

Pandemic Journals

TIME: 90 minutes

SUMMARY:

After reading diary excerpts from the past, students will explore a variety of journaling styles.

OBJECTIVES: Iowa Core

Literacy

W9.-10.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES:

- Student journals or copies of lesson printables
- Access to the *New York Times* article “The Lost Diaries of War”
<https://nyti.ms/3eMoLeG> or <https://www.annefrank.org/en/anne-frank/diary/>

Note: Many libraries have free access to the *New York Times*. Or go through the Des Moines Public Library for access: <https://bit.ly/3bGhk70>

INTRODUCTION:

Anne Frank listened in isolation with her family in 1944 as the Dutch minister of education said over the radio: “**Preserve your diaries and letters...** Only if we succeed in bringing this simple, daily material together in overwhelming quantity, only then will the scene of this struggle for freedom be painted in full depth and shine.”

Read excerpts of journals from those experiencing unsettled times <https://nyti.ms/3eMoLeG>. Certainly, wartime experiences are different from a pandemic, but similarities remain. How can you connect with their experiences?

EXPLORATION:

Pick up a pencil and start writing about your life. If this seems daunting, read on for alternative journaling options!

BRIGHT SPOTS:

What value does journaling have to the writer, and to future readers?
What is your favorite style of journaling? Why?

Journal Option #1: A List of Lists

Sometimes it's difficult to find the words to form sentences, or maybe you're just a list person. If this describes you, make a list instead.

Below are some possible list topics. See if you can think of 5-8 items per topic; you may list many more. Perhaps you'll be able to come back to your list in a week, add to it, use it to create a paragraph, or write about how things have changed.

- Ways you can stay connected to your friends and family
- What you're scared of
- Things that make you feel hopeful
- Events you miss
- Things you do to keep your body strong
- Trends in news and social media this week
- Activities you enjoy that don't involve a screen

Journal Option #2: Jar of Questions

Cut up the slips and place them in a container. Pick one and write until you feel finished. You can use these as good conversation starters too.

How has life changed since the pandemic?	What would you write in a letter to your former self? Your future self?	What brings you joy these days?
What ways have you found to move your body and keep busy?	Anne Frank often described her meals in her diary. Describe some meals you've eaten recently.	How has your screen time changed?

Journal Option #3: Conversation Journals

Start a journal with a friend or a member of your family. To begin, write a paragraph or ask questions, then give your journal to your journaling partner to respond. Continue to share your writing back and forth like a conversation.

If you prefer an online version, starting with a shared Google Doc, an email or text.

Journal Option #4: Sticky Note Poetry

1. Name an **emotion** you are feeling right now. Write it on a sticky note.
2. Add the word “as...” and describe an image of that emotion.
3. Return later. Write another emotion on a sticky note. Add another phrase.
4. Repeat, and arrange the sticky notes in an order you like. You wrote a poem!

An example...

Content as a mother robin warming her nest,

Lonely as a solitary stick of gum forgotten in my purse,

Disappointed as a fifth grader quarantined from his long-awaited field trip,

Hopeful as a sunflower waiting for sunrise.

Journal Option #5 :: A Day in the Life

Today's date: _____

Describe a typical day in your life. What time do you wake up? What do you do next? When do you do schoolwork? How have your work and chores changed? When do you go to sleep?

Describe a typical day in your pre-pandemic life. How is it similar and different?