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Lesson Pairing Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum

Most students will have heard of Anne Frank. This lesson introduces them to the diarist, Etty Hillesum, another young woman (28 years old) writing in German-occupied Amsterdam.

Learning Goals—Students will be able to (SWBAT):

- SWBAT pair two women writers writing during WWII;
- SWBAT do close readings of primary source documents and generate questions;
- SWBAT understand the nature of a transit camp vis a vis a concentration camp;
- SWBAT respond critically and creatively to diaries and letters written during WWII;
- SWBAT consider similarities/differences between young people from history and present
- SWBAT will come to see two diarists, one more well-known than the other, as great writers

Essential Questions:

- What does it look like to bear witness from hiding? from a transit camp? from the streets of Amsterdam?
- What's the role of writing from these different places? What do the writers discover? What do we discover about their circumstances? about them? About their voices

Writing Prompts (Optional/time dependent):

- What makes good writing good?
- How can writing help us understand our circumstances and ourselves?
- Why keep a diary or write letters?

Lesson Plan:

1. Teacher makes enough copies of Anne's diary entry of July 11, 1942 and of Etty's letter of 8 June, 1943 for every student to have one of each; students write their names on their copies.
2. Ask students to read Anne's entry and circle 3 images or lines that resonate; then in the margins, write a response to the circled text. At the bottom of the page, write out at least one or the text.
3. Put sheets in the middle of the table, choose one and read the comments then respond to the question at the bottom of the page.
4. Repeat this 2 times: trade, read circled texts and write responses to questions.
5. Retrieve originals and read the comments written by other students to the questions at the bottom of the sheet. Respond to what was written in a free write.
6. Repeat steps 2-5 with Etty's entry of 8 June, 1943

Discussion for full group or begin in pairs/small groups and move to full:

- a. What are some differences you noticed between Anne’s voice and Etty’s voice? (For example: how do they describe, pose questions, use words, etc)
- b. What are some similarities in their voices and/or perceptions?
- c. What might contribute to some of the differences? (For example, how might being inside in hiding (Anne) vs. being outside in Amsterdam (Etty) affect their experience? What about their difference in age?

Recommended Extension/Follow-up Lesson:

1. Hand out copies of Etty’s diary entry of 11 July, 1942—NOTE: this is the same date as Anne’s diary entry used in the lesson above—and ask students to recall Anne’s entry or reread it silently. Then read Etty’s diary entry aloud.
2. Students mark lines in each writing that show how each author is aware of the world beyond her own experience.
3. Questions for students to discuss consider:
 - How is each writer using her diary to come to terms with what is happening around her?
 - How does the diary help the writer understand her circumstances?

Resources:

Anne Frank’s diary entry of 11 July 111942
Etty Hillesum’s letter of 8 June1943
Etty Hillseum’s diary entry of 11 July 1942