

Excerpt from the Diary of Anaïs Nin and Reflection Questions

August 11, 1914

We were all dressed and on deck. It was 2 o'clock and one could vaguely see a city, but very far away. The sea was gray and heavy. How different from the beautiful sea of Spain! I was anxious to arrive, but I was sad. I felt a chill around my heart and I was seeing things all wrong. Suddenly we were wrapped in a thick fog, a torrential rain began to fall, thunder rumbled; lightning flashes lit the heavy black sky. None of the Spanish passengers had ever seen weather like that, so the frightened women wept and the men prayed in low tones. We were not afraid. Maman had seen many other storms and her calmness reassured us. We were the first to go back up on the wet deck. But the fog continued and we waited. It was 4 o'clock when the ship began to move again, slowly, as though she approached the great city with fear. Now, leaning on the railing, I couldn't hear anything. My eyes were fixed on the light that drew closer. I saw the tall buildings. I heard the whistling of the engine. I saw a great deal of movement. Huge buildings went by in front of me. I hated those buildings in advance because they hid what I loved most—flowers, birds, fields.

—Anaïs Nin



Anaïs Nin was a writer who came to New York City at the age of ten. On the boat from Europe, she began her very first diary. Later in life, Anaïs Nin took part in some of the most remarkable literary movements and artistic engagements that happened in the 20th century. These include the surrealist movements of the 1930s and the 1940s, the avant-garde crowd, and the feminist movement in the 1960s.

Reflection Questions:

- ✓ What is Anaïs feeling?
- ✓ Where is she coming from?
- ✓ What date did she arrive in the United States?
- ✓ What does she miss?
- ✓ How does the outer world reflect her inner world?
- ✓ How can you tell that this piece of text is from a different time in history?