UNIT STRUCTURE

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12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- get an idea about what a diary is,
- learn about the historical evolution of a diary,
- write a diary,
- list some examples of diaries.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit makes an attempt to acquaint you with the steps that you could follow in order to write a diary. Writing a diary is fun. It makes you feel better about yourself. It also reminds you of the past. It is a good place to store your memories in. We shall focus on the procedure involved in writing a diary.

12.3 WHAT IS A DIARY?

A diary is a personal daily record of events, thoughts or experiences noted down in a book by the writer himself. A diary is lively, full of details and mostly written in plain language. Diaries bring us close to the person whose diary we read.

Although letters and diaries from the past are immediate, homely and comfortable to read, they are not as simple as they might first seem. Diaries and letters are similar in important ways; each form has its own purposes and possibilities. Compared to other kinds of written sources, both letters and diaries seem at first to be 'Private' kinds of writing. They give us the past from individual points of view. These letters and diaries were created by people who had the time and the means to reflect and correspond.

Letters and diaries have certain points of difference as personal texts. Letters are written to a particular person, they require a dialogue. Diaries are written for oneself or an imagined other; they rely on monologue. Letters are shaped by the factors like distance and time between writer and recipient; they become over time scattered in various places and must be collected to form a single body of writing. Diaries are shaped by moments of inspiration but also by habit; they are linked together by a single voice and usually are contained between covers. At the same time, letters and diaries share certain features. Diarists wrote letters and letter writers kept or read diaries. Both forms play with the tension of revealing and concealing, between telling all and speaking obliquely so keeping silent. Both inscribe the risks and pleasures of expression and trust.

12.4 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF DIARY

Few historical texts seem as familiar or as engaging to read as personal letters and diaries. They capture with special sharpness historical changes and continuities in self, social relations, work and values. The history of each form, especially since the seventeenth century, helps us sharpen a sense of how they are personal but not really private. The diary is a relatively recent form in the culture of Western Europe and early America, arising in large part from a Christian desire to chart the story of individuals' spiritual progress toward God. Such religious diaries broadened over time into the nineteenth century practice of using diaries to record personal feelings and explore intellectual growth. Diaries thus were born of self examination but expanded into a means

of self reflection and self fashioning. By the 1830's, diarists freely employed many of the literary devices of novels and other kinds of imaginative writing, especially writing by and for women. These aspects of diary keeping continued into the twentieth century with an increasingly secular accent on psychological self scrutiny and on using the diary as a means of emotional well being and self-discovery.

In contrast, the letter as a personal missive addressed to a particular person is a much older form, dating from antiquity when ambassadors from one kingdom to another sent dispatches home and later when travelers of various kinds reported on their journeys. Scholars have observed that many literary forms including official dispatches, newspapers, scientific studies and even the modern novel arose from the letters particularity and sharp attention to place and character. By the 18th Century, European and American political and social commentators often formed their published remarks as 'letters' to the public. This became a lively way to tell others about one's interests or culture, and a flexible form for inscribing literate, bourgeois values in the education of youth, as publishers brought out informative volumes of famous men's letters and institutions taught young American women and men proper ways to put to pen the relations of courtship, family and business.

Thus, the historical value of reading diaries and letters involves understanding the significance of how individual writers employed, experimented with or altered the conventional forms alive in their time. Perhaps more than any other kind of historical text, the personal writing we are considering reveals how people both embraced and resisted the time and place in which they lived. Their personal motives for employing either-form the emotional and intellectual energy infusing the form with life suggest much about how people in the past made their cultures, but made them from the ingredients at hand.

Thus, John Mack Faragher has shown how American women moving west in the nineteenth century wrote conventional letters home, filled with good wishes and narrative descriptions of travel, but also infused

them with longing and loss beyond what we might expect. Judy Litoff and David Smith have also shown the range of feeling and depth of commitment in the letters of World War II families, and Elizabeth Hampsten has sounded the depths of Midwestern farm women's personal writing. Publication of the letters of Abigail and John Adams, for instance, helped us to understand Abigail's importance as an intellectual influence on her better known President husband, as well as revealing that domestic life was a thoroughly political realm in Revolutionary America. The diary of a common midwife, Martha Ballard permitted Laurel Thatcher Ulrich to argue for the importance of women's medical work in colonial American communities.

