

## Living through the times



### Critical Challenge

*Write an “authentic” journal about an assigned development challenge from the perspective of an individual who is experiencing its effects.*

### Overview

In this critical challenge students write an “authentic” journal about personal life as seen through the eyes of an individual faced with a featured development challenge. Students examine a fictionalized journal entry for evidence of the criteria for an “authentic” diary/journal. Students then create a brief biography of an assumed character and write an entry involving their featured development challenge as experience by their fictional character. Students critique each other’s entries before submitting their final drafts. Each group selects one journal to share with the rest of the class.

### Pre-planning

- **Ensure background knowledge.** Ideally, students will have completed at least one of the other lessons in this series: Critical Challenge #1: *Profile on quality of life* and Critical Challenge #2: *What has changed?* If not completed, provide a copy of the briefing sheet related to the development challenges you want students to focus on.
- **Select the challenges to focus upon.** This activity can be completed with any or all of the development challenges featured in the picture collection and briefing sheets. Decide whether you want students to exclusively examine the difficulties presented by these challenges (use the six images referred to as “challenges”) or also to incorporate the hopes and benefits arising from assistance efforts with these issues (also use the six images referred to as “efforts”), Picture sets and briefing sheet are available on the following development topics:
  - A. agriculture and rural development
  - B. child labour
  - C. children of war
  - D. disaster relief
  - E. education for all
  - F. pollution
  - G. health and nutrition
  - H. humanitarian aid for refugees
  - I. water and sanitation.

### Session One

- **Introduce diary and journal:** Explain to students that personal perspectives on a situation are often effectively portrayed in diaries or personal journals. These can provide interesting insights not only into the larger factors and also into the everyday lives of the ordinary people. Indicate to the class that they will be asked to develop a journal about one of the eight featured development challenges from the perspective of a fictional individual. Point out the differences between a diary and journal:

- *diaries* tend to have much shorter, more frequent entries. They focus more on the day-to-day events that happen to the individual;
- *journals* tend to have much longer entries. They focus in more depth on a particular issue. They would include the writer’s views on an event and/or the likely impact on their life.

Explain that when they take on the role and write a series of journal entries, students are developing empathy—the capacity to place themselves in the minds and times of others.

- **Examine a “forged” journal entry:** To help students develop their own “authentic” entry, make overhead transparencies of *Sample journal entry* (Blackline Master #3.1). This is a fictionalized account of an inferior journal entry. Place the sample on the overhead and ask students to comment on this entry:
  - Is it an effective journal entry? Why or why not?
  - Does it seem that it was actually written by someone living through the events?
- **Criteria for effective journals:** After a brief discussion of student reactions, distribute a copy of *Effective journals* (Blackline Master #3.2) to each student. Suggest that these four criteria reflect the qualities that an authentic journal might possess. Review the criteria in the left-hand column of the chart and ask students to examine the fictionalized entry noting evidence for each criterion. When recording their evidence in the right-hand column, ask students to place a “+” in front of evidence indicating that the criterion is present and place a “-“ before evidence suggesting that the criterion is missing. After students have recorded several pieces of evidence, invite them to share their results with the rest of the class. Referring to the bottom of Blackline Master #3.2 ask students to comment on the following:
  - What are the strengths of this journal entry?
  - What areas need more work?
- **Pose the critical task:** Once students are familiar with the criteria for an authentic journal, present the critical task:

*Write an “authentic” journal about an assigned development challenge from the perspective of an individual who is experiencing its effects.*

- **Create student groups:** Create as many as eight groups of students—one group for each of the eight development challenges featured in the image collection and briefing sheets. Direct each group to assemble the material for its assigned development challenges. These materials would include the appropriate photographs from the picture collection, the briefing sheet and any analysis of these images completed through Critical Challenge #1 and #2.
- **Assume a character:** Ask each student in each group to select a person appearing in one of the 12 images dealing their assigned topic as the assumed character who is writing the fictional journal. Invite students to construct a realistic “biography” of their character including:
  - name,
  - occupation,
  - age,
  - family members (if any),
  - place of birth,
  - other personal traits.

Distribute a copy of *Character biographies* (Blackline Master #3.3) to each group for it to record the details of it assume characters' biographies.

