

Diaries vs. Memoirs - Thoughts to ponder

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A **diary** tells what happens within a specific time frame and is written about specific things that have happened. It doesn't address the person to whom these things happened. Diaries are usually written as a record of events, transactions or observations kept daily or at frequent intervals.

In Calkin's book, *Living Between the Lines*, Ernest Becker states: "*What human beings fear is not growing old, but growing old without things adding up.*"

That is why we write our memoirs.

Memoirs are not personal narratives. Memoirs are not single moments. Memoirs are about the *plot lines or patterns that bind those moments together*.

Virginia Woolf says, "*A memoir is not what happens, but the person to whom things happen.*"

Writing a memoir has everything to do with rendering the ordinariness of our lives so that it becomes significant. Rather than writing with statistics, memoir is written with scenes.

Memoir allows one to select images, events, and treasures that reveal important things about themselves. The central challenge in memoir writing is to find out how particular moments fit into the plot lines of one's own life. One must not only discover the moment of their lives, but the meanings in those moments.

Memoir is always double-edged. In memoir the unfolding story is always being remembered by a writer who is now older and wiser. Interestingly enough, whenever there is a "then" and a "now" in memoir, there seem to be both moments and meanings.

In this light, *memoir writing makes the past real and vivid and compelling, as if it happened yesterday*. The smells, and sounds from other times develop rich, evocative writing. We in turn learn more than a diary provides.

Noreen Brand, Program and Education Coordinator, Florida Holocaust Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida.

Discussion Questions:

1. What makes diaries unique?
2. How can diaries be used to teach the Holocaust?
3. What are the important issues that can be addressed through diaries?

4. What are some famous diaries that you know of that came out of the Holocaust?
5. Why has Anne Frank had such widespread appeal?
6. How can these themes be translated into the classroom?
7. How much of the story does Anne Frank tell?
8. What is the difference between a diary *and a memoir*?

Holocaust Bibliography

Holocaust Memoirs and Diaries

Appellman-Jurman, A. *Alicia: My Story*. New York: Bantam Books, 1990.

Nonfiction account of Alicia, a girl who began saving Jewish lives during the war when she was only 13. (MS, HS)

Atkinson, Linda. *In Kindling Flame*. New York: Beech Tree, 1985.

A biography of Hannah Senesh, who risked her life to parachute into Nazi-occupied Europe to save fellow Jews. (MS, HS)

Ayer, Eleanor with Helen Waterford and Alfons Heck. *Parallel Journeys*. New York: Atheneum, 1995.

The story of the Holocaust told in alternating fashion from the perspectives of a member of the Hitler Youth and a young girl who survived Auschwitz. (MS, HS)

Berenbaum, Michael. *Witness to the Holocaust*. New York: Harper Collins, 1997.

An illustrated documented history of the Nazi's largely successful effort to eradicate the Jews and other "undesirables" of Europe, told in the words of the victims, perpetrators, and bystanders.

Bernheim, Mark. *Father of Orphans: The Story of Janusz Korczak*. New York: Dutton, 1989.

Details the devotion of a man who accompanied the children in his orphanage to Treblinka. (MS)

Boas, Jacob. *We are Witnesses*. New York: Holt, 1995.

Five diaries of teenagers who perished in the Holocaust. Particularly vivid portraits of spiritual resistance. (HS)

Boom, Corrie L. *The Hiding Place*. New York: Bantam, 1971.

The courage of a Christian who was sent to a concentration camp for helping Jews. (MS)

David, Kati. *A Child's War: World War II through the Eyes of Children*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1989.

Eyewitness accounts by fifteen children who survived; represented are children of Nazis, Jews, resistance fighters, collaborators, etc. (MS, HS)

Denes, Magda. *Castles Burning*. New York: Touchstone, 1997.

A preteen's experiences in war-torn Hungary, hiding from the Nazis. A story of loss, fear and survival, it is also a remarkable portrait of a child's capacity to love and endure. (MS, HS)

Du Bois, William P. *Twenty and Ten*. New York: Puffin Books, 1978.

