

Rowlands Gill: The Great War and the Great Peace The Diary of Ruth Dodds

Lesson Plan: Ruth Dodds' Diary Transcription	
Teacher/s	Date
Subject History	Year
Learning Objectives Understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources. Use a range of historical information including primary sources. Construct an informed response to the evidence.	Success Criteria The children will feel increased confidence in investigating handwritten primary sources and will understand the strengths and limitations of diaries as historical evidence.
Key Questions Why are diaries useful to historians? Are diaries a reliable source of information about the past? Why might Ruth have kept a diary?	
Starter Activity/Introduction Discuss what a diary is and why people might keep them – storing memories, living through stirring times or the urge to write. Ask the children to write a short diary entry for something that has happened to them in the past week. How useful might their diary be in 100 years? For a little more background information about Ruth cut and paste the Journal web link. Rowlands Gill link: Boys Board School log book page 332 Miss Hodgson goes to Hartlepool to look for an injured friend.	Resources http://www.thejournal.co.uk/north-east-analysis/analysis-news/diaries-reveal-one-gateshead-womans-8669291
Main Activity a) Discuss and think about the strengths and limitations of diaries as historical evidence. b) Explain what transcribe means and how this is different to translate. Transcribe the diary extract using the writing frame to help structure the exercise. Work as a class or in groups to read the first 2/3 lines. Discuss letters difficult to recognise like <i>e</i> in <i>begin</i> and the joined <i>n w</i> in <i>Swanwicks</i> .	Resources The Diary of Ruth Dodds Activity Sheet
Plenary Discuss the diary entry: How might Ruth have received the information for her dairy – letter, a visit, a postcard? What did the Swanwick's think was happening at first? What was Uncle Eustace's job? How do we know from the diary? Do the Swanwick's seem to have been frightened? How can we tell?	Resources The Diary of Ruth Dodds Activity Sheet

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The Diary of Ruth Dodds

Ruth was born in Gateshead in 1890 into a wealthy middle class family. During the First World War she worked for a charity looking after the families of soldiers and sailors and became a munitions girl in Armstrong's giant Elswick armaments factory in Newcastle.

Ruth began her diary in 1905 when she was 15 and kept writing until shortly before her death in 1976.

These pages are dated 20th December 1914. Here she tells the story of family friends, the Swanwicks, who lived in Hartlepool during the bombardment in 1914. The first sentence reads:

To begin with the Swanwicks:-

To
begin with the Swanwicks:-
Everyone while in bed heard
loud noises & whistling which
they attributed variously
to trams, timber-movers &
the town's own guns. Anna
went to Margaret's bed to ask
her what she thought it was
& Margaret said "Nothing,
go to sleep again". However
everyone began to dress &
the firing became so much
worse that they guessed at
~~no~~ once that it was the
enemy; so they began to pack
& have breakfast. But before
the bombardment was over
the surgery was full of
injured & they all set to
work to help. They filled

the dining-room, drawing-room
& kitchen. They had all
sorts of cases & two people
were brought in dead. The
worst-injured were sent
on to the hospital & the
slightly wounded Uncle
Eustace attended to & Anna
helped him, & Aunt Edie
& Margaret boiled kettles
& comforted the ones waiting
their turns & warmed the
shaken ones by the kitchen fire.
It must have been a terrible
time, but they were so busy
that they hardly noticed when
the firing ceased. Though
Aunt Edie did say "This
will be trying if it goes
on long". When it stopped
they were told that it was

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