

AGREGATION INTERNE D'ANGLAIS

SESSION 2011

Epreuves orales

EXPOSE DE LA PREPARATION D'UN COURS

IV B

Ce sujet comprend 3 documents.

- **Document 1** : “Something Sensational”, extrait de *The Guardian*
- **Document 2** : “Keeping a diary makes you happier”, extrait de *The Guardian*
- **Document 3** :
 - **3a** : Extrait de *The Assassin's Cloak*, Virginia Woolf
 - **3b** : Extrait de *The Assassin's Cloak*, Virginia Woolf
 - **3c** : Extrait de *The Assassin's Cloak*, Virginia Woolf

Compte tenu des caractéristiques de ce dossier et des différentes possibilités d'exploitation qu'il offre, vous indiquerez à quel niveau d'apprentissage vous pourriez le destiner et quels objectifs vous vous fixeriez. Vous présenterez et justifierez votre démarche pour atteindre ces objectifs.

Document 1

Something sensational

Published 11 December 2000. The Guardian

The published diary is a vital element of our culture, a record of manners and history. But what will become of it, asks Andrew Lycett, in this age of obsession with instant celebrity?

5 Queen Victoria painstakingly wrote hers, but it is a safe bet that her great-great-grand-daughter, our present monarch, doesn't. One can't imagine Mick Jagger bothering. (He, one hopes, follows the school of Tallulah Bankhead: "Only good girls keep diaries. Bad girls don't have time.") Andy Warhol, however, used to spend his mornings on the telephone to a special diary amanuensis, outlining his previous day's activities. (He subscribed to the alternative, Oscar Wilde principle, enunciated in *The Importance of Being Earnest*: "I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train.")

10 Diaries are written partly to satisfy private emotional needs, and partly with an eye to the future. For historical reasons, women have tended to the former mode (diaries offering an outlet where self-expression is stifled) and men to the latter. Showing typical maturity, the Dutch teenager Anne Frank spoke for many of her sex when she began her journal in June 1942. Unhappy at the triteness of her contemporaries in wartime Amsterdam, she recalled the adage "Paper is more patient than man" and commented: "I want to write, but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart."

15 A good diary allows one to play with ideas, adopt different perspectives, put forward views one would normally self-censor. In the process, one can arrive at an alternative, and perhaps more truthful, sense of one's being.

20 A diary also allows one to reclaim the past. It acts as an *aide-memoire*, summoning a forgotten name, colour or mood. Thus, in March 1768, Fanny Burney resolved to address her ideas to a certain Miss Nobody (that is, her diary): "To have some account of my thoughts, manners, acquaintances and actions, when the hour arrives in which time is more nimble than memory, is the reason which induces me to keep a journal."

25 But for every successful diarist, many more go unrecognised. Paradoxically, at a time when people no longer have time for reflective communication such as letter writing, diaries are hugely popular. Schoolchildren are required to write journals of their holidays; therapy patients of their dreams. Publishers latch on to anything, from a cricketer's "diary of the season" to Ossie Clark's meanderings. Their enthusiasm is not misplaced. The public enjoys diaries as a form of spectator sport. If a record is unavailable, it is simply made up, as in the fictional exploits of Bridget Jones.

30 Technology now threatens this literary effort. When *Big Brother* participants wanted to let off steam, they went into a wired "diary room". (Imagine such rooms dotted around Britain's high streets like photo booths.) And who needs a written record when people stick digital cameras in their bedrooms and broadcast the results on the web?

35 One answer is biographers and historians, who, occasionally, are rewarded with a complete evocation of a literary culture, as found in Virginia Woolf, or with a window on to one strand of society - the legacy of Evelyn Waugh.

40 Another reason why diaries are so attractive is that they are, as the French say, *journaux intimes*, or receptacles for secrets. Chips Channon admitted in July 1935: "I feel treacherous sometimes, keeping this diary from the eyes of my wife - yet it is our only secret. She knows I keep it, but if she were to read it, and I knew she were, it would lose much spontaneity, and cease to be a record of my private thoughts..."

That sense of the sanctity of diaries can also make them truly powerful: diaries allow expression where it is otherwise not permitted: thus the thriving literature of diaries from totalitarian societies and from prisons.

Document 2

Keeping a diary makes you happier

Psychologists say 'Bridget Jones effect' of writing about feelings helps brain regulate emotions

Ian Sample, science correspondent, guardian.co.uk, Sunday 15 February 2009 11.21 GMT

Dear diarists take heart. Writing about your feelings can help the brain overcome emotional upsets and leave you feeling happier, psychologists have found.

Brain scans on volunteers showed that putting feelings down on paper reduces activity in a part of the brain called the amygdala, which is responsible for controlling the intensity of our emotions.

5 Psychologists who discovered the "Bridget Jones effect" said it worked whether people elaborated on their feelings in a diary, penned lines of poetry, or even jotted down song lyrics to express their negative emotions.

10 Matthew Lieberman, a psychologist at the University of California in Los Angeles, said the effect differs from catharsis, which usually involves coming to terms with an emotional problem by seeing it in a different light.

