

## DIARIES AND LETTERS

## KEY POINT

The most famous published diaries show that the personal viewpoint can be an extremely powerful tool in non-fiction writing.

## HINT

As you read the passage, think about:

- the age of the girl who is writing the diary
- signs of her ability to write in an unusually mature way about what she is experiencing
- her explanation as to why she writes the diary.

**people** Anne personifies the paper.

**home** Is it surprising to find that a diary is preoccupied with home life, family and friends?

**time** Notice the informal register here.

Many people express their most personal thoughts about their lives in writing that is less planned and more informal than an autobiography. This can be done either in a diary that they write regularly – often to an imaginary friend, such as Anne Frank's 'Kitty' – or in a letter to someone close: a friend, a lover or a relative. This means that the perspective of diaries and letters is personal, and many writers of diaries and letters did not originally intend them to be published. Remember that someone's thoughts and feelings can be an important part of a non-fiction text, just like in fiction.

Some of the most powerful diaries and letters that have been published give readers a remarkable understanding of the suffering of individuals in wartime. One example is Anne Frank's diary, published as *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Anne was a Dutch teenager who kept a diary over a period of two years during the Second World War. As she and her family were Jewish, they hid from the Nazis in a house in Amsterdam. The diary entries ended when the Frank family was eventually found and arrested. Anne was sent to a concentration camp, where she died. The following extract comes from the early months of Anne's period in hiding.

## ▼ THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL BY ANNE FRANK

'Paper has more patience than **people**.' I thought of this saying on one of those days when I was feeling a little depressed and was sitting at home with my chin in my hands, bored and listless, wondering whether to stay in or go out. I finally stayed where I was, brooding. Yes, paper does have more patience, and since I'm not planning to let anyone else read this stiff-backed notebook grandly referred to as a 'diary', unless I should ever find a real friend, it probably won't make a bit of difference.

Now I'm back to the point that prompted me to keep a diary in the first place: I don't have a friend.

Let me put it more clearly, since no one will believe that a thirteen-year-old girl is completely alone in the world. And I'm not. I have loving parents and a sixteen-year-old sister, and there are about thirty people I can call friends. I have a throng of admirers who can't keep their adoring eyes off me and who sometimes have to resort to using a broken pocket mirror to try and catch a glimpse of me in the classroom. I have a family, loving aunts and a good **home**. No, on the surface I seem to have everything, except my one true friend. All I think about when I'm with friends is having a good **time**. I can't bring myself to talk about anything but ordinary everyday things. We don't seem to be able to get any closer, and that's the problem. Maybe it's my fault that we don't confide in each other. In any case, that's just how things are, and unfortunately they're not liable to change. This is why I've started the diary.