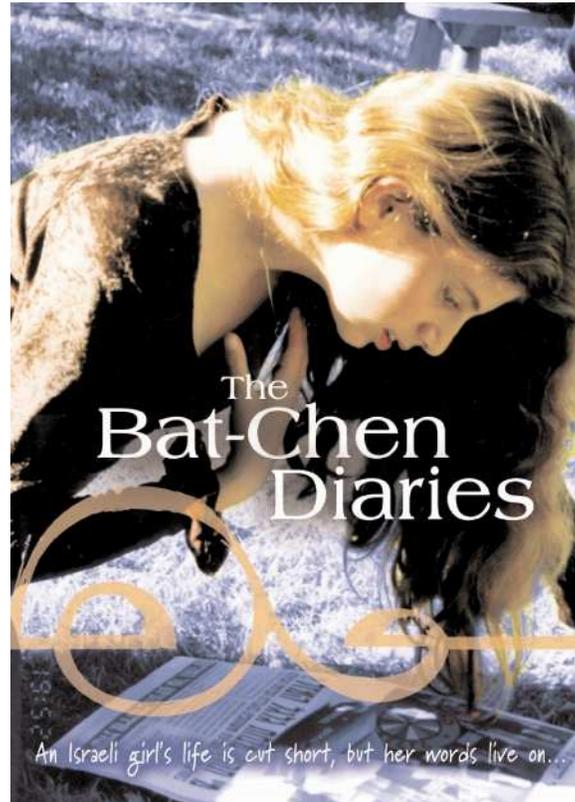


The Bat-Chen Diaries Study Guide



This study guide will introduce students to the diary and journal genre, with the goals of showing them the usefulness of keeping a diary or journal, and what they can learn from reading original diaries of others.

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Lesson 1: Introduction:

- A. Have students fill out questionnaires (Appendix 2).
- B. Ask class to brainstorm associations with the word “diary.”
- C. Ask class discuss to the *opposites* of those associations.
- D. Assign each student to bring in a diary, either fictional or real, from the library for next class.

Lesson 2: Discovering diaries

- A. Students work as individuals or in pairs: Give each student or group photocopies of excerpts from different diaries - real or fictional - which show the writers’ reasons for keeping a diary.
 1. Ask students to try to determine why the diaries were written, and the age of the writers when they wrote their diaries.
 2. Have students create a list of reasons for writing diaries.
- B. Students work in groups: Give each group two diaries, one real and one fictional. Have each group address the following points:
 1. Prepare an identity card for each writer:
 - The writer's name
 - Country in which writer was born
 - Age
 - Personal status
 - Physical appearance
 - Aspirations
 - Personality characteristics
 - Hobbies and interests
 - Where, when, and how they died
 2. Determine whether the diaries they’re reviewing are real or fictional.
- C. Class discussion: What do we learn about the world in which each writer lived that we would likely not learn from an article in a text or history book about that time and place?

Lesson 3: Encounter with Bat-Chen's writing

- A. Give each student a photocopy of texts, in which Bat-Chen relates why she keeps a diary. (Appendix 1 “Why Keep a Diary?”)
- B. Give each student a copy of *The Bat-Chen Diaries*.
 1. Ask each student to make an identity card for Bat-Chen including the following information:
 - Name
 - Country of birth
 - Age
 - Personal status
 - Physical appearance
 - Aspirations
 - Personality characteristics
 - Hobbies and interests
 - Where, when and how she died

2. Based on their reading, discuss whether students think this is a real or fictional diary and why.
3. Discuss what we learn from Bat-Chen's diary about growing up in Israel? Discuss how Bat-Chen's life was the same and different from that of an American teen in terms of school , home , friendships, impact of political situation..

Lesson 4: Why keep a diary?

A. Hand out photocopies of the final text in Bat-Chen's 7th grade diary, the longest diary which she kept (from the end of 6th grade to the end of the 7th grade). (see Appendix 1, "Disappointed Love")

Discuss why Bat-Chen might have chosen to keep a diary during this particular period. How is the transition to junior high school an often difficult time. How might the diary have helped her cope with the transition.

- B. Ask each student to choose one text from the book which is particularly meaningful to him/her, and explain or state why he/she feels this way.
- C. Have students choose one sentence from the book which they think may be of use to them in their own lives, and state why.

