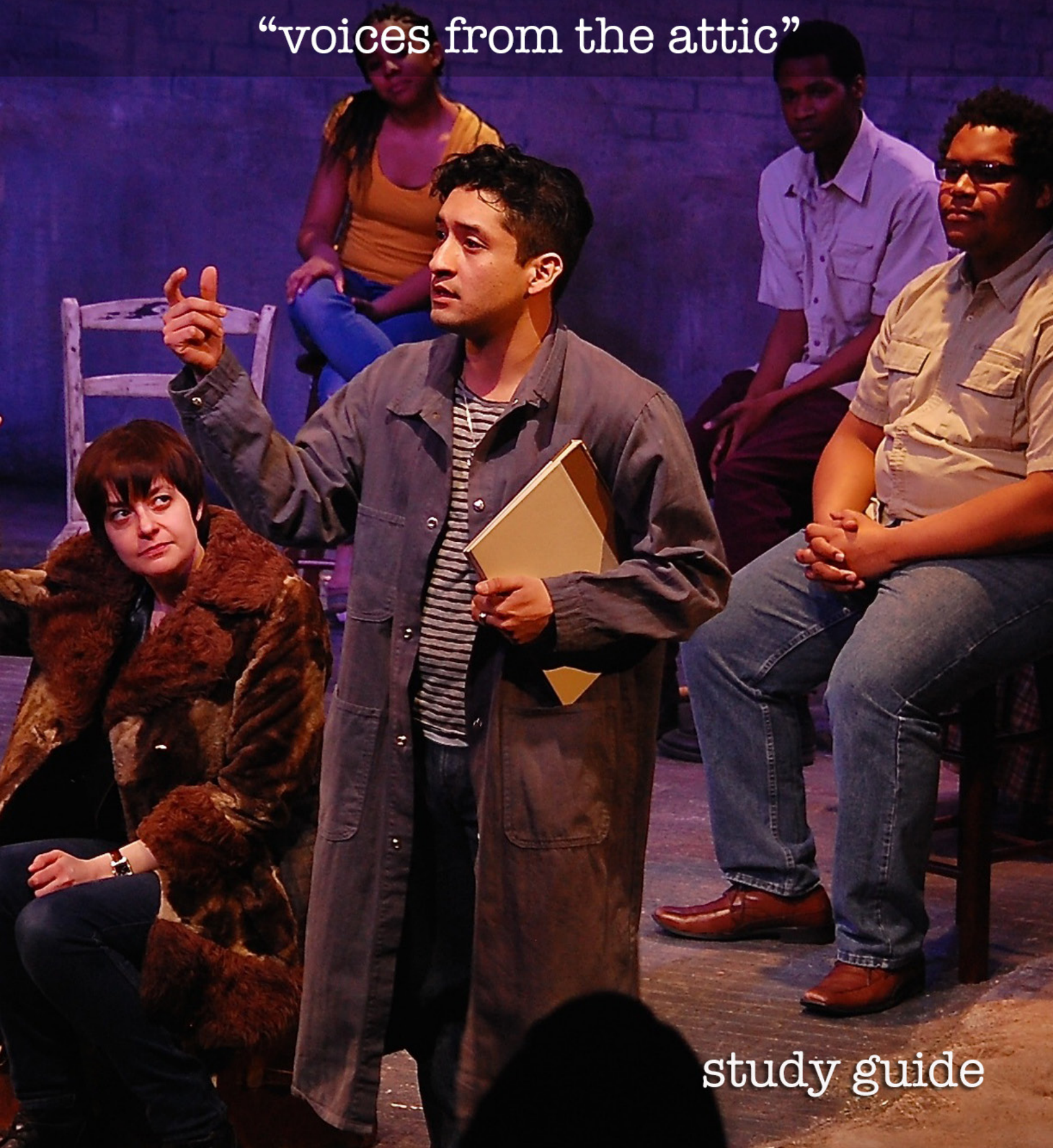


# ANNE FRANK

“voices from the attic”



study guide

## 1. Overview

## 2. Anne Frank's Story

## 3. Armenia - 1915

## 4. Bosnia - 1995

## 5. Rwanda - 1994

**Anne Frank: voices from the attic** tells the story of the Frank family's period of hiding from the Nazis through the eyes of a group of characters who have each survived their own episodes of ethnic cleansings, from different times and places.

