



### **MARY HENRY: JOURNAL/DIARY WRITING**

**Objectives:** Students will learn what a primary source is, how to find information in primary sources, and why primary sources are valuable in the study of history. They will practice reading and proofreading skills. They will also learn how to keep a journal/diary of their own.

**Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes (*Adjust Time As Needed*)

- introduction, (*suggested: 15 minutes*)
- reading and proofreading of diary entry, (*suggested: 15 minutes*)
- answering questions about diary entry, (*suggested: 10 minutes*)
- large discussion, (*suggested: 10 minutes*)
- writing journal, (*suggested: 15 minutes*)
- exchanging journal with partner, (*suggested: 10 minutes*)

**Skills:** Reading, Proofreading, Writing

**Content Area:** Language Arts, US History

**Materials:**

- student worksheet
- diary format sheet
- blank diary sheet
- Mary Henry Diary entry and transcript

**Grade Level:** Grades 4–6

### **Historical Overview:**

Mary Anna Henry (1834-1903) was the daughter of Joseph Henry, the first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. She lived with her family in the Smithsonian Institution Building, or “Castle” on the National Mall in Washington, DC, from 1855 to 1878. Mary was well-educated and kept company with many prominent scientific and political citizens of Washington. During the Civil War, DC remained the capital of the Union, but from the “Castle”, Mary could see the Confederate States of America. On the border between the warring Union and Confederacy, Mary wrote about events in the city over the course of the entire Civil War in her diary.





### Journal/Diary Writing:

In years where there was not a public space like Facebook or twitter to write about your day, people kept their thoughts and memories in journals, diaries and scrapbooks. Here, in their personal pages, they captured not just what events happened during their daily lives, but how they felt and what opinions they held about these events. Keeping a journal or diary, allows you to record your daily activities and events that you participated in. By writing in a journal or diary daily, you can ensure that small details won't be forgotten. Later, you can look back through your journal and remember your activities, or others can read through it for a glimpse into an earlier time.

Mary Henry used her diary to record details of a very important time period, the Civil War. Through her writings we see what life was like in the 19th century, and what life was like in Washington, DC, during the war. Her stories provide us details about the events and her personal feelings about them. This personal perspective lends depth to our understanding of the history of the Civil War; beyond facts and dates, we can learn how this difficult time affected those who lived through it.

In years past, words were sometimes spelled or used differently. Since journals and diaries are personal writings, they are very informal. However, certain important pieces of information, such as the date, help keep journals organized so that they are easy to read later.

### Primary and Secondary Sources:

A **primary source** is any original source of information that provides a direct or first-person connection to a historical event. Examples may include: documents such as letters, diaries, birth certificates, receipts, and notebooks; photographs and drawings; objects, such as clothing or furnishings; oral history interviews, and home movies. Primary sources were created by a person who witnessed an event first-hand.

**Secondary sources** are summaries, second-hand accounts, and analyses of events. They were created by someone who did not witness the event, but may have read or heard about it. Examples may include: books or articles written on a topic,



artworks depicting an event, letters or diaries recounting a version of events told to the author by another source.

One source can contain both primary and secondary information. For example, a diary entry that contains a version of events the author read in the newspaper (**secondary**) and the author's feelings about the event (**primary**). Whether a source is primary or secondary can depend on the question you ask. If you are looking for information on how an event occurred, the diary entry written from a newspaper article would be a secondary source (the newspaper article may be a primary source). But if you are asking how the author learned about an event, the diary entry written from a newspaper article would be a primary source.

Primary sources provide valuable information that we cannot find elsewhere. They speak to us in a first-person voice and bring history alive. They provide an individual's view of historic events and times, and they tell stories about how people lived and coped in the past. These letters, diaries, and photographs create engaging stories for students to learn about and relate to. By comparing conflicting primary sources, students learn to carefully examine actual documents, as well as the words they contain, evaluate evidence and point of view, and develop critical thinking skills about the past and also about their world today.



**Instructions for Teachers:**

Explain the definition of a primary source to your students. Ask them to think of examples of primary sources. Ask why they think primary sources are a valuable way to study history.

Describe the purposes and uses of journal/diary writing to the students. Ask whether any of them have written letters, or if there is another, similar, form of communication that they use to exchange information with their friends.

Give each student copies of Mary Henry's diary entry and transcript to read and the accompanying worksheet. Have them first examine the original document carefully. Tell them to use the original document and proofread the diary entry for any spelling or grammar mistakes, and then analyze the diary entry to answer the question on the worksheet. Encourage the students to use the transcript only when necessary. When the students have finished, go through the mistakes and answers they found as a class.

Give each student a copy of the journal/diary writing forms, both the one that includes the labels and the one that is blank. Discuss the different parts of a journal/diary and their placements. Ask them to identify each section listed on the form in Mary Henry's entry. Have each student choose a partner and tell them to write a journal/diary entry describing a recent event in which the whole class participated of your choosing.