When people wrote about their feelings, medical scans showed that their brain activity matched that seen in volunteers who were consciously trying to control their emotions.

15 "Writing seems to help the brain regulate emotion unintentionally. Whether it's writing things down in a diary, writing bad poetry, or making up song lyrics that should never be played on the radio, it seems to help people emotionally," Dr Lieberman said.

The psychologists investigated the effect by inviting volunteers to visit the lab for a brain scan before asking them to write for 20 minutes a day for four consecutive days. Half of the participants wrote about a recent emotional experience, while the other half wrote about a neutral experience.

20 Those who wrote about an emotional experience showed more activity in part of the brain called the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex, which in turn dampened down neural activity linked to strong emotional feelings.

Men seemed to benefit from writing about their feelings more than women, and writing by hand had a bigger effect than typing, Dr Lieberman said.

25 "Men tend to show greater benefits and that is a bit counterintuitive. But the reason might be that women more freely put their feelings into words, so this is less of a novel experience for them. For men it's more of a novelty," Lieberman said.

The study showed that writing about emotions in an abstract sense was more calming than describing them in vivid language, which could make people feel more upset by reactivating their original feelings.

30 The findings suggest that keeping a diary, making up poetry and scribbling down song lyrics can help people get over emotional distress.

The study raises the issue of why so many writers, from Martin Amis to Michel Houellebecq are not the jolliest of souls. "What we don't know is: what would that person be like if they weren't writing?" Lieberman said.

Document 3

20 April

1919

a)

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What sort of diary should I like mine to be? Something loose knit and yet not slovenly, so elastic that it will embrace any thing, solemn, slight or beautiful that comes into my mind. I should like it to resemble some deep old desk, or capacious hold-all, in which one flings a mass of odds and ends without looking them through. I should like to come back, after a year or two, and find that the collection had sorted itself and refined itself and coalesced, as such deposits so mysteriously do, into a mould, transparent enough to reflect the light of our life, and yet steady, tranquil compounds with the aloofness of a work of art. The main requisite, I think on re-reading my old volumes, is not to play the part of censor, but to write as the mood comes or of anything whatever; since I was curious to find how I went for things put in haphazard, and found the significance to lie where I never saw it at the time.

Virginia Woolf

7 December

1936

b)

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Now, we are – without a King? With a Queen? What? The Simpson affair is on the surface. It was on Wednesday 2 December that the Bishop [of Bradford] commented on the King's lack of religion. On Thursday all the papers, *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* very discreetly mentioned some domestic difficulties; others Mrs Simpson. All London was gay and garrulous – not exactly gay, but excited. We can't have a woman Simpson for Queen, that was the sense of it. She's no more royal than you or me, was what the grocer's young woman said. But today we have developed a strong sense of human sympathy: we are saying hang it all – the age of Victoria is over. Let him marry whom he likes. Harold [Nicolson] is glum as an undertaker, as are the other nobles. They say Royalty is in Peril. The Empire is divided. In fact never has there been such a crisis. Spain, Germany, Russia – all are elbowed out. Parties are forming. The different interests are queueing up behind [Stanley] Baldwin or Churchill. [Oswald] Mosley is taking advantage of the crisis for his ends. In fact we are all talking nineteen to the dozen; and it looks as if this one little insignificant man had moved a pebble which dislodges an avalanche. Things – empires, hierarchies, moralities – will never be the same again.

Virginia Woolf

13 September

1940

e)

5 A strong feeling of invasion in the air. Roads crowded with army wagons, soldiers. Just back from hard day in London. Raid, unheard by us, started outside Wimbledon. A sudden stagnation. People vanished. Yet some cars went on. We decided to visit lavatory on the hill: shut. So L[eonard, her husband] made use of tree. Pouring. Guns in the distance. Saw a pink brick shelter. That was the only interest of our journey – our talk with the man, woman and child who were living there. They had been bombed at Clapham. Their house unsafe; so they hiked to Wimbledon. Preferred this unfinished gun emplacement to a refugee over-crowded house. They had a roadman's lamp; 10 a saucepan and could boil tea. The nightwatchman wouldn't accept their tea; had his own; someone gave them a bath. In one of the Wimbledon houses there was only a caretaker. Of course they couldn't house us. But she was very nice – gave them a sit down. We all talked. Middle class smartish lady on her way to Epsom regretted she couldn't have the child. But we wouldn't 15 part with her, they said – the man a voluble emotional Celt, the woman placid Saxon. As long as she's all right we don't mind. They sleep on some shavings. Bombs had dropped on the Common. He a housepainter. Very friendly and hospitable. They liked having people in to talk. What will they do? The man thought Hitler would soon be over. The lady in the cocked 20 hat said Never. Twice we left: more guns: came back.

Virginia Woolf

Excerpts from Virginia Woolf's diary

Republished in "The Assassin's Cloak"

"An anthology of the world's greatest diarists"

Edited by Irene and Alain Taylor

Canongate Books, 2008