Ten Jewish children are hidden by nuns in a refuge in the mountains of France. (E, MS)

Edvardson, Cordelia. *Burned Child Seeks the Fire*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1977.

Summoned with her mother to Gestapo headquarters in 1943, 14 year old Cordelia was given the terrible choice: to acknowledge her secret Jewish heritage and suffer the consequences or to see her mother charged with treason. The true story of the love between a mother and daughter. (HS)

Fluek, Toby K. *Memories of My Life in a Polish Village*. New York: Knopf, 1990.

Paintings, drawings, and text of a young girl growing up (1930-1949) takes the reader through a time before, during and after the war. (All ages)

Friedman, Carl. *Nightfather*. New York: Persea Books, 1994.

Survivor's children live in the everyday world and also in their father's nightmare world of the camps. The tragedy of the Holocaust is passed down from parent to child through the bond of love.

Friedman, Ina R. *Flying Against the Wind*. Brookline: Lodgepole Press, 1995.

A biography of a young German woman who defied the Nazis by helping to restore human rights and dignity to those she befriended. (MS, HS)

Friedman, Ina R. *The Other Victims: First Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1990.

Nonfiction book dealing with the Nazi tactics against the non-Jews and factions they found dangerous, such as the Church. (MS)

Grossman, Mendel. *With a Camera in the Ghetto*. New York: Schocken Books, 1977.

Actual pictures taken by Grossman who was interned in the Lodz ghetto before he died. (MS, HS)

Holliday, Laurel. *Children in the Holocaust and World War II: Their Secret Diaries*. New York: Pocket Books, 1995.

An anthology of diaries written by children across Nazi-occupied Europe and in England. Twenty three young people, ages ten through eighteen, recount in vivid detail the horrors they lived through, day after day. (MS, HS)

Isaacman, Clara. *Clara's Story*. Jewish Publications Society, 1984.

A family in hiding in Belgium for two and a half years. (MS)

Isaacson, Judith M. *Seed of Sarah*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

First person account of a 19 year old Hungarian Jewish girl sent to Auschwitz. (MS, HS)

Kerr, Judith. *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1972.

A nine year old in 1933 doesn't understand what is happening when her father disappears and the rest of the family is left to try to escape to Switzerland. (Factual) (E, MS)

Kertesz, Imre. *Fateless*. Chicago: Northwestern University, 1992.

A stark and sometimes unsettling story of a Hungarian teenager's tale of survival as he hides from the Nazis. (HS)

Klein, Gerda. *All But My Life*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.

Memoir of her three years in Nazi concentration camps. Includes updated epilogue from 1957 edition. Documentary won an Oscar in 1995. (MS, HS)

Koehn, Ilse. *Mischling, Second Degree*. New York: Puffin, 1990.

Although she doesn't know it, her grandmother is Jewish and her parents teach her to pretend she is a loyal German. (MS)

Kuchler-Silberman, Lena. *My Hundred Children*. New York: Dell Laurel-Leaf, 1990.

True story of a survivor's attempt to lead 100 war orphans out of Poland to a refuge in Israel. (MS)

Laird, Christa. *Shadow of the Wall*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1990.

The fictional Mischa shares his life in the Warsaw ghetto from 1939-1942 in the orphanage of Janusz Korczak. Based on actual documents. (MS)

Leitner, Isabella. *Fragments of Isabella: A Memoir of Auschwitz*. New York: Crowell, 1978.

A memoir of Auschwitz. The Katz family are sent to Auschwitz. Seven of them would stand before Dr. Mengele. Not all of Isabella's family would survive. (Factual) (HS)

Lewin, Rhoda G. *Witness to the Holocaust*. Boston: Twayne, 1990.

Sixty oral testimonies from the concentration camp survivors, partisans, those in hiding, and liberators. (HS)

Lowry, Lois. *Number the Stars*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1990.

Ten year old Annemarie Johansen and her best friend Ellen Rosen often think about life before the war. But it's now 1943 and Annemarie must find the strength and courage to save her best friend's life. (MS)

Lustig, Arnost. *Darkness Casts No Shadows*. Washington: Inscape, 1976.

