

The Mannequin & the Diary Activity 3 Lesson Plan

Diary Entries from Western Front, World War I

Grade Level: Grade 10 -12;

Subject: Canadian or World History; English and/or Creative Writing

Materials Needed: Computer, access to high-speed internet.

Outcomes:

- Students will learn to apply creative thinking to the issues arising from Canada's involvement in WWI.
- Students will be able to distinguish primary from secondary sources during historical research
- Students will reflect on the importance of primary documents (i.e. Sisler's diary) to understand the experiences of historical subjects.
- Students will be familiar with experience of Canada's soldiers on the Western Front during WWI.
- To communicate meaning and convey emotion through the writing assignment

Instructions

In this activity, students will be asked to write five to ten diary entries for a fictional wartime character.

Discuss briefly the nature of Byron Cooper Sisler's diary. Remind students that the entries tend to be short and not very descriptive. The personality of the soldier likely played a significant role in shaping diary entries. Prompt students to consider what kind of man or woman they are creating (matter of fact, emotional, patient, quiet, action-oriented etc.)

Have students visit this site and explore different styles of diaries before beginning the writing process.

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/diaries-letters-stories/first-world-war>

Students will have to create a character based on an occupation (miner, pharmacist, bank teller etc.) identified either in the videos or the supporting content. They should create a brief biography for the character, including:

- name
- year of birth
- where they live
- what their role is in the war (soldier, nurse, stretcher-bearer etc.).

Using this character, they will then write the diary entries, incorporating a battle mentioned in the videos as well as two to three artefacts from the Themes & Images section for The Mannequin & the Diary.

Step 1

Introduce assignment. Remind students of the kind of information they should be looking for (also encourage them to consider the role of women when selecting their wartime character). They should pay special attention to the diary readings of Byron Cooper Sisler.

Step 2

Watch first video. (Students may skip Step 4 if they have already viewed the exhibit or they may choose to review some of the video content).

Step 3

After finding the correct answer to “Signing Up & Training”, students should take a few minutes to make any notes or review any necessary content.

Step 4

Repeat the above steps for Videos 2-6.

Step 5

There are a number of occupations identified in the five videos and related materials (i.e. Byron Cooper Sisler was a bank clerk). Find at least three. Students can browse through the Themes and Images section for the Mannequin & the Diary for ideas. (i.e. munitions worker, prospector, nurse, pharmacist, miner, foundry worker)

Step 5

There are a number of major battles mentioned in Surviving the Trenches and Going Home. Find at least three.

(Battle of the Somme including Flers-Courcelette and the battles for Regina Trench and Desire Trench; the Calonne Trench Raid; Vimy Ridge; Hill 70; Passchendaele)

Step 6

Students should select an occupation for their character and a battle.

Step 7

Visit the Themes and Images section and select two artefacts to integrate into your diary entries. (Ross rifle, trench periscope, gas mask, nurse’s hat)

Step 8

Draft five to ten diary entries.

Step 9

Have another student proof-read your entries.