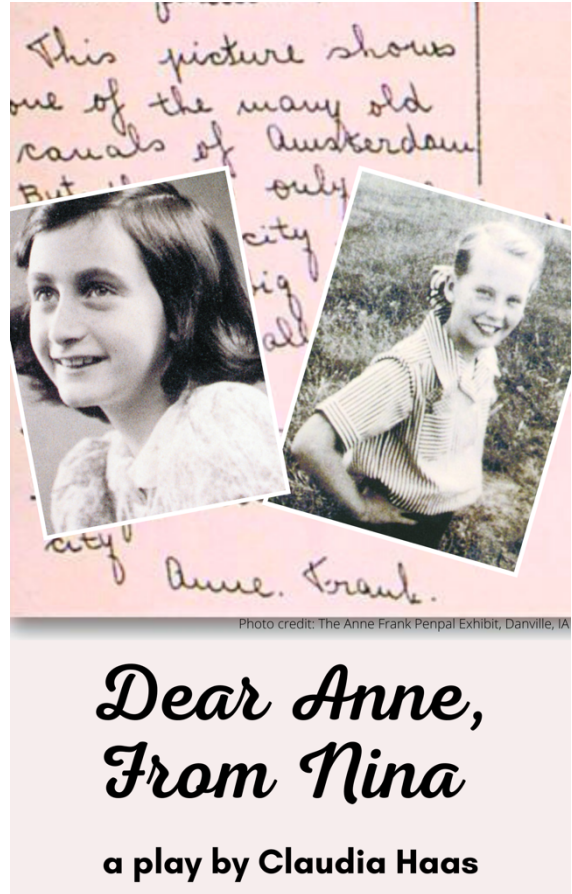


## *Dear Anne, From Nina:* Connecting to Character

by Maria McConville

Creating a character is always an interesting challenge. Now imagine playing role based on a real person! As the actor, you want to be sure you are presenting this person with as much truth as you can muster. That is where the research comes in. Here is a starting point for connecting to your character.



### ACTIVITY 1- TIMELINE

Anne and Juanita became pen pals in 1939

\*Research what was happening in Amsterdam in 1939-1940

\*Research and create a timeline for what was happening in Danville, Iowa in 1939-1940.

\*Research and create a timeline for what was happening in your town in 1939-1940.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

\*How do you think the events in Amsterdam in 1939 affected Anne and Margot?

\*How do you think the events in Danville in 1939 affected the Wagner sisters?

\*What might you be doing in your town that year? What events were happening and how might they have affected you?

## **ACTIVITY 2 – CHARACTER BIO**

When diving into a character, it is important to examine the information you can glean from the text. This information can help inform your performance. You can find your answers in the text of the play.

Character Name/Age:

Habitat (Where they live or are most comfortable):

Occupation:

Family:

Overall intention/Want:

Obstacles:

Fears:

Secret they keep to themselves:

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- \*How do you relate to this character? How are you similar?
- \*How are you different from this character?
- \*What do you admire about this character?
- \*What do you wish for this character?

## **ACTIVITY 3 – PHYSICALIZING YOUR CHARACTER**

- \*Find photos of the character you are playing.
  - \*Create a statue of the character with your body. What is their stance? Where do they lead from? What is their gesture? Facial expression?
  - \*Allow your character to begin to move. What is their tempo? Do they lift their feet when they walk? Are their movements confident or hesitant?
- (Feel free to build on these questions for your actors. The more specific they can be, the better!)

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- \*Did you discover anything about your character by moving like them?
- \*Are there similarities between you and your character?
- \*What are the differences between you and your character?

## ACTIVITY 4 – What Would You Take Into Hiding?

Anne brought her diary, her box of postcards and her hair curlers into hiding. Margo brought her diary and books. They could only take what they could carry and what wouldn't draw attention.

- \*Imagine you had to go into hiding, never to go outside and you have to ditch your cellphone. Make a list of what you would take with you.
- \*Challenge: Turn off your phone. Don't use your computer. Hang out in as quiet a space as you can find with only the items you would take into hiding. See if you could stay there for 1 hour. 2 hours?
- \*Write a journal entry or monologue about your experience.

Have fun! If you would like to share your take on this lesson with us, e-mail  
[Maria@yourstagepartners.com](mailto:Maria@yourstagepartners.com)

---

**Maria McConville** has been a NYC Public School teaching artist since 2005. In the past she has worked with the Theatre Development Fund, LeAP! Onstage, and as a Shakespeare and Playwriting teaching artist with Theatre For A New Audience. Her students have performed and adapted the work of Shakespeare, written their own plays, devised ensemble performance pieces, sang and danced in musical productions, and performed their peers work on a Broadway stage. Growing up in New York, Maria attended LaGuardia High School of Performing Arts for Drama, and Fordham University at Lincoln Center. In addition to being Stage Partners' Education Director, Maria is also a playwright; her published plays include "#Censored" and "#Viral" (Stage Partners) and "To Date or Not to Date" (Playscripts).

---



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

Stage Partners

P.O. Box 7874

New York, NY 10116

Copyright © 2021 by Stage Partners, All Rights Reserved. You may freely use this lesson plan, as long as the document is distributed in its entirety, including the author's bio and this notice.