book? Why are they important? How can we apply what we've learned from them? As more time passes since the Holocaust, what are the challenges associated with keeping those memories alive?
6. Why do you think Anne returns the gift of the necklace from her mother (p. 174)? Why did her mother initially give it to her? What is Anne hoping for when she tells her mother to give it to her later? Why do you think she ultimately tells her mother to give it to Margot (p. 181)?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Continued)

- The narrator writes, “Anne made a list of all the things that had disappeared. It had begun slowly, and then it wasn’t slow at all. It was one thing, and then it was everything . . .” (p. 212–213). What kinds of things did Anne lose? What did they mean to her? What does the narrator mean by “began slowly and then it wasn’t slow at all?” How did the losses happen? What role did other people—neighbors, friends, and classmates—play in that loss?
- Anne Frank was murdered before she could see how her legacy would impact the generations to come, but she was aware enough of what might come to pass that she knew how important it was to write down her thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Because we know her story, we have a much fuller picture of the experiences of Dutch Jews during World War II. Why is it important for regular people to record what their lives are like, especially in times of challenge and strife? What is the benefit of learning about history directly from the voices of those who experienced it?
- Anne Frank lived in a world where antisemitism, fascism, and hatred were allowed to fester and grow unchecked. Today, antisemitism and other forms of hatred are on the rise again. What are some things people can do when they encounter antisemitic and other hateful acts or speech taking place?



RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

Museum of Tolerance | [museumoftolerance.com](https://www.museumoftolerance.com)

A digital and in-person museum in Los Angeles, CA, devoted to educating and enlightening people about the Holocaust and challenging “visitors to understand the Holocaust in both historic and contemporary contexts and confront all forms of prejudice and discrimination in our world today.”

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum | Selected Resources | [ushmm.org](https://www.ushmm.org)

Digital resources from the USHMM are one of the largest collections of resources on all topics related to the Holocaust. The links below provide specific resources to learn more about Anne Frank, the Netherlands during WWII, and testimonies/oral histories from Holocaust survivors and witnesses.

encyclopedia.ushmm.org/tags/en/tag/anne-frank?type_filter%5B%5D=34

encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-netherlands

ushmm.org/collections/the-museums-collections/about/oral-history

Anne Frank House | annefrank.org/en

The Anne Frank House is a museum located in the Amsterdam house where Anne and her family hid for two years. The website offers many educational resources, including online exhibitions, workshops, and activities.

Yad Vashem | yadvashem.org/index.html

This website for Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Israel, contains numerous digital resources, databases, archives, online exhibitions, and information for people interested in Jewish family history.

USC Shoah Foundation | sfi.usc.edu

Established in 1994 by Steven Spielberg, the Institute for Visual History and Education (formerly Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to making audio-visual interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust, a compelling voice for education and action. Resources include documentary films, podcasts, and more.

PRAISE FOR *WHEN WE FLEW AWAY*



“Adding new poignance to a story whose ending we already knew, Alice Hoffman has deftly recreated the child Anne Frank with all her wit, mischief, and uncertainties. This fictionalized account of the increasingly desperate years that preceded the famous diary breaks readers’ hearts one more time. But it reminds us of how important it is to remember and honor all that was lost.”

—Lois Lowry, Newbery Award-winning author of *Number the Stars*

“We can highly recommend Alice Hoffman’s novel of Anne Frank’s life, set in the dramatic and terrible circumstances of those first war years. We hope it will persuade young readers that contributing to a better world is both necessary and possible.”

—Ronald Leopold, Executive Director, Anne Frank House

When We Flew Away: A Novel of Anne Frank Before the Diary | HC: 9781338856941 • \$19.99 | Also available in ebook and audio | Ages 8–12 • Grades 3–7 | On sale September 17, 2024

Q&A WITH ALICE HOFFMAN



Photo © Alyssa Peek

Q. What was it about Anne Frank that spoke to you and moved you as a young reader?

A: In school we read books written by men, and so to read such a powerful book written by a young girl really spoke to me. The fact that she was Jewish and longed to be a writer made her story feel even more personal to me.

Q. Why is telling Anne’s story before the Diary begins important? What does this part of her story depict?

A: I think it’s always important to know how a story begins, and so much of the history of this time is no longer taught. It’s too important to be forgotten, especially in the difficult times we are living through now.

Q. What do you hope readers will take away from reading *When We Flew Away*?

A: I hope readers will close my book and pick up *The Diary of a Young Girl* so they can learn more about Anne Frank’s story, told in her own words.

Q. What was your research process for writing this book?

A: I read as much as I could about her life and the times she lived in, and then I went to Amsterdam to visit the places I’d read about, and to speak with the historians at the Anne Frank House, who were so helpful to my understanding of Anne’s story. It was an emotional journey, one I will never forget.

Q. What do you think is the lasting impact of Anne Frank’s story?

A: Anne’s story will always be there to remind us about compassion, faith, love, and family, even in our darkest times. I hope that every new generation reads the Diary and that we never forget how the world can change in the blink of an eye if we’re not careful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALICE HOFFMAN is the highly acclaimed author of over thirty novels for readers of all ages, including *The Dovekeepers*, *The World That We Knew*—winner of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, *The Marriage of Opposites*, *Practical Magic*, *Incantation*, *The Foretelling*, and most recently, *The Invisible Hour*. Her previous novels for Scholastic Press are *Aquamarine*, which was made into a major motion picture, *Indigo*, *Green Witch*, and *Green Angel*, which *Publishers Weekly*, in a boxed, starred review, called “achingly lovely.” She lives outside of Boston. Learn more at alicehoffman.com.

Discussion guide prepared by Talya Sokoll, a school librarian right outside of Boston. They have served on a number of award committees including the Stonewall Book Award and the Sydney Taylor Book Award. They are the faculty advisor to the Jewish affinity group at their school and are currently pursuing a master’s of Jewish professional studies at Gratz College so that they can continue their lifelong journey as a student. They offer their deepest gratitude to both their mother and one of their amazing tenth graders, Amanda Rosa, for their invaluable suggestions. They live by the daily reminder, “It is not incumbent upon you to complete the task, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it.” (Pirkei Avot 2:16)



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