Two boys who are longtime concentration camp survivors finally escape a "death train" and struggle to maintain their freedom and regain their dignity. (Factual) (HS)

Marks, Jane. *The Hidden Children*. New York: Fawcett, 1993.

Twenty three hidden children give testimony about their experiences during the war. Very powerful vignettes. (HS)

Meed, Vladka. *On Both Sides of the Wall*. New York: Schocken Books, 1979.

Vladka Meed was 17 when Hitler's army conquered Poland. Thanks to her Aryan appearance, her fluent Polish and her gallantry, she was able to smuggle weapons to the Jewish Fighting Organization inside the Warsaw Ghetto during uprising. (HS/A)

Meltzer, Milton. *Never to Forget*. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

Meltzer turns statistics back into people, as the men, women and children who lived the Nazi terror tell it in their own words. The accounts reveal everyday life in the Nazi ghettos and labor and death camps. They detail the many ways Jews resisted Hitler in ghetto and camp uprisings, underground partisan actions, and in individual decisions to "live and die with dignity." (Factual) (MS, HS)

Meltzer, Milton. *Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews in the Holocaust*. New York: Harper Collins Children's Books, 1991.

The author uses materials excerpted from diaries, letters, interviews and eyewitness accounts. (MS, HS)

Neimark, Anne E. *One Man's Valour: Leo Baeck and the Holocaust*. New York: Lodestar, 1986.

Leo Baeck helped thousands of Jews escape from Germany, but refused to escape himself. The story of his work, his time in a concentration camp, and his liberation, as well as his rise as a respected Jewish leader. (MS, HS)

Novac, Ana. *The Beautiful Days of My Youth*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1992.

Ana survived the war and preserved her diary, the only such account to emerge from Auschwitz with its author. A record of life triumphing over death, as seen through the eyes of a teenager.

Orgel, Doris. *The Devil in Vienna*. New York: Puffin Books, 1988.

A 13 year old girl recounts the difficulties of maintaining her friendship with the daughter of a Nazi. (MS)

Orlev, Uri. *The Island on Bird Street*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1984.

Alex is eleven and alone in the ghetto. His mother has disappeared and his father has been "selected" by the Germans. He is forced to take shelter in a bombed-out building at 78 Bird Street. He must forage for food and fuel to survive the cold Polish winter. (Factual) (MS)

Orlev, Uri. *The Man from the Other Side*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991.

A novel based on a real life boy who smuggled goods into and people out of the Warsaw ghetto. (MS)

Petit, Jayne. *A Place to Hide*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1993.

The story of rescuers who risked their lives to help others. (MS)

Reiss, Johanna. *The Upstairs Room*. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

It is too late for the Dutch family to escape so their father does his best in arranging hiding places for each of his children and himself. (Factual) (MS)

Reulir, Elisabeth. *Best Friends*. Germany: Yellow Brick Road Press, 1993.

What happens when people do not stand firm against what they know to be evil and lies. (E, MS)

Richter, Hans Peter. *Friedrich*. New York: Puffin Books, 1987.

This story tells of Friedrich's growing up years in Germany during the early 1930s. Friedrich's father is deported to a "work" camp and his mother dies leaving Friedrich to fend for himself. (Factual) (MS, HS)

Richter, Hans Peter. *I Was There*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972.

The narrator of this book and his friends were actual members of Hitler's Youth movement. Told in the first person, it gives an intimate glimpse into the lives of German youth of the period preceding and during World War II. (MS, HS)

Rittner, Carol and Sandra Meyers, eds. *The Courage to Care*. New York: New York University Press, 1986.

The stories of non-Jews who risked their lives to protect and rescue Jews.

Roth-Hano, Renee. *Touch Wood*. New York: Puffin Books, 1989.

Renee must learn to obey curfews and wear a star. Then she is separated from her parents. (MS)

Sachs, Marilyn. *A Pocket Full of Seeds*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973.

Nicole and her family feel safe in France during the German occupation since they are non-religious Jews. They soon realize that non-religious Jews are in as much danger as religious ones. Nicole is 8 years old at the beginning of the story and 13 at the end. (Factual) (MS, HS)

Schaur, Steven. *The Shadow Children*. New York: Morrow, 1994.

