

# Ergänzung zu den Materialien zum selbstständigen standardorientierten Lernen in der gymnasialen Oberstufe im Fach Englisch – *Text production*

## Writing a diary entry from the perspective of a literary character

### 1 Criteria for writing a diary entry

If you are asked to write a diary entry from the perspective of a literary character, you should reflect on an issue which is important to this character. Firstly, read the text at hand carefully in order to understand what is special about the character. The diary entry is expected to focus on her/his experiences as described in the text and your thoughts regarding what might have led to the character's current situation and/or your anticipation of what might happen next. Additionally, consider her/his feelings, thoughts, hopes, expectations and/or worries using your knowledge about the issue(s) dealt with in the text passage.

The diary entry should be written in a way that fits the character's personality and language, so your language can be slightly informal.

#### PREPARATION

- 1) Read the task carefully. Look for information about
  - whose perspective you are asked to take on
  - which experiences you are asked to write about
  - aspects you are supposed to be dealing with in the diary entry.
- 2) Study the text carefully. Find and underline or highlight the information that is relevant to the task, e.g. information about the character or experiences you have been asked to reflect on.
- 3) Take notes on the ideas from the text you want to use in your diary entry.
- 4) Add your own ideas based on your understanding of the literary text and your knowledge about the issue(s) the text deals with. Make sure your ideas fit the character whose perspective you are taking on.
- 5) Put your notes in a convincing order:
  - Select a suitable beginning, e.g. date, salutation, general statement.
  - Note down information on the character, her/his personality, background, situation and experiences as described in the text at hand.
  - Write down ideas that go beyond the text but are plausible, e.g. events prior to the situation described in the text, possible thoughts, feelings, hopes, wishes, worries, or future developments related to the aspects you have been asked to focus on.
- 6) Make sure your notes are relevant to the task.

#### WRITING A DIARY ENTRY

##### BEGINNING

- Write a beginning that suits the text, e.g. date and if it suits your character, a salutation like *Dear Diary, ...*

- Make clear at what time, where, in which situation and why you are writing. Begin your first sentence with a capital letter, e.g. *Today I ..., I feel so awful because of ..., Now I am sitting here in ...*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- Refer to experiences described in the excerpt.
- Focus on the character's overall feelings/thoughts concerning these experiences.

#### **MAIN PART**

- Refer to ideas expressed in the text at hand. Make sure your text is plausible within the context of the short story or the excerpt from the novel. Everything you write should fit the character you are focusing on.
- You are not expected to give evidence or quote from the text.
- Explain feelings/thoughts/hopes/worries... in detail using vivid language (e.g. strong adjectives).
- Write about expectations or plans.
- Show convincing reasoning if you evaluate a situation.
- Give good reasons if you write about decisions.

#### **CONCLUSION**

- Find a suitable way to finish your diary entry, e.g. by making a final statement on the character's feelings or giving an outlook.

#### **THROUGHOUT YOUR TEXT**

- Write clear sentences. Use linking words, but be careful with lengthy sentences. Unlike German, English tends to use shorter sentences and active verbs.
- Follow a clear and reasonable structure and use paragraphs.
- Write in a way that helps the readers to gain a better understanding of the character and her/his thoughts.
- Use vocabulary that is appropriate for a diary entry. If you use informal language, make sure it fits your character.

#### **POINTS TO REMEMBER**

- Make sure your diary entry is based on the text at hand and your knowledge about the issue(s) it deals with.
- Make sure you convey the character's experiences and thoughts in a convincing way.

## 2 Sample diary entry<sup>1</sup>

**Text:** Richard Brautigan (1971). "Greyhound Tragedy". In: *Revenge of the Lawn*. Edinburgh: Canongate 124-126 (short story)

**Task:** On September 1, 1938, while trying to decide whether or not to go to the bus station, the protagonist writes a diary entry in which she reflects on her current situation and future prospects. Write the entry for her.

September 1, 1938

Dear Diary,

I feel so awful, sitting at home, not knowing what to do.