When the students are finished with their entries, tell them to exchange entries with their classmate and read it. Ask them to compare each other's descriptions of the event, and find any discrepancies. Discuss how different people can remember different elements of an event as more important than others and how this might play a part in what becomes historical record.

*Please note that all Smithsonian Institution primary and secondary source materials can be used and reproduced for educational purposes without further permission.*



**Instructions for Students:**

Read and analyze Mary Henry's diary entry. Proofread it to find any spelling or grammar mistakes or the way that words were spelled or used differently. Answer the questions listed on your worksheet, using evidence from the documents to support your answers.

Use the journal/diary form worksheet and identify the different parts of Mary Henry's diary. Then, in the blank letter form, in the blank journal/diary form, write your own entry describing the event of your teacher's choosing. Follow the correct journal/diary writing format. Trade entries with a partner, and compare your descriptions of the event.



**Mary Henry Diary Entry on visiting the Navy Yard**

**Names:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions:**

1. Who wrote this diary entry?
2. When and where was this diary entry written?
3. What is this diary entry describing?
4. Why was this diary entry written?
5. Who was the intended audience?
6. What was the point of view of the diary writer?
7. What does the diary entry tell you about life in Washington, DC, during the Civil War?
8. How does the grammar/spelling and word use differ from today's writing style?
9. Is this diary a primary source or secondary source, or both?
10. Are any/all parts of it a primary source, explain why or why not?
11. How could you check the accuracy of the information in the diary?
12. How does the information in the entry compare to what you have learned in your textbooks?



\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Name

Date \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Body of the Journal Entry – Your Narrative of Events**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

