

Mass-Observation Winter Directive 1995

Part 1: IMAGES OF WHERE YOU LIVE: CITIES, TOWNS, VILLAGES

Please start with your city, town or village as the heading. This should be where you live now, but if you are temporarily living away from home, or want to describe somewhere that is more familiar to you, please do so. It would be helpful if you explained your relationship with the place you describe. (Please remember to start with a two or three line note about yourself at the start of both Part 1 and Part 2)

If anyone who is worried about being identified, perhaps you could provide a short description of your village eg "Rural hamlet in Devon" or suburb of Edinburgh". Obviously it would be preferable if you could provide a place name.

How long have you lived there? Where else have you lived? Please provide a rough list with dates if you can.

If you are not living in the place of your birth, why did you move there? Have you moved a lot?

Are you happy with where you live? Do you feel you belong? Do you expect to stay there for long? Please give details, and talk about what some of the considerations might be about your staying or moving. How important are your feelings about the area itself, as opposed to other reasons for staying or moving?

Describe your surroundings. (Drawings & photographs with labels/captions welcome as well as a written description).

What kind of image do you think your home town has? What words would you use to describe it? Please distinguish between your own neighbourhood and the image of the whole town or city.

Do you think the way other people think about your home town is the same as the way you think about it? What kind of image does it have, do you think, in newspapers and on TV or radio? Has there been much of a change over time? How do you think these images come about?

Please turn over....

PART 2: MOTHERS AND LITERACY IN THE EARLY 1900S

Jane Mace of Goldsmiths' College, University of London, has asked for this subject to be included in the directive this time. She will be analysing your replies as part of her research. This is her summary of the research questions she is asking:

Today's educational policies stress the importance of mothers in young children's literacy development. Illiterate mothers, it is suggested, raise illiterate children.

But is this true? A generation of women in the early years of this century had had little if any schooling as children. As adults, many therefore had little or no literacy in English. Yet, as a population of older people today can testify, many of the children of those women grew up not only able to read and write, but also positively to enjoy reading and writing in their adult lives. Maybe then, it didn't matter if a mother could not read and write in English? Or maybe it did, but the child learned from others? Or maybe mothers provided something else even though they had no skills in reading and writing themselves?

Please help us create a portrait of some of these mothers from your own experience. What we are looking for is anything you remember, or anything you know about a woman who was a mother raising children between 1890 and 1930. You may need to talk to your own parents or grandparents to get this information. *You should not use real names.*

To begin with, please note down (if you know them) the dates of birth and death of the woman about whom you are writing. You can write about more than one woman if you wish. Then make a note of whether you are writing about her as:

- (a) her child
- (b) her grandchild, or
- (c) in some other relationship - please specify this.

Please try and offer your reflections in two parts. As always the points below are guidelines, and although it would be useful if you could try to cover them all, you are welcome to add additional points wherever you feel they are important.

(1) Her childhood: say anything you know about where she grew up, with how many brothers and sisters, and in what circumstances. What reading or writing occurred in the household? Was English the first language of the home? If not, what was? Did she go to school at all? For how long?

(2) Her life as a mother: how many children did she have? What reasons, if any, might she have had to want to read and write? For example, did any of her children, or her husband, live away for any time? Was she involved in religious, political, or other groups? Write anything you know about her literacy. Did she ever, as far as you know, read anything? If so what? What about writing? If she couldn't read or write, who did she rely on for different kinds of literacy? Did she sing, tell stories, or talk to her children? What was her health like?

(3) If you were her child or grandchild: your memories of her attitudes to *your* reading and writing. Did she comment on your early efforts to read and write? What kind of things did she say? What feelings do you think she had about her own literacy?

There are only two parts to this directive this time. If there are issues or subjects which you feel we should be covering, please feel free to add a Part 3 on a subject of your own choice. It could be on a matter that is personal to you, or your feelings about current events (or both). Ensure that you include your M-O number as usual, and a biographical note about yourself, and start with a clear heading so that we know it is a special supplementary report.