It's been such a long time since I first started thinking and writing about going to the bus station to find out how much a ticket to Hollywood costs. I'm terribly disappointed in myself. For almost a year now, I've been delaying the inevitable. Now, with my back to the wall, I have no choice but to face my biggest fear. My father is putting so much pressure on me. He clearly wants me to marry Michael. He feels I've become a burden to him. He doesn't like the life I am living, begrudging me the money for my movie magazines and the tickets for the films I just need to watch.

Whenever I think about my situation, I feel like laughing out loud. It's unbelievable that it is so hard for me to go to the bus station in order to simply find out how much a ticket to Hollywood costs. And yet, I've never been more afraid in my whole life.

The mere thought of making the decision to leave makes me panic. I'm such a coward. It's not that I fear that I can't afford the ticket, but more that I don't know what will happen if I find out that I can easily buy one. What will happen then? If I decide to go, I would leave everything behind. My whole future would be uncertain.

What if I can't make it in Hollywood? I want to become a famous movie star. But what would my future be like if I failed? Where would I go? How would I survive? Accepting Michael's proposal, as my father expects me to do, would give me safety. There are worse men than Michael. He is kind, has a solid job as a Ford salesman and is making good money. And he has been waiting so long for me to make up my mind.









But if I do accept him, no doubt, I can forget about my dream of leading a different life in Hollywood. I will be stuck here forever, taking care of our household and bringing up our children. That isn't the kind of life I've been dreaming of.









I feel I'm running out of time. If I don't leave now, I will never again get the chance to do so. I'm sure that then I will regret forever that I didn't at least try to get away and find my luck in Hollywood.

So tomorrow is the day I will finally go to the station and ask about the ticket. No matter what! I hope that by tomorrow night I will have a clearer idea about my trip to Hollywood and escape as soon as possible to start a new and exciting life.

<sup>1</sup> Dieser Schülertext wurde von Fr. Schulz (Johann-Gottfried-Herder-Gymnasium, Berlin-Lichtenberg) zur Verfügung gestellt. Der Verfasser hat der Veröffentlichung zugestimmt.

### 3 Self-assessment grid: Writing a diary entry

Criteria	Date:				Date:			
								
<b>Beginning</b>								
I have found a beginning that fits a diary entry (e.g. date/salutation) and the personality of the character whose perspective I am taking on.								
I have mentioned where/in which situation/at what time the character is writing her/his diary entry.								
<b>Introduction</b>								
In a general statement, I have referred to the experience/conflict I am supposed to focus on.								
I have made clear what the character's overall feelings are.								
<b>Main part</b>								
I have described the experience referring to the character(s) involved, and made clear why this is a problem/conflict/an important issue.								
I have described the character's reaction to the experience in detail making her/his thoughts/feelings clear.								
I have referred to hopes/worries/future developments/plans that are not mentioned in the text at hand.								
I have given necessary explanations.								
I have used ideas from the literary text and added my own ideas that fit the character and situation.								
I have referred to my knowledge about the issue the character is confronted with.								
<b>Ending</b>								
I have made clear that I am coming to my conclusion.								
I have ended with a final statement/thoughts about the character's situation or given an outlook for the future.								

								
<b>Final check</b>								
I have made sure that I have included the relevant aspects from my notes.								
I have fulfilled the task using the text at hand as a starting point.								
In all parts I have focused on the aspects given in the task.								
Everything I have written is plausible and fits the character whose perspective I have taken on.								
My text helps readers to gain a better understanding of the character, his/her situation, hopes, thoughts, feelings, wishes, worries, plans, ...								
I have written in a style which is adequate for a diary entry and fits the character's personality and language.								
When writing about feelings I have used vivid language.								
I have structured my text by writing paragraphs.								
I have connected my ideas and sentences logically.								
I have avoided repetitions by using synonyms/paraphrases.								
I have checked my vocabulary/grammar/spelling using a dictionary.								