The survivor/witnesses on stage have seen the horrors of genocide from their experiences in Rwanda in 1994, from Bosnia in 1992, and from Armenia in 1915, the episode that is widely considered the first mass campaign of ethnic cleaning of the 20th century.

The purpose of this approach is to help your students recognize that what happened to the Franks and the millions of others who were swept up into the Nazi killing machine was not an isolated incident; it was, to use Anne Frank's words, "part of a pattern" that has been part of human history for centuries, and, in fact, is still part of our world today.



Anne Frank was born on June 12, 1929, in Frankfurt, Germany, to Edith and Otto Frank. Otto was a businessman in Germany. Frank also had a sister named Margot who was three years her senior.

With the economic and social upheaval of Depression-era 1930s Germany, the anti-Semitic Nazi Party led by Adolph Hitler became Germany's leading political force, winning control of the government in 1933. Seeing the situation, the Frank family realized that it was time to flee, moving to Amsterdam, Netherlands, later that year. Otto became the managing director of the Dutch Opekta Company, and Anne began attending Amsterdam's Sixth Montessori School in 1934.

## Nazi Occupation

On May 10, 1940, the German army invaded the Netherlands. The Dutch quickly surrendered, marking the beginning of the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. Beginning in October 1940, the Nazi occupiers imposed anti-Jewish measures on the Netherlands. Jews were required to wear a yellow Star of David at all times and observe a strict curfew; they were also forbidden from owning businesses. Otto Frank managed to keep control of his company by officially signing ownership over to two of his Christian associates, Jo Kleiman and Victor Kugler, while continuing to run the company from behind the scenes.

## "Kitty"

On June 12, 1942, Frank's parents gave her a red checkered diary for her 13th birthday. She wrote her first entry, addressed to an imaginary friend named Kitty, that same day: "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."

A few weeks later, Margot received an official summons to report to a Nazi work camp in Germany. The very next day, the family went into hiding in makeshift quarters in an empty space at the back of Otto Frank's company building, joined by Otto's business partner Hermann van Pels, his wife, Auguste, and their son, Peter.

The families spent two years in hiding, never once stepping outside. To pass the time, Frank wrote extensive daily entries in her diary. Some betrayed

the despair of confinement, but in general, the act of writing allowed Frank to maintain her sanity and her spirits. "When I write, I can shake off all my cares," she wrote on April 5, 1944.

## Captured and Deported

On August 4, 1944, acting on a tip, Dutch Nazis stormed into the Frank family Annex, arresting everyone. The family members eventually wound up in the Auschwitz death camp in Poland. Upon arriving at Auschwitz, the men and women were separated. This was the last time that Otto Frank ever saw his wife or daughters.

Anne and Margot were transferred in winter 1944 to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany. Their mother was not allowed to go with them, and Edith Frank fell ill and died at Auschwitz shortly thereafter, on January 6, 1945.

Frank and her sister both came down with typhus in the early spring and died within a day of each other sometime in March 1945, only a few weeks before British soldiers liberated the camp. She was 15 years old.

## Diary of a Young Girl

Otto Frank was the lone survivor of the death camps, and when he returned to Amsterdam, he found Anne's diary, which had been saved by his secretary, Miep Gies. He eventually gathered the strength to read it. "I had no idea of the depths of her thoughts and feelings," he later said.

Otto sought to have selections from his daughter's diary published as a book, and *The Secret Annex: Diary Letters from June 14, 1942 to August 1, 1944* was published on June 25, 1947.

"If she had been here, Anne would have been so proud," he said. The *Diary of a Young Girl*, as it's typically called in English, has since been published in 67 languages, and been the source for several film, theatrical and television adaptations.



