

Diary

EXAMPLE SOURCE: *Diary of Anne Frank*

Key Considerations

- ❖ Diaries can appear especially immediate and authentic, because their structure gives the impression that they are written “in the moment” and unfiltered. This can enhance the feeling of connection between author and reader, as the reader feels they have access to the author’s innermost thoughts and feelings. However, students should be brought to reflect on the process of publication and the ways in which the diary has been edited (particularly in the case of the diary of someone who died before it was published). Who else is involved in producing this testimony?
- ❖ As with all forms of testimony, diaries taken on their own give a singular perspective on a very specific set of events. That perspective needs to be set in a broader context in order to avoid a partial view.
- ❖ Teachers will need to consider if they propose to use the whole diary or only extracts. Using extracts can allow this source to be studied in a reduced amount of time; however, it does mean that contextualisation will have to be considered carefully. On the other hand, teachers will also need to consider the extent to which they will extend the diary forwards and backwards in time, e.g., by explaining what happens to Anne after the diary finishes.
If extracts are to be used, we would recommend selecting moments from across the diary to give a sense of the

whole and allow students to engage with Anne’s experience as it evolved over time.

Starting Point

You might begin by asking students what they do to help them remember and look back on big events. What about recording everyday life? It might be that some keep diaries, but it’s more likely to elicit reflection on images and the ways that these are stored and circulated. Ask students to think about their social media usage. Ask them to consider a recent post to Facebook/Twitter/Instagram etc. Who did they hope would read it? What would they have changed if they had known their teacher/parents/future employers were looking at it?

They can then ask: Who was Anne writing for? Do you think she intended it to be published? Does it matter? The idea here is to get students thinking about the ethics of reading a diary and open opportunities to discuss the editing work undertaken by Otto Frank.

Source Engagement

There are a range of excellent resources for engaging with the *Diary*, including ideas for activities (see the box below for a selection). In selecting which of these to use, we would stress the need to avoid activities that ask students to imagine themselves *as* Anne Frank (as opposed to being sensitive to the expressions of emotions in the diary itself, which are complex and challenging). Teachers should also keep in mind – and encourage

students to keep in mind – the nature of the diary as a source as outlined above.

Whilst avoiding “self-oriented” empathy (see **Research Briefing I**), teachers might make use of Anne’s closeness in age to the students by asking them to consider what questions they would ask Anne Frank if she had survived. Are these the same questions that you have heard asked of people who did survive? The reason behind this question is the idea that all of the survivors are (especially for students), elderly! Does being elderly illicit certain questions and responses – what does this mean when it comes to considering the testimony written by someone their own age?

The *Diary of Anne Frank* also lends itself to thinking about the present moment. For example, if her story is extended beyond the diary to include consideration of Otto Frank’s attempt to get asylum for the family in the United States before they were forced into hiding it can be used to help explore issues surrounding refugees today. The recent film *No Asylum* (<https://noasylumfilm.com/>) might be a good starting point here (see below for ideas on how to approach testimony embedded in documentary film).

More broadly, the iconic status of Anne Frank means that her story has been told through multiple media (theatre, film,

Anne Frank Resources

- ❖ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum provides a useful summary of published resources here: <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/anne-frank#h171> .
- ❖ The Anne Frank House also provides free online resources, including an introductory lesson and ideas for connecting Anne’s story to the present: <https://www.annefrank.org/en/education/all-educational-products/> .
- ❖ The Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect has published a ‘Reader’s Companion’ to the diary which also includes some useful activities to complete with students: <https://www.annefrank.com/teacher-resources>
- ❖ The Anne Frank Trust offers an extensive schools’ programme if more time (and resources) permit: <https://annefrank.org.uk/education/schools-programme/>

exhibitions, social media etc.). Exploration of the ways in which these different media tell the story in different ways – drawing on the considerations for each medium outlined in this document – would make for an engaging cross-curricula project.