

The Sapling Project

<http://annefranktreeusa.com/>

From her only window to the outside world, Anne Frank could see the sky, birds and a majestic chestnut tree. "As long as this exists", Anne wrote in her diary, "how can I be sad?" During the two years she spent in the Secret Annex, the solace Anne found in her chestnut tree provided a powerful contrast to the Holocaust unfolding beyond her attic window. And as war narrowed in on Anne and her family, her tree became a vivid reminder that a better world was possible.



Anne's tree would outlive its namesake by more than 50 years, before being weakened by disease and succumbing to a windstorm in 2010. But today, thanks to dozens of saplings propagated in the months before its death, Anne's tree lives on in cities and towns around the world. Here in the United States, the Sapling Project is bringing eleven of these precious trees to specially selected locations across the country. As the saplings take root, they will emerge as living monuments to Anne's pursuit of peace and tolerance. In the process, they will serve as powerful reminders of the horrors borne by hate and bigotry and the need for collective action in the face of injustice.

The Tree in Anne's Diary

During a speech delivered in 1968, Anne's father, Otto Frank, reflected on just how important Anne's tree was to his youngest daughter. "How could I have known", he asked "how much it meant to Anne to see a patch of blue sky, to observe the seagulls as they flew, and how important the chestnut tree was for her, when I think that she never showed any interest in nature". Still, he acknowledged, "she longed for it when she felt like a bird in a cage. Only the thought of the freedom of nature gave her comfort. But she kept all those feelings to herself."

Of course, there was one place in which Anne did reveal those feelings: her diary. Anne wrote about her beloved chestnut tree in three separate entries.

On February 23, 1944, she recorded her friendship with Peter and the peace she found by looking outside her window. "The two of us looked out at the blue sky, the bare chestnut tree glistening with dew, the seagulls and other birds glinting with silver as they swooped through the air, and we were so moved and entranced that we couldn't speak."

Two months later, on April 18, 1944, she noted that "April is glorious, not too hot and not too cold, with occasional light showers. Our chestnut tree is in leaf, and here and there you can already see a few small blossoms."

On May 13, 1944, she noted that "Our chestnut tree is in full bloom. It's covered with leaves and is even more beautiful than last year."

About Anne's Tree

Anne's tree was a white horse chestnut tree, of a variety found throughout the Northern hemisphere. At the time of its demise, it was over 170 years old, making it one of the oldest trees of its kind in Amsterdam. Throughout that period, it stood in the courtyard garden of number 188 Keizersgracht—right outside of Anne's Secret Annex window.

As decades passed, the majestic tree became infected with a moth and fungus infestation. Determined not to let the tree be lost forever, The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam decided, with the permission of the tree's owner, to gather chestnuts, germinate them, and donate the saplings to schools and organizations dedicated to Anne Frank.

The Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect was one such location. In 2009, the Center received 11 saplings that it planned to disperse across the United States, to organizations with a demonstrated commitment to upholding Anne's vision for a peaceful, more tolerant world, as well as the capacity to properly care for the sapling and tree. In 2009 the Center issued a call for proposals and received dozens of entries from institutions across the country. But before the 11 designated sites could begin their planting, the saplings were placed in post-entry quarantine for a period of 3 years, as per US Department of Agriculture regulations. The saplings were finally released from quarantine in early 2013, enabling their planting throughout the spring and fall of this year.

Name: _____ **Due Date:** _____

**Article of the Week #44
The Sapling Project**

1. What is a sapling?

2. What does Anne's tree symbolize?

3. When did Anne's dad learn that this tree was important to Anne? This is an inference question, please do not write a year.

4. Why do you think Anne wrote about this tree in her diary?

5. What was special about the schools and organizations that received a sapling donation?

6. Name one place that you feel would be deserving of a sapling donation. Explain.