# ARMENIA : 1915 - The First Modern Genocide

The Armenian people trace their history back to the Bronze Age, and at one point, controlled the territory between the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Christianity spread into the region soon after the death of Christ with the establishment of numerous Christian communities. In 301, Armenia became the first state to proclaim Christianity its official religion.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Armenians occupied a reduced territory located in what is now north-eastern Turkey, a predominantly Muslim country. With the outbreak of World War I and the threat of Russian invasion, the Ottoman's began to suspect the loyalty of the Armenians and feared that they might actively support the Russians. To prevent this, the Ottoman's devised a plan to eliminate the Armenians from their territory.

## **Eyewitness Account**

*American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau described the forced evacuation of one group of Armenians from their homeland to the Syrian desert:*

"All through the spring and summer of 1915 the deportations took place. In some villages placards were posted ordering the whole Armenian population to present itself in a public place at an appointed time-usually a day or two ahead: in still others not the slightest warning was given.

The Armenians had hardly left their native villages when the persecutions began. Women were separated from their children and husbands from their

wives. The old people soon lost contact with their families...

When the victims had travelled a few hours from their starting place, the Kurds would sweep down from their mountain homes. They would steal such children as pleased their fancy and mercilessly rob all the rest of the throng.

As the exiles moved, they left behind them another caravan - that of dead and unburied bodies. There were women who held up their babies to strangers, begging them to take them and save them from their tormentors, and failing this, they would throw them into wells or leave them behind bushes. Flocks of vultures followed them in the air, and ravenous dogs, fighting one another for the bodies of the dead, constantly pursued them.

The gendarmes went ahead, informing the half-savage tribes of the mountains that several thousand Armenian women and girls were approaching. The Arabs and Kurds began to carry off the girls, the mountaineers fell upon them repeatedly, violating and killing the women, and the gendarmes themselves joined in the orgy.

On the seventieth day a few creatures reached Aleppo. Out of the combined convoy of 18,000 souls just 150 women and children reached their destination. A few of the rest, the most attractive, were still living as captives of the Kurds and Turks; all the rest were dead."



## **FEAR & LOATHING OF 'THE OTHER'**

The Ottomans entered into a strategic alliance with Germany in 1914, designed to keep the Russians out of Ottoman lands. This decision was driven largely by a group known as “The Young Turks”, a movement that began as politically progressive, but eventually allowed their concerns for Turkey’s future to become highly nationalistic in nature.

The sense of threat from “outsiders” drove the Young Turks’ actions, and as their nationalistically-driven fears increased, a scapegoat population was identified - in this case, the largely Christian Armenians who lived in one area of Turkey.

The “tribal” elements of ethnic cleansing are a common element across cultures and generations, particularly in situations where a majority population has a minority in their midst.

In **Anne Frank: thinking myself out**, the two Armenian characters are seen at the very beginning of Turkish invasion and their story illustrates both the history of what happened and shows them grabbing for a common coping technique for the victims of oppression: story-telling.



*Armenian mother holds vigil over her dead daughter during the exodus to Syria (1915). To this day, the United States does not acknowledge that this event constituted genocide, because the Turkish government would object to that characterization.*

## **QUESTIONS /CONSIDERATIONS**

Look at the ways the Nazis illustrated the “otherness” of Jewish people, “gypsies”, Communists, and other persecuted peoples. Are there similarities to how some people in the United States talk about some groups in our midst? Is there a definable point where recognition of “difference” changes into a belief that the difference is inherently dangerous?

How can we recognize the early signs of ethnic cleansing? Are there areas in the world today where the early stages can be observed right now?

# BOSNIA 1992 to 1995 : Blood in the Streets

## BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Balkan states of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia became part of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. After the death of longtime Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito in 1980, growing nationalism among the different Yugoslav republics threatened to split their union apart. This process intensified after the mid-1980s with the rise of the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, who helped foment discontent between Serbians in Bosnia and Croatia and their Croatian, Bosniak and Albanian neighbors. In 1991, Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia declared their independence; during the war in Croatia that followed, the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army supported Serbian separatists there in their brutal clashes with Croatian forces.