## Session Two

- **Develop a feel for their character.** To help students get inside their character's situation, encourage them to undertake two kinds of image analysis:
  - Invite students examine the picture in which their assumed character appears to draw inferences about that individual's fears, beliefs and values. Students may also want to use the image to get inside the head of other individuals who may be associated with their designated character. Consult the *Investigating Images* resource, ***Describe inner thoughts*** for details on how to support students in this task.
  - Invite students to select two or three of the most evocative images related to their development challenge and to draw inferences about the smells, sounds, tastes and touch (feel) evoked by the scenes. Consult the *Investigating Images* resource, ***Focus on the senses*** for details on how to support students in this task.
- **Develop draft entries:** When students have developed a feel for their character, ask them to prepare a draft of their journal. Remind students to focus on their specific development challenge as seen through their character's perspective and try to address the criteria for authentic journal (e.g., accurate, specific, revealing, empathetic). Encourage students to look for details from their image analyses to make their journal more authentic. Encourage students to consult other online resources, such as the Central Intelligence Agency's *The World Factbook* (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html>), for additional details about their assumed character's home country and conditions.

## Session Three

- **Critique the draft entry:** When the draft entries are complete, ask group members to exchange and review each other's work. Distribute another copy of the chart on Blackline Master #3.3 to each student. Invite each member to prepare a written critique of another member's journal entry using this Blackline Master. Arrange for students to meet to discuss their critiques. Encourage students to begin with the positive features of the draft and then to suggest in a respectful and tentative manner the areas for possible improvement.
- **Prepare final entry:** Based on the feedback received, ask students to revise their entries and, if desired, add other "authentic" touches to their final copy.
- **Share selected journals with rest of class.** Invite each group to nominate one person to read his/her journal in an expressive and personal manner to the rest of the class. Ask students to comment orally or in writing on what they have learned about the lives of people in developing countries from this assignment.

## Evaluation

- **Assess the entries:** Using the rubric *Assessing the /journal* (Blackline Master #3.4) to assess students' journal entries. According to this rubric the assignment is assessed on four criteria:
  - accurate facts,
  - specific information,

- revealing insights,
- empathic perspective.

## Sample journal entry

3.1

A journal entry from a fictional twelve-year-old boy living in a rural area of Ghana (west central Africa) talking about the challenges of poor water and sanitation in his community

*May 2*

*I woke up feeling hungry. It was pretty bad, but what can you expect when you haven't eat for a day. I had to help with the chores. But we had lots of time to play because I don't have to go to school. People in my community are always getting sick. I think it must be the water. They should test it first before drinking it. One of my cousins died from bad water.*

# Effective journals

3.2

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	Evidence (+ if criterion present; – if absent)
<b>Accurate</b> include documented facts plausible details for the time, person and place	
<b>Specific</b> contain clear and precise details of the situation	
<b>Revealing</b> provide useful information for understanding the situation	
<b>Empathic</b> are sensitive and realistic in presenting the character's feelings and opinions	

<b>Overall strengths</b>	
<b>Areas needing work</b>	

# Character biographies

3.3

Development issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Student name	Biography
	Name: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: _____ Gender _____ Family: _____ Residence _____ Place of birth: _____ Education: _____ Other personal traits _____
	Name: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: _____ Gender _____ Family: _____ Residence _____ Place of birth: _____ Education: _____ Other personal traits _____
	Name: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: _____ Gender _____ Family: _____ Residence _____ Place of birth: _____ Education: _____ Other personal traits _____
	Name: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: _____ Gender _____ Family: _____ Residence _____ Place of birth: _____ Education: _____ Other personal traits _____

## Assessing the journal

3.4

Name \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Well developed</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>
<b>Accurate facts</b>	All facts are accurate and highly plausible.	A few minor details are inaccurate or implausible.	Many facts are inaccurate or implausible.
<b>Specific information</b>	Considerable detail is provided; account is fully described and very specific.	Detail is thinly provided; account needs elaboration and more specifics.	Almost no detail is provided; account is incomplete and vague.
<b>Revealing insights</b>	The entry offers a revealing account that helps in understanding the issue.	The entry provides some useful insight that helps in understanding aspects of the issue.	The entry does not add to the reader's understanding of the issue described.
<b>Empathic perspective</b>	The entry richly imagines a believable character's point of view. The perspective is very realistic and personal.	The entry captures some of a believable character's point of view. The perspective is quite realistic and personal.	The entry does not offer a believable character's point of view. The perspective is unrealistic and impersonal.
<b>Comments:</b>			