

Register Number:

Date: 24-4-19

**St. Joseph’s College (Autonomous)**

**BA-CPE—VI SEMESTER--END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION—April 2019**

**Communicative English Elective:Archiving and Documentation: CE-6217**

**Time allotted: 21/2hours Marks: 70**

**Instructions**

1. **This paper is meant for VI semester students of the BA-CPE course who have chosen the Archiving elective**
2. **You are allowed to use a dictionary**
3. **Please stick to the word-limits suggested.**
4. **This paper contains THREE pages and THREE sections**
5. **Read this excerpt from *Why do we read diaries?* by Louis Menand.**

Why do a few keep diaries, when diary-keeping is, for many, too much?

Three theories immediately suggest themselves. They are theories of the ego, the id, and the superego (and what is left, really?). The ego theory holds that maintaining a diary demands a level of vanity and self-importance that is simply too great for most people to sustain for long periods of time. It obliges you to believe that the stuff that happened to you is worth writing down because it happened to *you.* This is why so many diaries are abandoned by circa January 10th: keeping this up, you quickly realize, means something worse than being insufferable to others; it means being insufferable to yourself. People find that they just can’t take themselves seriously enough to continue. They may regret this—people capable of taking themselves seriously tend to go farther in life—but they accept it and move on to other things, such as collecting stamps.

The id theory, on the other hand, states that people use diaries to record wishes and desires that they need to keep secret, and to list failures and disappointments that they cannot admit publicly have given them pain. Diary-keeping, on this account, is just neurotic, since the last thing most people want to do with their unconsummated longings and petty humiliations is to inscribe them permanently in a book. They want to forget them, and so they soon quit writing them down. Most people don’t confess; they repress.

And the superego theory, of course, is the theory that diaries are really written for the eyes of others. They are exercises in self-justification. When we describe the day’s events and our management of them, we have in mind a wise and benevolent reader who will someday see that we played, on the whole, and despite the best efforts of selfish and unworthy colleagues and relations, a creditable game with the hand we were dealt. If we speak frankly about our own missteps and shortcomings, it is only to gain this reader’s trust. We write to appease the father. People abandon their diaries when they realize that the task is hopeless.

These are powerful, possibly brilliant theories, and they account for much. But, though they help explain why people generally don’t like to write diaries, they do not explain why people generally do like to read them. The obvious assumption is that we read diaries because we want to know what the diarist was really like as a person, but how plausible, even in the case of famous diarists, is this? It’s true that we read the diaries of Virginia Woolf because they were written by Virginia Woolf, who, in addition to being an interesting novelist, was an interesting character. But (a paradox of representation) we would actually feel that we had a more intimate sense of Virginia Woolf if we read about her in someone else’s diary. Woolf described from the outside by another person is likely to give us a more vivid picture of what Virginia Woolf was really like than Woolf described from the inside by herself. Introspection is not as reliable as observation. (That’s why we have shrinks.)

Inside, everyone sounds, more or less eloquently, like the same broken record of anxiety and resentment. It’s the outside, the way people look and the things they say, that makes them distinct. We read Woolf’s diaries so that we can see other people through Woolf’s eyes:

*Pale, marmoreal Eliot was there last week, like a chapped office boy on a high stool, with a cold in his head, until he warms a little, which he did. We walked back along the Strand. “The critics say I am learned & cold” he said. “The truth is I am neither.” As he said this, I think coldness at least must be a sore point with him. (February 16, 1921.)*

*Edith Sitwell has grown very fat, powders herself thickly, gilds her nails with silver paint, wears a turban & looks like an ivory elephant, like the Emperor Heliogabalus. I have never seen such a change. She is mature, majestical. She is monumental. Her fingers are crusted with white coral. She is altogether composed. (July 23, 1930.)*

*Dr. Freud gave me a narcissus. Was sitting in a great library with little statues at a large scrupulously tidy shiny table. We like patients on chairs. A screwed up shrunk very old man: with a monkeys light eyes, paralysed spasmodic movements, inarticulate: but alert. (January 29, 1939.)*

Woolf was one of those writers who keep the instrument in tune: she wrote, sometimes, just to be writing, whether there was anything of significance to write about or not. So a reader of her diaries (of the five-volume complete edition, anyway) has to wade through a fair amount of rote record-keeping, panning for the nuggets:

*Brain rather dried up after 6 days strenuous London. Tuesday dinner to meet Duff Cooper; Wednesday Ethel Smyth; Thursday Nessa & dressmaker; Friday Harcourt Brace. So I’m running in a circle, having got on to the university chapter [of “Three Guineas”] a difficult one. Very very hot. Very noisy. The hotel dancing; buses everywhere. (June 11, 1937.)*

“Never discriminate, never omit” is one of the unstated rules of diary-keeping. The rule is perverse, because all writing is about control, and writing a diary is a way to control the day—to have, as it were, the last word. But diaries are composed under the fiction that the day is in control, that you are simply a passive recorder of circumstance, and so everything has to go in whether it mattered or not—as though deciding when it didn’t were somehow not your business. In a diary, the trivial and inconsequential—the “woke up, got out of bed, dragged a comb across my head” pieces—are not trivial and inconsequential at all; they are defining features of the genre. If it doesn’t contain a lot of dross, it’s not a diary. It’s something else—a journal, or a writer’s notebook, or a blog (blather is not the same as dross). For a diarist, if nothing important happened, it’s extremely important to say so.

**I.A Answer the following questions in 100 words (3x10=30)**

1. Are all diaries archives – regardless of who wrote them? Or do they assume worth as an archive only if certain people wrote them? Are some people more archive-worthy than others? Explain.
2. Does the statement “Never discriminate, never omit” hold good for an archivist also? Explain using instances from readings and personal experiences.
3. What does a reader lose if the sentence “woke up, got out of bed, dragged a comb across my head” has been removed from a diary? What does the writer mean when he says ‘features of the genre’?

**II.A**Whose personal diary from your class would you like to read? Why? Based on what you know about this person, what do you expect to find in the diary? **Answer in FIVE to SIX sentences. (5 marks)**

1. **Read the following quote by Clifford Geertz and answer the question below.**

"Understanding what people think doesn't mean you have to think the same thing. You don't just say 'whatever you do is fine.' Just saying 'it's their culture' doesn't legitimize everything. To be open to dialogue with other people doesn't mean you don't have any values of your own. I hold democratic values, but I have to recognize that a lot of other people don't hold them. So it doesn't help much to say, 'This is the truth.' That doesn't mean I don't believe anything. The challenge is to find a way to keep one's values and identity while living with other values -- values you can neither destroy nor approve. You can't assert yourself in the world as if nobody else was there. Because this isn't a clash of ideas. There are people attached to those ideas. If you want to live without violence, you have to realize that other people are as real as you are."

**I.B**Write about a personal dilemma regarding a socio-political movement that has either resolved or become complicated after reading Geertz. **Write this account in 150 words. (15 marks)**

1. Which of your portfolio pieces from this semester did you enjoy writing the most? What were you able to discover/learn? Would you call yourself an archivist now? **Explain in 200 words.(20 marks)**

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