## MUSLIM VS SERB

A 1991 census showed that Bosnia's population of some 4 million was 44 percent Bosniak (Muslim), 31 percent Serb, and 17 percent Croatian. Elections held in late 1990 resulted in a coalition government split between parties representing the three ethnicities. As tensions built inside and outside the country, Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his Serbian Democratic Party set up their own "Serbian National Assembly." On March 3, 1992, after a referendum vote (which Karadzic's party blocked in many Serb-populated areas), President Izetbegovic proclaimed Bosnia's independence.

## STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL IN BOSNIA

Far from seeking independence for Bosnia,

Bosnian Serbs wanted to be part of a dominant Serbian state in the Balkans. In May 1992, Bosnian Serb forces launched their offensive with a bombardment of Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo. They attacked Bosniak-dominated town in eastern Bosnia, including Zvornik, Foca, and Visegrad, forcibly expelling Bosniak civilians from the region in a brutal process that later was identified as "ethnic cleansing."

Though Bosnian government forces tried to defend the territory, sometimes with the help of the Croatian army, Bosnian Serb forces were in control of nearly three-quarters of the country by the end of 1993.

## ATTACK ON SREBRENICA: JULY 1995

On July 11, 1995 Bosnian Serb forces advanced on Srebrenica, overwhelming a battalion of Dutch peacekeeping forces stationed there. Serbian forces subsequently separated the women and girls on buses: many of the women were raped or sexually assaulted in the process. The Bosniak men and boys who remained were killed immediately or bussed to mass killing sites. Estimates of Bosniaks killed by Serb forces at Srebrenica range from around 7,000 to more than 8,000.

## RESOLUTION

In August 1995, NATO began bombing Bosnian Serb positions, eventually bringing the Bosnian Serbs to the table to negotiate a peace settlement (the Dayton Accords). Estimated civilian death count from the Bosnian ethnic cleansing is between 100,000 and 200,000 people.



## **NATIONALISM + RESENTMENT = RATIONALIZED HATRED**

As in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, the situation in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s was one where the people felt their place in the world slipping out of their grasp. While Tito and the former USSR were able to keep tight control over the simmering ethnic rivalries, and maintained a sense of order through martial law, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the break up of the former Yugoslavia meant that many people, rather than sensing opportunity, instead felt that they had been abandoned, and that there was now no hope, and hence, no rules

Into that vacuum, Slobodan Milosevic stepped in to promote a type of simplistic nationalist message to the ethnic Serbs in Bosnia, positing that the Bosniak/Muslims were the only thing stopping them from having the type of political and economic power that they were then feeling they lacked, playing on historic distrust of 'the other' among the Serbs.

It was a short route from that message to ethnic cleansing, since the goal of a "Muslim-free Bosnia" could be easily measured by the Serbs, with each village destroyed.



*Bosniaks flee Srebrenica in summer 1995, ahead of the Bosnian Serb forces who eventually murdered almost every man and boy in the village. The Bosnian segments of ANNE FRANK: thinking myself out take place just before and after this episode.*

## **THE 'OTHER' IN THE USA**

The United States has long prided itself on being a cultural and ethnic melting pot, but there have been (and continue to be) episodes where certain groups find themselves being targeted for hatred by other groups of Americans.

Have your students look at our own political rhetoric. Can they look at the news today and see examples of American politicians who use fear or displeasure at some groups of Americans for political gain? How easily could something like Bosnia happen here?

# RWANDA 1994 : 800,000 Murders in 4 Months

## BACKGROUND

Rwanda is one of the smallest countries in Central Africa, and is comprised of two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. Although the Hutus accounted for 90 percent of the population, the Tutsi minority was considered the aristocracy, and dominated Hutu peasants for decades with the support of the Belgian protectors. Following independence from Belgium in 1962, the Hutu majority reversed the roles, oppressing the Tutsis through systematic discrimination and acts of violence.

## INITIAL SPARK & INTERNATIONAL REACTION

In 1990, a rebel army of Tutsis from neighboring countries invaded Rwanda and forced Hutu President Juvenal Habyalimana into signing a power-sharing agreement with them. This set into motion a response from the Hutu tribal leaders, which roared to life in April, 1994, following the downing of a plane carrying the Rwandan President by Tutsi rebels.

