

Dramatic License

Since a drama is a series of events that can be acted out rather than a description, Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett [the authors] had to adapt Anne's diary entries to make them suitable for presentation on a stage. These **changes, made for the sake of the overall effect** desired by the dramatists, **are referred to as the use of dramatic license.**

From Anne's descriptions of events in the annex, the dramatists had to create dialogue for the persons involved. Too, they had to compress journal entries to provide necessary exposition, or background, for the play. For example, the first diary entry, which Mr. Frank begins to read aloud on the stage, was drawn from parts of a number of entries. Finally, so as not to crowd the stage unduly with actors, in Miep and Mr. Kraler they created composite characters. The personalities of Miep Gies and Elli Vossen both of whom worked in the warehouse building and were friends of Anne, merge on stage in Miep; Mr. Kraler and Mr. Koophuis, both business friends of Mr. Frank and both associated with Travis, Inc., become the single character Mr. Kraler.

In reality, the people living in the Secret Annex had more freedom to move around than do the characters in the play. In the diary, Anne frequently mentions the trips to the "private office" on the first floor of the building where the inhabitants of the annex listened to news broadcasts, speeches, and concerts on the radio. The playwrights, however, realizing the difficulties in staging different settings, have confined the action and the characters to one set, the Secret Annex itself.

During the two years the Franks and the Van Daans occupied the Secret Annex, there were several burglaries in the office below. None of them occurred during the Hanukkah season. Again, the playwrights have used dramatic license in presenting only one of these burglaries. By having the burglary occur during the Hanukkah celebration, the playwrights have created an extremely dramatic situation; the hope and strength which the inhabitants receive from the religious ceremony contrast sharply with the ever-present danger of discovery, brought into focus by the intrusion of the unknown thief.

Much of Anne's diary reveals her thoughts about herself, the special problems with which she, as a teen-ager, is faced. The following diary entry reveals an important aspect of Anne's personality:

Saturday, 15 July, 1944 . . . I have one outstanding trait in my character, which must strike anyone who knows me for any length of time and that is my knowledge of myself. I can watch myself and my actions, just like an outsider. The Anne of every day I can face entirely without prejudice, without making excuses for her, and watch what's good and what's bad about her. This "self-consciousness" haunts me, and every time I open my mouth I know as soon as I have spoken whether "that ought to have been different" or "that was right as it was." There are so many things about myself that I condemn; I couldn't begin to name them all. I understand more and more how true Daddy's words were when he said: "All children must look after their own upbringing." Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands.

This is the type of personal, intimate revelation which Anne made only in her diary. To reveal this aspect of Anne's personality to the audience, the dramatists incorporated the entry into Scene 4 in which Anne, still frightened and overwrought from her nightmare, confesses to her father things that in actuality she revealed to no one.

Counterpoint in Literature. Scott, Foresman, and Company, Glenview, Illinois, 1967, p. 505-506.