

MASS OBSERVATION DIARY SESSION FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Mass Observation was formed in 1937 and aimed to gauge public opinion through various different research methods. By taking part in these fun diary-focused activities, your students will learn more about these methods while also developing skills in historical enquiry, reading for meaning and spoken presentation.

Learning objectives:

- To understand why people wrote diaries for Mass Observation.
- To consider the purpose and audience of the Mass Observation diaries.
- To compare mid-twentieth century writing with more recent.
- To compare and contrast diary writing styles.
- To summarise diary content.
- To develop empathy for those writing.
- To 'get into role' as Mass Observer and write in character as them.



INTRODUCTION TO MASS OBSERVATION: WHY DID PEOPLE WRITE DIARIES?

TIME	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES
15 mins	<p>Explain what Mass Observation was and the research methods the organisation used, including diaries that were written anonymously.</p> <p>Read Sept 5th 1939 diary entry by diarist 5420, without revealing the date:</p> <p>Q: Who is the audience?</p> <p>Q. When do you think it was written?</p> <p>Q: How do events surrounding the writer impact the content of the diary entry?</p> <p>Q: Are there any words you don't recognise?</p> <p>Q: Do you think people were as honest as they would be in a private diary? Give reasons.</p>	<p>To understand why people wrote diaries for Mass Observation.</p> <p>To consider the purpose and audience of the Mass Observation diaries.</p> <p>To compare mid-twentieth century writing with more recent.</p>	<p>Power Point, with a scanned copy of the diary entry to be read out.</p>

GETTING TO KNOW THE DIARISTS

TIME	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES
1 hour	<p>An opportunity to look through the diaries and complete the diarist sheet. Model using the Power Point.</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Why the person was writing the diary (purpose).-Who they were writing for (audience).-The impact of these two things on the content.	<p>To compare and contrast diary writing styles.</p> <p>To summarise diary content.</p> <p>To develop empathy for those writing.</p>	<p>Power Point.</p> <p>Enough copies of the diarist sheet for each student.</p>

CALL MY BLUFF DIARY CHALLENGE

TIME	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	RESOURCES
45 mins	<p>Put the class into groups of four and give a 'secret' diary entry to each. Explain that they can't show their entry to anyone outside of the group because they are about to compete against each other.</p> <p>Explain the activity:</p> <p>Each group has 20 minutes to carefully read their diary entry, make notes and then write as if they are that Mass Observer. Once they have completed their writing, the groups will take it in turns to share. They will read both entries — the real and the fake — and try to convince the audience that the one that they've written is the true diary!</p> <p>Teacher to model how to write in character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show a diary entry on the Power Point and read it out loud. • Make notes on the flipchart commenting on how the Mass Observer writes — <i>uses 'and' a lot, includes lots of details about ...</i> — and point out idiosyncrasies. Remind the students that these were written over 70 years ago and the vocabulary/language people use has changed. • Show an example of your diary entry 'in the style of' the Mass Observer. 	To 'get into role' as Mass Observer and write in character as them.	Power Point Flip Chart