Lesson 5: The characteristics of diaries

A. Have students summarize the characteristics of a diary, answering the following questions:

1. Text is not necessarily addressed to anyone specific
2. Writings do not have to be perfect, there is no need for a draft version
3. Most diaries are designed to be confidential, for the writer's eyes only.
4. The author can write in stream-of-consciousness style, no need to erase or change.
5. There is no fear of criticism as, theoretically, the diary will never be read by anyone other than the writer..

B. Discuss the issues that arise when diaries become public; under what circumstances should they be made public.

C. Discuss Bat-Chen's family's decision to make her diaries public. Was this a good idea or not? Were her parents betraying a confidence or was Bat-Chen giving permission for the diaries to become public when she wrote: "I tell everything freely, without worrying that it will be discovered and there will be a slip of the tongue. I know the diary is a real friend...And perhaps one day, you'll read it in the paper, who knows?"

D. Have students write letters to Bat-Chen telling her what they learned from her diaries.

E. Have students go to the website www.bat-chen.israel.net to learn more about Bat-Chen and encourage them to send feedback to members of her family.

F. Screen the film about Bat-Chen "*It's Not Fair*".

APPENDIX 1: Diary excerpts

Why keep a diary?

This diary contains entries from my life from the 5th grade up to the end of 7th grade.

2nd Grade.

I've decided to keep a diary and tell about everything that happens to me in life, whether I'm happy or sad. I've decided that writing a diary will be a lovely keepsake from my childhood. Especially at hard times, there's someone to run to and tell, and that makes life much easier.

There's someone to pour out your heart to, someone to encourage you, without words.
Really amazing!

Love,
Bat-Chen Shahak

What an irritating mother!

(5th grade diary, 1992)

I was playing with the computer today,
And suddenly it threw me out.
I went downstairs
And my little sister
Ran after me
And said to mum
"Bat-Chen cursed at me!"

Then, without thinking
Mum started scolding me:
"What an awful child!"
And of course it wasn't true.
You can imagine how angry
And insulted I was.
I had a tangerine in my hand
And threw it straight at mum.

It messed up the tablecloth a bit
And you can guess what happened:
She screamed at me
And sent me to my room.
When I wanted a drink
She stood on the staircase and said:
"Say you're sorry at once!"
So I said to her:
"What are you - a queen or something?"
Then she said:
"Don't you dare leave your room!"
I went back to my room and hung a sign on the door
that said:
"No entry to idiots!"

Wouldn't you be irritated too
If people made up things about you?
And mum's sure that she's right, that she's so clever,
And she's furious with me.

Disappointed Love

(7th grade diary - 1994)

Disappointed love
Is so painful.
When you love someone
But you know that his heart belongs to
Someone else.
That he's not really interested in you
And you're wasting your time,

And my best friend is my biggest enemy,
It's all because of her,
And if she didn't exist,
I could trap him.
Oh ... I can see how everything would be perfect
If only - if only she wasn't around!
Oof! If only she'd disappear!

How your heart aches when you hear "No".
That's the way it goes. Your heart gets used to it.
And the worst is seeing them kissing,
If only I was in her place.
How great it would be!
Why did he choose her?
Is she more beautiful or cleverer?
Maybe it's just because
He met her first.

APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire - Writing and Me

Name: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Please circle your answer for each statement.

1. In my free time, the thing I like to do best is:

- a. spending time with family & friends
- b. playing sports
- c. watching TV
- d. writing
- e. using the computer

8. If I'm not satisfied with what I write, I:

- a. throw it away
- b. hide it in a drawer
- c. erase it
- d. correct it

2. I like writing. YES/NO

8. The word 'diary' reminds me of:

- a. my homework notebook
- b. an office diary
- c. a diary of life

3. I like the way I write. YES/NO

4. I sometimes write down my thoughts and experiences, either in a diary or journal, or in some less formal way. YES/NO

9. Writing down my thoughts is (you can circle more than one):

- a. easy
- b. hard
- c. helpful
- d. not helpful
- e. scary
- f. fun
- g. _____
- h. _____

5. I have friends who keep diaries or journals. YES/NO

6. I sometimes share what I write with:

- a. friends
- b. parents
- c. teachers
- d. nobody – it's private

7. I most often write when I'm:

- a. happy
- b. unhappy
- c. I always like writing
- d. I never like writing

13. The books I enjoy most are:

- a. science fiction
- b. novels
- c. diaries
- d. adventures
- e. mysteries
- f. manga or comics