LET US KNOW



When historian C. Vann Woodward edited the manuscript of Mary Boykin Chestnut's *Civil War Diary*, he discovered that some editors of published diaries had greatly altered the texts. Woodward found that the editors of two previous, much used editions of the Chestnut Diary had changed many of her words, moved entire passages from one place to another and even wholly made up other passages.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. What is a diary?

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2. Where did the diary first arise and why?

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12.5 HOW TO WRITE A DIARY

Requirements for writing a diary

1. Journal or notebook
2. Pen
3. Outpour of emotions and deep thoughts
4. Secrets
5. Events / Happenings

You should have a pen and notebook or journal. The notebook must have a lot of pages since you will be writing continuously. You should find a private place like your bedroom or any other place where other people do not frequent. It is best to write in a place where nobody can see you writing in your diary. This will prevent any curiosity on the part of any other person who may try to invade your privacy. Also, vc being alone as you write and when you write your diary would prevent any distraction that may hinder your train of thoughts.

 # START FROM THE BEGINNING:

You should write the date and time on top of the page. You can start by saying “Dear Diary” as if you are writing to someone. You may exclude the “Dear Diary” words and just note down your thoughts for the day. You should write about what you have done today, what you have experienced, people you interacted with, what was the interaction about, whatever you may have experienced. You should write about how you feel and why you feel the way you do. An example from Anne Frank’s *The Diary of a Young Girl:*

> *Wednesday, 29 December 1943*
>
> *Dear Kitty,*
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> *I was very unhappy again last evening. Granny and Lies came into my mind. Granny, oh, darling Granny, how little we understood of what she suffered, or how sweet she was. And besides all this, she knew a terrible secret which she carefully kept to herself the whole time. How faithful and good Granny always was; she would never have let*

one of us down. Whatever it was, however naughty I had been, Granny always stuck up for me.

Granny, did you love me or didn't you understand me either " I don't know. No one ever talked about themselves to Granny. How lonely Granny must have been, how lonely in spite of us! A person can be lonely even if he is loved by many people, because he is still not the "One and Only" to anyone.

And Lies, is she still alive? What is she doing? Oh, God, protect her and bring her back to us. Lies, I see in you all the time what my lot might have been, I keep seeing myself in your place. Why then should I often be unhappy over what happens here? Shouldn't I always be glad, contented, and happy, except when I think about her and her companions in distress? I am selfish and cowardly. Why do I always dream and think of the most terrible things – my fear makes me want to scream out loud sometimes. Because still, in spite of everything, I have not enough faith in God. He has given me so much that is wrong every day. If you think of your fellow creatures, then you only want to cry, you could really cry the whole day long. The only thing to do is to pray that God will perform a miracle and save some of them. And I hope that I am doing that enough!

Yours Anne

(1993:126-127)

You should write about any celebration or disaster that happened that day. You could also simply put pen to paper and write about whatever is on your mind.

Sunday, 2 January, 1944

Dear Kitty,

This morning when I had nothing to do I turned over some

of the pages of my diary and several times I came across letters dealing with the subject "Mummy" in such a hotheaded way that I was quite shocked, and asked myself : "Anne, is it really you who mentioned hate? Oh, Anne, how could you! " I remained sitting with the open page in my hand, and thought about it and how it came about that. I should have been so brimful of rage and really so filled with such a thing as hate that I had to confide it all in you. I have been trying to understand the Anne of a year ago and to excuse her, because my conscience is not clear as long as I have you with these accusations, without being able to explain, on looking back, how it happened.

I suffer now-and suffered then-from moods which kept my hand under water (so to speak) and only allowed me to see the things subjectively with out enabling me to consider quietly the words of the other side, and to answer them as the words of one whom I, with my hotheaded temperament had offended or made unhappy.

I hid myself with in myself, I only considered my self and quietly wrote down all my joys, sorrows, and contempt in my diary. This diary is of great value to me, because it has become a book of memoirs in many places, but on a good many pages I could certainly put "past and done with".

I used to be furious with Mummy, and still am some- times. Its true that she does not understand me, but I do not understand her either. She did love me very much and she was tender, but as she landed in so many unpleasant situations through me, and was nervous and irritable because of other worries and difficulties, it is certainly understandable that she snapped at me.

I took it much too seriously, was offended, and was rude and aggravating to Mummy, with in turn made her unhappy. So it was really a matter of unpleasantness and misery

rebounding all the time. It was not nice for either of us but it is passing.

