

# 'DEAR DIARY'

How to use a 'Dear Diary' character analysis.

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## A bit about our methods.

This set of notes will focus on the 'Dear Diary' method of critical analysis. As you will see, a lot of our methods are based on practice. That is to say, 'doing something in the art we study'.

Does this mean the methods won't work in other areas? Of course not. In fact, this particular approach is a great social working tool.

1. What is the 'Dear Diary' approach?
2. Why should you try it?
3. How to do it in '4' simple steps.

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## Just what IS this approach?

This approach to analysis puts your creative mind at work with your analytical mind.

It came to me whilst watching the tv show MASH. There were episodes written by Alan Alda where he explores his character by using a 'Dear Dad' letter.

I altered 'Dear Dad' to 'Dear Diary' as an exercise to use while writing screenplays.

Now, I have adapted the tool as a means of teaching you how to explore literature.

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## Why should you try it?

All of the analytic tools we will learn this term are just that—tools. Think of yourself as a mechanic. Your mind is a toolbox that can hold a lot of tools. Maybe you only have one tool (a hammer). How much can you fix with that hammer?

Now think of what it means to pick up another tool. Do you see how many different jobs you can do now? Maybe even some jobs better with a screwdriver than that hammer you used before?

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## How can I do this type of analysis?

The next four slides shall go over the small steps needed for you to be successful at the 'Dear Diary' analysis.

These are just foundation steps—how you use them is up to you.

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## Step 1 – Pick your character.

The very first step you need to do is to pick the character you want to study. When you are picking a character to study, think of these basic questions:

- What about this particular character I find interesting?
- Is there something that 'bothers me' about this character?
- Do I know enough about this character to write a 'Dear Diary' analysis?
- How will this analysis with this character further my understanding of the piece?

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## Step 2 – Choose your day.

A diary entry happens on a certain day and time. You can write the entire day or just a small portion of the day. It's up to you. When I write a 'Dear Diary' analysis, I usually:

- Start the day when the character wakes up. What does he or she do the first thing in the morning? Do they have breakfast? Do they shower? Do they like baths? Do they skip cleaning all together? What do they wear?
- Who else is around the character in this day. For example, is the character going to school? If so, do they have friends? Do they ride a bus? Walk? Drive a car? Spaceship?
- Is this a special day like a birthday? Is there something fantastic happening this day? Is it a normal day?
- What is their family life like? Do they have one?
- When do they go to bed? Where do they sleep? How do they sleep?



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## Step 3 – Fine Tune Your Voice.

The voice here is a big key to the entire analysis. These questions will help you define your narrative voice for this type of analysis:

- Is the voice you are using the same as the one the author did?
- How can you change your first draft to make the character 'sound' more like the one you read in the story?
- Do NOT just rewrite the story you read, but focus on how the character acts. See if you can mimic that in a 'different day' scenario.
- Are you putting too much of yourself in the diary page? Do you need to focus more on just the character?



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## Step 4 – Review your results.

You picked your character and the setting/time you wish to frame the character's diary. You worked on your voice and you wrote an entire 'day of' diary entry. Now it is on to purely analytical concepts of your work.

- What about the character did you learn whilst writing a day in their life?
- Do you have a better grasp of why they acted the way they did in the story?
- Can you write a paragraph describing the person just from reading the diary entry?
- What does this diary tell you about the events in the story?
- Is the way the story unfolded true to the character or did the author impose an unfair role on the character?