

# ANALYSING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TEXTS IN THE VHEC'S LIBRARY COLLECTION

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** The following questions are designed to support students' independent inquiry into primary source texts in the VHEC's library collection. These guiding questions will assist students to place autobiographical texts, or excerpts, in their historical context and make inferences to deepen their understanding of historic events. The VHEC library collection includes classroom book sets, available free of charge for four-week loan periods, for autobiographical texts including Elie Wiesel's *Night* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

**DIRECTION TO STUDENT:** Autobiographical texts are ones in which authors write about events that they themselves have experienced or are experiencing. In this activity, you will be reading all or part of an autobiographical text. Respond as best you can to the questions below as you prepare to read the text, read it, and reflect on it after.

TEXT:

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AUTHOR:

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DATE OF CREATION:

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## READ THE TEXT AND THE ONLINE LIBRARY RECORD

- Who wrote the text?
- When was the text written?
- What type of autobiographical text are you reading (ex. a diary written while a person is experiencing the events that he or she describes or an autobiography or memoir written after the events are over)? How does the type of text that you are reading differ from other autobiographical texts, and from texts that are not autobiographical?

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## **ESTABLISH THE CONTEXT**

- As you read the text, note down at least three key people, places and themes that the author discusses. Are there terms or places that you do not recognize? Look them up, and add descriptions for them here.
- What tone does the author take in the text? What kinds of descriptive words does the author use to depict his or her experiences?
- What do you know (or can you infer) about the perspective or bias of the author? Was the author an impartial observer or a participant in events (eg. victim, perpetrator, refugee, liberator, collaborator, rescuer, bystander, resister, etc.)?
- What was the length of time between when the author experienced the events he or she describes and when he or she wrote the text? How might the author's proximity to, or distance from, the events that he or she describes affect what and how the author writes?

## **DRAW INFERENCES**

- Does the author explain for whom he or she is writing the text? If not, are there clues in the text or text excerpt that allow you to make inferences about the author's intended audience?
- Why do you think that the author may have written an autobiographical text? What do you think was the significance of the text for its author?
- What does this text tell you that you might not learn elsewhere? Does it reveal a unique perspective on events?
- How does this text compare to other sources of history that you have examined?
- What questions do you have about this text that you cannot answer? How could you find answers to these questions?