

Lesson: Exploring Children's Diaries from the Past
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Learning Target: Students will analyze the similarities and differences between children's lives in the past, and their own lives today by exploring historical diaries to understand the experiences of children in the 18th and 19th century.

Grade:5+
To modify for older groups have the students select the diary entries

Materials:
*[Google slide](#) or [Canva Slide](#)
excerpts from [Walter Goodrich's diary, 1846](#) from American Antiquarian Society webpage
and excerpts from [Ruth Henshaw Bascom's diary, 1789](#) from American Antiquarian Society webpage
*copies of the excerpts for students
*student writing notebooks
*Pencils/pens highlighters

Notes: The big questions to keep in mind will be how has children's writing evolved over time? What influenced children's writing in the past? Have students keep in mind the following questions: What would you share? Which pieces of your work would you like people to save and share? How does this tie into your digital footprint versus your paper footprint?

Lesson Procedure:

Introduction: (10 minutes)

Discussion:

Ask students what they think life was like for children in the past. What activities did they do? How were their lives similar or different from ours today?

Introduction: explain that diaries often provide readers to have a personal glimpse into the past of the writers. We can read about the everyday thoughts and experiences of people.

Background information (5 minutes):

Explain:

-Walter Goodrich (1834-1908) lived in Maine, and kept a diary during the first half of 1846.

- Ruth Henshaw Bascom (1772-1848) was born in Massachusetts. She was the daughter of William (1735-1820) and Phebe Swan Henshaw (1753-1808). Her father was an influential Leicester resident, and Ruth Henshaw grew up as a member of a large and very active family.

Text Analysis (30 minutes):

Read the excerpts (point out the daily activities, thoughts and experiences from both children)

Analytical Questions to Prompt Group Discussions (20 minutes)

Students will write their responses in their writing notebooks.

What were the daily routines for each of the children?

Did you notice any emotions in the writing pieces?

What similarities and differences did you notice between the two diary entries?

What are some of the entry passages that reflect the historical time period in these children's diaries?

How did the experiences of these children compare to your daily experiences?

Call on a few students to share their responses.

Writing Activity (15 minutes):

Students will write a diary entry from either the timeframe of 1846 or 1789 or both (for early finishers).

Remind students to include historical details and personal experiences that might have occurred during that time.

Call on volunteers to share their entries with their classmates. Listeners will pay attention to the historical components included in the reader's diary entry.

Wrap-up Reflection (this can be used as an assessment):

How did these personal narrative, diaries help you understand historical children's voices of the past?

What did you learn about the daily lives of children in the past?

Provide specific examples of how your knowledge base has increased about diaries as an example of historical children's voices of the past.

Sentence starter prompt: My knowledge base about dairies as an example of historical children's voices of the past because I used to think or I learned that

Conclusion:

Restate the importance of personal stories, such as diaries in the understanding of history, as they provide a glimpse into the lives of people in the past.

Extension Activity:

Students will write diary entries for a week. Students will be encouraged to share entries that they think others in the future might read. Ask students what do they use currently that would be equivalent to diary entries today and do they compare to the past.

Students can write a comparative essay.

Students will publish their diary in student created diary books.