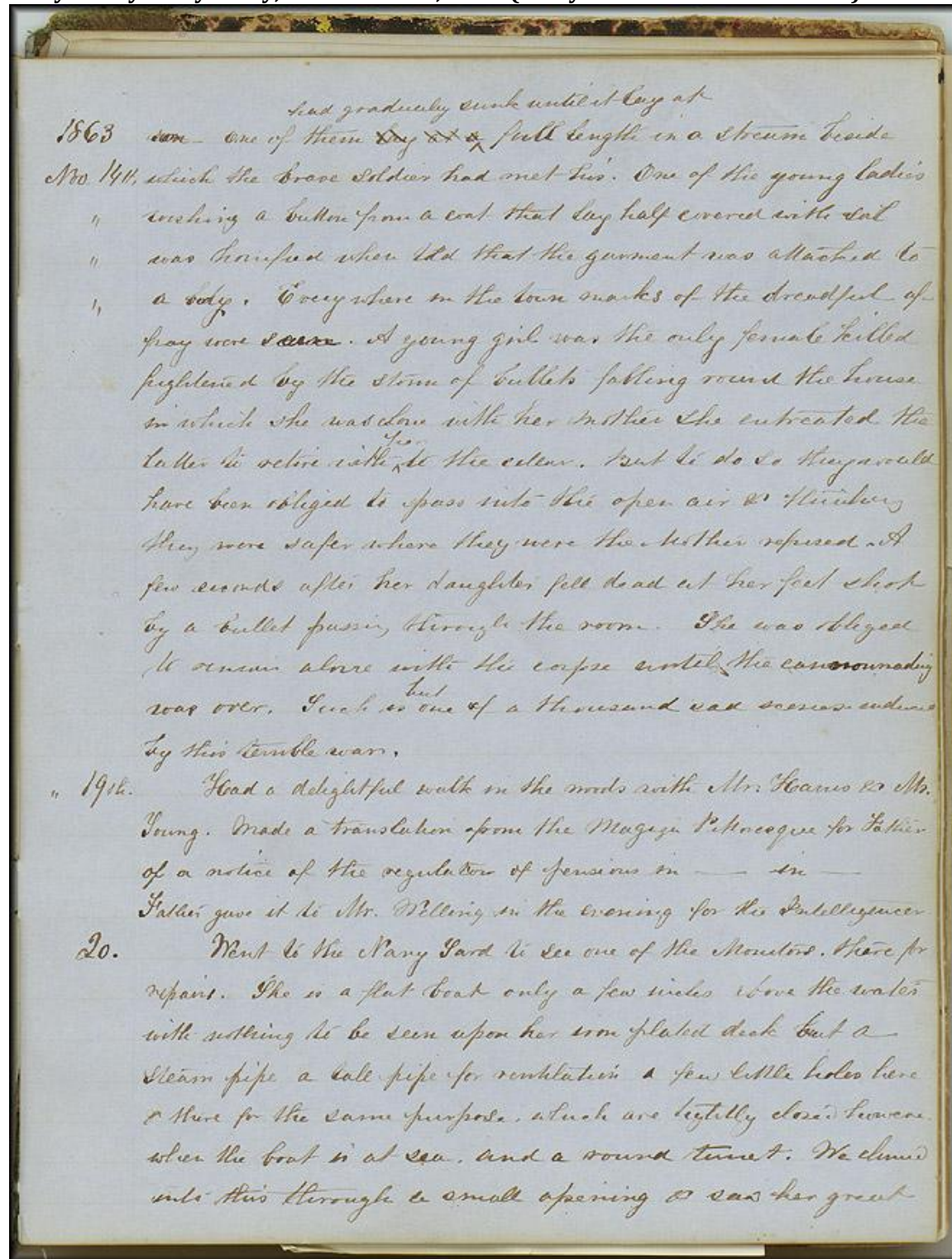
---

[illegible]





Mary Henry Diary Entry, November 20, 1863 (Entry Starts at the Number 20):



Mary Henry Diary Entry, November 20, 1863, page 1, Smithsonian Institution Archives.  
<http://siarchives.si.edu/history/exhibits/documents/mary.htm>





1863

Nov. 20. guns One of them is a monster the other somewhat smaller but large enough to make one shiver at the thought of the damage she might do. The turret can be turned in any direction. 18 men are required to man the guns how they can find room in the confined space round them I cannot imagine. The greatest danger they are exposed to is the loosening of the bolts fastening the iron plates which are sometimes driven into the turret by the violent concussions causing great damage. The quarters for the officers & men are of course entirely under water they seem to be quite comfortable although very small. It is very difficult to ventilate the vessel the pipe for that purpose we observed on deck is a new invention. We were shown an engine for pumping in the air through the pipe to the top of the turret. After leaving the monitor we went on board of another vessel, which has been awaiting Government orders for three ~~weeks~~ months. She has an apparatus for heating the steam after it comes from the boiler & so a greater amount of power is produced from the same amount of fuel. Capt. Blunt here our commander received a sword for gallant conduct at Fort Fisher the Monitor which was sunk by the Privateer Alabama. In the evening Miss Fenton, the Misses Blagden Mr. Walling Mr. Harris & the rest. took tea with us. Mr. — the most

21st. Father and party to see at the evening adj. Mr. — the most

23rd. Saw Mr. Hodge after church on Sunday. The said Capt. Hodge was preparing to sail. He has been very ill during the summer. Com. Thibaut is very ill with fever. Father saw his daughter. Mr. Clumber to day she fears

Mary Henry Diary Entry, November 20, 1863, page 2, Smithsonian Institution Archives.  
<http://siarchives.si.edu/history/exhibits/documents/mary.htm>



**Transcript** (*Entry Begins Near the End of Page 1 of the Original Document*):

[November] 20. Went to the Navy Yard to see one of the Monitors there for repairs. She is a flat boat only a few inches above the water with nothing to be seen upon her iron plated deck but a steam pipe a tall pipe for ventilation a few little holes here & there for the same purpose which are tightly closed however when the boat is at sea, and a round turret. We climbed into this through a small opening & saw her great **[Start Page 2]** guns. One of them is a monster the other some what smaller but large enough to make me shiver at the thought of the damage she might do. The turret can be turned in any direction. 18 men are required to man the guns how they can find room in the confined space round them I cannot imagine. The greatest danger they are exposed to is the loosening of the bolts fastening the iron plates which are sometimes driven into the turret by the violent concussions causing great damage. The quarters for the officers & men are of course entirely under water they seem to be quite comfortable although very small. It is very difficult to ventilate the vessel. The pipe for that purpose we observed on deck is a new invention. We were shown an engine for pumping in the air through the opening in the top of the Turret. After leaving the Monitor we went on board of another vessel, which has been awaiting Government orders ~~for~~ three ~~weeks~~ months. She has an apparatus for heating the steam after it comes from the boiler & so a greater amount of power is produced from the same amount of fuel. Capt Blake, her commander, received a sword for gallent conduct on board the Hatterras which was sunk by the Privateer Alabama. In the evening Miss Felton, the Misses Blagden, Mr. Welling Mr. Harris &c took tea with us.



**Additional Resources:**

*Reliable websites with documents online:*

SI Stories, Smithsonian Institution Archives,  
<http://siarchives.si.edu/history/exhibits/documents/index.htm>

Smithsonian Institution Archives History Pages,  
<http://siarchives.si.edu/history>

Smithsonian Institution Archives Home Page,  
<http://siarchives.si.edu/>

Historic Pictures of the Smithsonian, Smithsonian Institution Archives,  
<http://siarchives.si.edu/history/exhibits/historic-pictures-smithsonian>

Smithsonian Institution Education site,  
<http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/>

Smithsonian Institution Archives Lincoln Online Conference Virtual Exhibit,  
<http://www.smithsonianconferences.org/2009/siarchives/>