

Explaining the style of the diarist:

Like most people who write diaries, the young writers in the book and film shift between varying perspectives, voices, and scopes of interest. Alexandra Zapruder saw patterns related to perspective and voice as she wrote and researched her book. She developed one organizing principle for untangling the shifting nature of the diarists' writing by considering the different perspective or "worlds" that engaged their attention, and the corresponding voice or tone that they adopted. She identified these 'worlds' as the internal world with: 1) The voice of reflecting; 2) The immediate world with the voice of reporting; and 3) The external world with the voice of chronicling. This organizing principle is only one way to analyze the richness of this material. It can serve as a model structure for students to engage in the process of literary analysis.

Internal Perspective/Reflecting

The most personal of these perspectives is the **internal world**. Writers tend to use a **reflecting** voice for this type of writing; they are examining themselves, their inner lives, their deepest thoughts and feelings. They reflect over matters of character and their dreams and hopes for the future. Many young writers describe their relationships and conflicts with family, friends, and first loves. Some writers use their diaries as a place to consider matters of faith, religion, and belief (or lack of belief) in God.

Immediate World/Reporting

The **immediate world** is one step removed from the internal one, concerning itself with the daily lives or important events that occur within the writer's personal circle (family, friends, and acquaintances). This lends itself to a **reporting** tone, virtually devoid of emotion or personal reflection, and focused on documenting an event for posterity. These entries are usually described in great detail, with an emphasis on accuracy and specificity.

External World/Chronicling

The **external world** is still more removed from the personal life of the writer and his or her immediate circle. Writers who take on this perspective are **chronicling** a series of events as it happened to their community, or capturing a scene as it occurred to people they may not know but who nevertheless share their existential plight. These tend to be the most literary forms of expression; chroniclers capture in writing scenes and incidents that embody something larger than the single experience at hand. They see and sketch these moments for their generality, as snapshots of something related to a larger and more common experience.

*Lesson activity adapted using Study Guide to the MTV film *I'm Still Here: Real Diaries of Young People Who Lived During the Holocaust* developed by Facing History and Ourselves