

# Dear Diary / My Life—Activity 7

**Purpose** To have students create imaginative writing as it might have been authored by a specific nonconforming thinker they are studying. (See box at bottom of page for an alternative.)

**Materials** None.

The procedure below is for a *diary*. However, many other creative writings using a similar strategy are possible. For example:

- a *letter to the editor* that the person might have sent in at an important point in time
- a written *retrospection* in which the nonconforming thinker offers “last thoughts looking back on my life” (a version of *mini-autobiography*)

## Procedure (for Diary)

1. Before explaining the task, ask the student to first identify a critical or important week for the particular historical figure she or he has been researching. Once identified, this week is thenceforth to serve as the time frame for the creative writing endeavor.
2. Ask the student to originate some diary pages for the week, creating a fictional account of the individual’s activities and musings during the selected period, but sticking to historical accuracy wherever facts are known.

**Extension** Students may exchange their diaries with one another, or make a “One Day in the Life of \_\_\_\_\_” oral presentation to the entire class.

*Alternately*, the authoring may appear to be done by a contemporary of the individual or by a “compatriot” (in thinking) from some other time period. For example:

- a *letter containing advice*, either from a known acquaintance (e.g., from Mrs. Clemens to a traveling Mark Twain) or from a well-wisher of another era (e.g., from Socrates to Galileo)
- a *letter of argument or admonishment* sent by someone opposed to the nonconforming individual’s position or action
- a *letter to the editor* composed by someone irritated at or vouching for the nonconforming thinker’s position or action
- a *eulogy* or *obituary* from the point of view of survivors or as a contemporary *news report*