

# The Blue Plaque

## Sigmund Freud

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Freud was born in the small Moravian town of Freiburg (now Pribor in the Czech Republic) in 1856 and his family moved to Vienna when he was four years old. He lived there until he was an old man of eighty-two, through all the years in which he slowly elaborated the theories of psychoanalysis and the ideas about the Oedipus Complex and the threefold division of the mind into id, ego and superego which made him famous.

Books like *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, which changed the way we think about human nature and the human mind, were researched and written in his apartment and consulting rooms at 19 Berggasse.

By the 1930s Freud had become a grand old man of European thought but Hitler's rise to power in Germany indirectly threatened his status. To the Nazis, Freud's ideas were anathema. Not only were they the work of a Jewish thinker but they were representative of what the Nazis thought of as the sickness and decadence of the modern world. His books were burnt in Berlin. "What progress we are making," Freud wrote dryly to a colleague. "In the Middle Ages they would have burned me. Now they are content with burning my books." However, when the Nazis overran Austria, Freud's life as well as his writing was in danger and strenuous efforts were made to get him and his family out of Vienna.

He came to London in 1938 and to 20 Maresfield Gardens, Hampstead where he spent the last year of his life, writing *Moses and Monotheism*, his last significant work, and fighting against cancer of the jaw, which claimed his life on 23rd September 1939.

The house in Maresfield Gardens is now a museum devoted to Freud's life and work. There are plaques on the house dedicated to Freud and to his daughter Anna, a pioneer of child psychoanalysis, who continued to live there until her own death in 1982.



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