

Jews have perished because of their beliefs since the beginning of time but never have so many Jews been persecuted worldwide as they were in World War II. Anne Frank's diary reaches a place within all of our hearts because it reminds us how easily the innocents can suffer. Sometimes we may choose to close our eyes or look the other way when unjustifiable things happen in our society and Anne's tale reminds us that ignorance, in part, claimed her life. Sadly, her story is but one of many of those who died in the Holocaust and as with other Jews, her fate was determined by the country she lived in, her sex and her age.

Jews all over Europe feared for their lives and many were aware that the punishment for their religion depended on the country they were fortunate, or unfortunate, enough to live in. Hitler not only held prejudice against Jews, homosexuals, gypsies and those who harboured any of the above, but also held firm convictions that some countries' citizens were fit to die, no matter their religion. No one was hit harder by this prejudice as was Poland. Hitler hated all Polish citizens and hated Polish Jews even more. In Warsaw, Jews were confined to a blocked off area which came to be known as the Warsaw Ghetto. Many of these Jews never saw outside the Ghetto again and for those who did it was only en route to a concentration camp or labour prison. Food rations inside the Ghetto were very low and though many outsiders smuggled food in, there was not nearly enough to keep everyone alive. Many died of starvation or died due to illness they had contracted because their bodies had grown so weak. Throughout the war, Sweden remained neutral and many Jews from neighbouring countries were smuggled in. Nazi police soon realized that they had to find ways to prevent this from happening and turned to the animal world. Dogs were trained to detect the scent of humans and soon, all boats leaving for Sweden were searched to detect any Jews that were hiding in basement compartments. Most Jews were discovered before they could escape and this discouraged many more from attempting to do the same. Jews that were apprehended were not treated much differently by the Nazis but the Jews left behind received the brunt of their anger. Danish Jews in particular were often accused of planning to escape because of their proximity to Sweden. There are stories of countless Jews who were sent to concentration camps even if no proof existed. There was so much to be afraid of that many Jews devised new ways avoid death and found hiding places in the least obvious of places. Many of these secret homes were on busy streets that Nazis patrolled frequently. Anne Frank's family was one of these Jews and took up residence in the hidden rooms above her father's former office. As the end of the war neared, Nazi soldiers began to get worried and cared less about apprehending Jews than they did about killing the ones they already had taken as prisoner.

Since the Nazi soldiers were male, they treated men and women prisoners in their camps with a significant amount of difference. Prisoners were forced to do pointless yet challenging labour for an indefinite time before they were sentenced to death. Upon arrival at the camps, Jews were divided into two different groups; one would group would live and the other would be sent to the gas chambers immediately. The labour intensive tasks proved to be quite brutal for women since they were not accustomed to such duties. Even pregnant women were not spared and many women miscarried because the hard labour had killed their unborn child. Those babies who were born were almost inevitably taken immediately and killed. There was no privacy in these camps and the women were continually being eyed by the lonely, watching soldiers. Some women were beaten or sexually harassed while in the camps and could do nothing to stop the horror. Their husbands, brothers and fathers were either dead or in a different part of the camp and could offer them no protection. Most men would never know the trauma their loved ones endured because they would never see the female members of their families again, anyway. Even those Nazi soldiers who did not stoop to raping or molesting female prisoners were likely to give special treatment to particular members of the opposite sex. Guards were far from their own families and grew very lonely in the long months of the war. It was not uncommon for them to meet very small children who would remind them so much of their own children that they would do the child