Hutu militia, armed with machetes, clubs, guns and grenades, began indiscriminately killing Tutsi civilians. Rwandans carried identification cards stamped with either a T for Tutsi or H for Hutu, making it easy for the Hutu killers to identify and slaughter their victims.

At U.N. headquarters in New York, the killings were initially categorized as a breakdown in the cease-fire between the Tutsi and Hutu. Throughout the massacre, both the U.N. and the U.S. carefully refrained from labeling the killings as genocide, which would have necessitated some kind of emergency intervention. Eventually the U.N. Security Council responded to the worsening crisis by voting unanimously to abandon Rwanda. The remainder of U.N. peacekeeping troops were pulled out, leaving behind a only tiny force of about 200 soldiers for the entire country.

The Hutu engaged in genocidal mania, clubbing and hacking to death defenseless Tutsi families with machetes everywhere they were found. The Rwandan state radio, controlled by Hutu extremists, further encouraged the killings by broadcasting non-stop hate propaganda and even pinpointed the locations of Tutsis in hiding, along with encouraging unemployed Hutu youths and peasants to kill Tutsis just to steal their property.

The killings ended after armed Tutsi rebels invaded from neighboring countries, managing to defeat the Hutu armies. Estimates are that 800,000 moderate Hutus and Tutsis were murdered in the four months of the Rwandan genocide.





## **CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?**

Rwanda, as with much of Africa, had a history of colonial rule through the 19th and 20th centuries, with first the Germans and then the Belgians favoring the Tutsis over the Hutus, largely because of the Tutsi's willingness to go along with foreign control of the land.

Following independence from the colonial power, ethnic tensions were allowed to come to the fore. But what were the actual differences between the Hutu and the Tutsi? Aside from tribal affiliation, was there any significant qualifier that made a Rwandan citizen a member of one or the other - or were those distinctions human inventions?

Compare the situation in 1990s Rwanda, ethnically, to the situation in Iraq in the 2000s, where a dictatorship that favored a minority population was removed, and the assumption of power by the majority group led to an increase in minority retribution.

What are the common elements that lead to the types of ethnic or tribal insurrections that eventually allow people to murder others based on those differences?



*Tutsi villagers on the run from Hutu militiamen in Rwanda, summer 1994. The United Nations made a decision not to classify this as genocide, as that would have required them to commit peacekeepers to the area. Instead, a small group of Dutch soldiers did their best to keep the peace, but failed.*

## **WHAT COULD WE HAVE DONE?**

Have your students investigate this topic, and present their ideas as to how the United States and other like-minded nations could have used their influence to change the course of history in Germany, Rwanda, Bosnia, and other places.

Have them investigate the possible reasons why the United States, the UN, and other countries decided not to intervene even after the extent of the situation was known. Was their lack of action justified? What are the factors that lead to action (or inaction).

# A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

The genesis of *ANNE FRANK: voices from the attic* was in a conversation with a staff member of the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie, following a performance of an earlier, more traditional version of the Anne Frank diary. She noted that the museum's goal is to educate people not only as to what happened in Europe in the 1930s and 40s, but to get them realizing that it was all part of a pattern of human behavior that has happened many times before and since, and will continue for as long as humans choose to view themselves as different or superior to others.

From our standpoint, we were beginning to feel that our middle-school audiences were looking at the 1940s Anne Frank story as if it was a museum piece, one that was like an old Hollywood movie, with characters that felt like archetypes rather than real people. Add in to that GreatWorks' overarching aesthetic, one that sees the stage space as being flexible with regards to character, action, and time, and we began to feel that a more vital, more contemporary approach to presenting Anne Frank's observations about her world could be an effective way to spark conversation among the student audiences.

Our hope is that the take-away for your students will be one that recognizes the commonalities of genocide, along with the coping mechanisms that its victims have employed in the effort to keep their sanity and their humanity - when both seem to be in short supply.

- Matt O'Brien

**GreatWorks**  
touring theatre

[www.greatworkstheatre.com](http://www.greatworkstheatre.com)