What really happened to the children of Mont Brulant is the question Etienne has for his grandfather after the end of WWII. (E, MS)

Sender, Ruth Minsky. *The Cage*. New York: Macmillan, 1986.

Teenager Riva Minska survives Auschwitz. She vows to live long enough to tell the story of her people's faith and courage. (HS)

Serrailier, Ian. *Escape from Warsaw*. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1963.

On a cold, dark night in Warsaw in 1942 Edek and Ruth Balicki watch in horror as Nazi storm troopers arrest their mother. Alone, they are determined to find their father who is safe in Switzerland. (MS)

Siegel, Aranka. *Grace in the Wilderness: After the Liberation, 1945-1948*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985.

Sequel to *Upon the Head of the Goat: A Childhood in Hungary, 1939-1944*. Sisters survive the horror of the death camps only to learn they have no home left. Shows what it was like to be a teenage survivor of the Holocaust and how hope and courage can mean survival. (HS)

Siegel, Aranka. *Upon the Head of the Goat: A Childhood in Hungary, 1939-1944*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1981.

The story of how a family attempts to stay together.

Silver, Eric. *The Book of the Just*. New York: Grove Press, 1992.

Oral history and personal testimonies of the hunted and the liberators. (HS)

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus. Volumes I and II*. New York: Pantheon, 1991.

The author relates his parents' stories through the use of cartoons. (MS, HS)

Tatelbaum, Itzhak B. *Through our Eyes: Children Witness the Holocaust*. Jerusalem: I. B. T. Publishing, Inc., 1985.

A resource book on the Holocaust divided into eighteen thematic units arranged in chronological order and comprised of children's diary entries, survivors' testimonies, and pictures representing the various countries (and times) in which the events took place. (MS)

Voight, Cynthia. *David and Jonathan*. Scholastic Books: 1992.

Voight's characters question enduring issues of racism, survivor guilt, and altruistic self sacrifice as they reflect on the Holocaust. (MS)

Volakova, Hana, ed. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. New York: Schocken. 1978.

Children's drawings and poems from Terezin Concentration Camp 1942-1944. (MS, HS)

Vos, Ida. *Anna is Still Here*. New York: Puffin, 1995.

Though Anna survives the Holocaust, she struggles with the burden of her survival. Sequel to *Hide and Seek*. (MS, HS)

Vos, Ida. *Hide and Seek*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991.

Spare vignettes of a young Dutch girl's life during the Nazi occupation.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. New York: Bantam Books, 1960.

Story of a Hungarian boy and his father. It reveals the special perception of the moral effects that suffering can have on its victims. (HS)

Wilkomirski, Benjamin. *Fragments*. New York: Schocken Books, 1996.

The author pieces together the fragments of his life from recollections of a childhood in Latvia, separation from family, and his imprisonment in Majdanek at the age of four. From inside the mind of a little boy. We experience love and loss, terror and friendship, and a return to the real world. (HS)

Yolen, Jane. *The Devil's Arithmetic*. New York: Viking Kestrel, 1988.

Hannah opens the door for Elijah during a Passover Seder and finds herself in Poland in the 1940s. (MS)

Zamoyska-Panek, Christine & Holmberg, F. B. *Have You Forgotten: A Memoir of Poland 1939-1945*. New York: Doubleday Books, 1990.

Former Polish countess describes the German occupation of her father's estate and her work in the Resistance movement. (HS)

Zassenhaus, Hiltgunt. *Walls*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1974

She resisted the Third Reich by refusing to give the Hitler salute in high school. Later she risked death to smuggle food and medicine to hundreds of political prisoners. A true story. (HS)

Ziemian, Joseph. *The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, Co., 1975.

A tiny band of children stayed alive by singing in the streets and selling black market cigarettes to the Nazi occupiers. (Factual) (MS)

Zyskind, Sara. *The Stolen Years*. New York: New American Library, 1983.

Teenage girl must face the struggle for survival in the Jewish Ghetto when both her parents die from starvation and illness. (MS, HS)