I just did not want to see all this, and pitied myself very much, but that, is understandable. Those violent outbursts on paper were only giving vent to anger with in a normal life could have been worked off by stamping my feet a couple of times in a locked room, or calling Mummy names behind her back.

The period when I caused Mummy to shed tears is over. I have grown wiser and Mummy's nerves are not so much on edge. I usually keep my mouth shut if I get annoyed, and so does she, so we appear to get in much better together. I can not really love mummy in a dependent childlike way-I just do not have that feeling.

I soothe my conscience now with the thought that it is better for herd words to be on paper than that Mummy should carry them in her heart.

Yours Anne

(1993:127-128)

You could also write about how you wish you day could have gone. You may include what you think could have made it better.

You should close with your name. You should also add your signature. This is optional and you can end your entry with 'bye'. You can also stick photos, flower petals or anything associated with what happened that day to add to the creativity of the work.

 # HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY:

You should be honest and truthful. Avoid letting your imagination run wild. You should avoid fictionalization. If you wish to tell a story using your imagination and if the story is removed from reality then a diary is not what you should be writing. You can then just write a fictional story with fictional characters but do not label it as a diary or memoir.

 # WRITING ABOUT PEOPLE:

You can write the real names of the people you interact with or name them with a code or change their names so that you alone are aware of whom you are referring to. This is a practical way to disguise the identities of those people about whom you have made negative comments in your diary. In this manner you can also save them from feeling hurt or offended by the unfavourable things mentioned about them. From Anne Frank's Diary:

Wednesday, 5 January, 1944

Dear Kitty,

I have two things to confess to you today, which will take a long time. But I must tell someone and you are the best one to tell, as I know that, come what may, you always keep a secret.

The first is about Mummy. You know that I've grumbled a lot about Mummy, yet still tried to be nice to her again. Now it is suddenly clear to me what she lacks. Mummy herself has told us that she looked upon us more as her friends than her daughters. Now that is all very fine, but still, a friend can't take a mother's place. I need my mother as an example which I can follow, I want to be able to respect her. I have the feeling that Margot thinks differently about these things and would never be able to understand what I've just told you. And Daddy avoids all arguments about Mummy.

I imagine a mother as a woman who, in the first place, shows great tact, especially towards her children when they reach our age, and who does not laugh at me if I cry about something – not pain, but other things – like "Mums" does.

One thing, which perhaps may seem rather fatuous, I have never forgiven her. It was on a day that I had to go to the dentist. Mummy and Margot were going to come with

me, and agreed that I should take my bicycle. When we had finished at the dentist, and were outside again, Margot and Mummy told me that they were going into the town to look at something or buy something – I don't remember exactly what. I wanted to go, too, but was not allowed to as I had my bicycle with me. Tears of rage sprang into my eyes, and Mummy and Margot began laughing at me. Then I became so furious that I stuck my tongue out at them in the street just as an old woman happened to pass by, who looked very shocked! I rode home on my bicycle, and I know I cried for a long time.

It is queer that the wound that Mummy made then still burns, when I think of how angry I was that afternoon.

The second is something that is very difficult to tell you, because it is about myself …… (1993:128-129)

Friday, 14 April,1944

Dear Kitty,

The atmosphere here is still extremely strained. Pim has just about reached boiling point. Mrs. Van Daan is in bed with a cold and trumpeting away. Mr. Van Daan grows pale without his fags, Dussel, who is giving up a lot of his comfort, is full of observations, etc. etc.

There is no doubt that our lucks' not in at the moment. The lavatory leaks and the washer of the tap has gone, but, thanks to our many connections, we shall soon be able to get these things put right.

I am sentimental sometimes, I know that, but there is occasion to be sentimental here at times, when Peter and I are sitting somewhere together on a hard, wooden crate in the midst of masses of rubbish and dust, our arms around each other's shoulders, ands very close, he with

one of my curls in his hand, when the birds sing outside and you see the trees changing to green, the sun invites one to be out in the open air, when the sky is so blue, then – oh, then, I wish for so much……

(1993:208-209)

 # WRITING CONTINUOUSLY:

You should write continuously. You should endeavour to write on a regular or daily basis. If you want to just write when there are unexpected events or if something extraordinary has happened, skipping those days that you think are uneventful, you may opt to write more than once a day or when you feel the urge to write. If you wish to write daily and if there is nothing eventful or interesting to write about, then you should simply write the date, time and one sentence saying that nothing new happened.

 # PHOTOGRAPHS:

You should add photographs to your diary. You could use the help of a digital camera. You should print the photographs and add it to your diary. It makes it more interesting for future reading and reference if you have actual photos of the event or anything that may have inspired you to take the photo. Please do not put too many photos so that your diary resembles a scrapbook. There are distinctions between the two, although your scrapbook may contain journals it is not to be confused with a diary containing some photos.

 # PRESERVING YOUR WORK:

When you finish writing you should keep the diary in a safe and secure place. You should not reveal the location of your diary to anyone. Your diary belongs to you and it should remain your secret or private for as long as you wish it to remain so. You should keep the diary in a fireproof safe or in a safety deposit box once you have finished an entire journal. You may give instructions in your last will and testament if you want the diary to be read by others or if you want it to be

discarded or burnt. Some people have opted to be buried with their diaries. So ensure that you indicate your wish in your will if you desire.

LET US KNOW



Nathaniel Hawthorne became a famous author but he spoke like countless other correspondents when he wrote to his sweetheart Sophia Peabody in 1840 that the 'only ray of light' in his dreary day was "when (I) opened thy letter……. I have folded it to my heart, and ever and anon it sends a thrill through me…….. It seems as if thy head were leaning against my breast."

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



3. Where should you sit while writing your diary? Why?

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4. What must you do if you write about real people who might be offended by negative things that you have said about them?

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***TIPS FOR WRITING A DIARY:**

1. It should be neat. When you look back at the diary many years from now, you should be able to read your own writing. It must be neat and presentable in case others read it at some point of time.

2. You should try not to write in it more than once a day. If something crops up that you wish to write about, you could put 'later' under the part that you already wrote for that day.

3. You should put a cover design that you think is nice or suits your image and style for example, if you are an artist you could draw on the cover. If you are a sports person, you could stick a picture of you playing the particular sport you enjoy. Sometimes it can be as simple as a school notebook which can be transformed with drawings, stickers and even pipe cleaners.

4. Instead of writing 'Dear Diary' for every entry you could use names like 'Dear Rose' 'Dear Scarlett' that matches the colour/style of your diary.

5. Never write anything that you would not want to read about when you go through it later.

LET US KNOW



In 1942, with the Nazi's occupying Holland, a thirteen year old Jewish girl and her family fled their home in Amsterdam and went into hiding. For the next two years, until their whereabouts were betrayed to the Gestapo, they lived cloistered in the 'Secret Annexe' of an old office building. Cut off from the outside world, they faced hunger, boredom, confinement and the threat of discovery and death. The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank records the vivid impressions of her experiences during this period.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



5. How can you enhance your diary?

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6. How can you make your autobiography very interesting and complete in itself, if you want to pass it on to your heirs?

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ACTIVITY

1. You could take a well known diary and do some research on it. You could ask questions like- is the volume the complete diary or are there other volumes elsewhere?
2. Who saved the diary and why?
3. Has the diarist herself added retrospective marginal notes, scratched out passages or cut out pages?

12.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt what a diary is and how to write a diary. We have made you aware of the general outline that should be adhered to while writing a diary. We have shown you how to organize your diary with a few examples. You should now be able to write a diary.

12.7 EXAMPLES OF DIARIES

- Frank, Anne. The Diary of a Young Girl. New York: Bantham Books, 1993.



12.8 FURTHER READINGS

Website Resources:

http://www.wikihow.com

12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. A diary is a personal daily record of events thoughts and experiences noted down in a book by the writer himself.
2. The diary first arose in the culture of Western Europe and Early America. It arose from a Christian desire to chart the story of individuals spiritual progress towards God.
3. You should sit in a private place like your bedroom or any other place where other people do not frequent. Being alone when you write will prevent you from being distracted.
4. We must change the names or use coded names for those people who might be offended by negative things that we may say about them in our diary.
5. We can enhance our diary by keeping it neat, putting a cover design that would suit our style and adding stickers and drawings to the diary.
6. We could use names like ‘Dear Rose’, ‘Dear Scarlett’ to match with the colour / style of our diary.



12.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the historical evolution of the diary.
2. What, do you think, are the main points to keep in mind while writing a diary?
3. Why is honesty important when writing a diary?

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