

Becoming a Researcher

Reading Objects Teaching Pack: Diaries

Guidance

The purpose of this pack is to offer activities and resources to aid a teaching workshop to undergraduate or postgraduate researchers new to Special Collections. Activities begin with a detailed reading of specific diaries held in Special Collections and are designed to engage students in the content, context, handwriting and materiality of items. The aim of the session is to provide students with the questions and tools to rigorously read other diaries they may encounter during their research, and to critically distinguish these from other types of material.

In line with the Research Skill Development Framework used by the University of Leeds, the aim for this teaching session is to encourage an increased level of student confidence and autonomy when approaching primary materials, and to facilitate independent research.

At the end of the pack you will find links to related resources in Special Collections and external websites, a key questions sheet, further reading and handouts for use during the teaching session. Teaching notes give further context for the materials studied.

Session overview

Students work in small groups (of no more than 5), each group focusing on one diary as a case study. Progressing through a series of tailored short activities, students gain experience of the skills needed to read diaries rigorously.

Learning objectives:

At the end of the teaching session students should be able to:

- Critically examine diaries.
- Analyse diaries alongside other forms of discourse and compare and contrast them.
- Identify the questions that need to be asked of diaries as historical documents.
- Consider the physical properties of diaries and their importance.
- Understand the importance of provenance to primary materials.



Planning a Session: Teaching sessions using Special Collections material are generally held in the Brotherton Room. This can comfortably accommodate up to 20 students looking at material. Information on booking the Brotherton Room is available at on the [Library website](#).

Primary materials to be consulted in library or via the Special Collections website:

- [William Crick's diary](#)
[catalogue link: <https://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/499377>]
- Excerpts from Florence Lockwood's Diary
[catalogue link: <https://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/30737>]
- 'Great Naval Battle', *The Times*, 3 June 1916, p. 8.
[catalogue link: <https://library.leeds.ac.uk/record=b2661465>]

Other materials:

Nick Hewitt, ['What was the Battle of Jutland?'](#), Imperial War Museum.

Selecting material: A list of diaries which have been successfully used in similar activities alongside contextual information is also available.

Lesson Plan:

Introduction	Talking to group	5 minutes
Case Study 1: William Crick and the Battle of Jutland		
ACTIVITY 1: Content and Context	Small Group Discussion	15 minutes
ACTIVITY 2: Reading diaries as historical documents	Small Group Discussion	15 minutes
Case Study 2: Florence Lockwood		
ACTIVITY 3: Content and Context	Small Group Discussion	10 minutes
ACTIVITY 4: Structure and materials	Small Group Discussion	10 minutes
ACTIVITY 5: Comparing diary entries	Small Group Discussion	10 minutes
Round up	Whole Group Discussion	5 minutes



Suggested reading in advance of visit:

Students can read [Special Collections Research Skills resources](#) in advance of their visit to Special Collections.

Introductions:

Powerpoint introductions to Special Collections for use in teaching sessions are available [here](#).



Case Study 1: William Crick and the Battle of Jutland

ACTIVITY 1: Content and Context

Examine some entries from [William Crick's First World War diaries](#). If you are not visiting Special Collections these can be accessed digitally. Read particularly his entries from [Wednesday 31st May 1916 to Wednesday 7th June 1916](#) (page 103 onwards).

1. What can you learn about William Crick from his diary entries? What is he describing (events / emotions / individuals?) and what kind of language is he using to describe it?
2. What kind of a diary is this? Is it professional or private? Is it designed to be read? How might these questions affect the way that you read the diary?
3. How frequent are the diary entries? Are they all of a similar length? Does it matter whether diary entries are made regularly or if they are sporadic?

ACTIVITY 2: Reading diaries as historical documents

Read two further accounts of the Battle of Jutland. One is a contemporary account of the battle printed in [The Times](#) on Saturday 3rd June, 1916, p. 8, which reports an announcement from the Secretary of the Admiralty. The second is a [modern account of the battle](#) given by the Imperial War Museum.

1. How do these accounts differ from the account of William Crick, and what can we learn about the battle from each? Think about the differences in detail, but also the difference in tone of the accounts.
2. How does the format of the diary entry, the newspaper article, and the museum website affect your engagement with their subject? Do some of the formats seem more subjective than others? Are you more likely to trust an account published in a newspaper than one handwritten in a diary, or does William Crick's proximity to the action add weight to his observations?
3. How can we read diaries alongside other historical documents to build up a picture of historical events? What are the advantages of using contemporary diaries? What are their limitations?



TEACHING NOTES for ACTIVITIES 1 and 2

- **Biographical Information**

William Crick served in the Royal Navy as a Boy Telegraphist on board HMS Gloucester and HMS Caroline (the 'Carry'). He was born in 1899 in Surrey.

- In William Crick's diary the importance of routine to the ship is clear by his division of the day into a.m. and p.m. and different watches. The crucial importance of the weather to navy life is also emphasised. It is interesting that he calls his diary a 'private log' (page 4), rather than a diary, suggesting that its purpose, while private, is less personal than we might consider a diary to be, and very much linked to life on board the ship.



Case Study 2: Florence Lockwood

ACTIVITY 3: Content and Context

Examine some entries from Florence Lockwood's diaries. If you are not visiting Special Collections these can be accessed digitally. Read particularly her entries for **Thursday 1st to Tuesday 6th June 1916**, but also get a sense of the different types of materials which she pastes into her diary.

1. What do we learn about Florence Lockwood's experience of the war from these excerpts from her diary? What do you think her views on the war are? Are her views consistent or inconsistent?
2. What can you find out about Florence Lockwood herself from her diary? Do you get a sense of her class or social circle? Do you get any sense of what life on the 'Domestic Front' was like from these pages?
3. Can you guess Florence Lockwood's age by reading her diary? Would knowing her age change how you read her diary?

ACTIVITY 4: Structure and materials

1. The handwritten portions of the diary are divided into diary pages and notes pages.
 - a. Is there a change of tone between the diary entries and the notes entries?
 - b. What is the effect of this on you as a reader? Does the information in one section affect how you read the other? If there were no notes pages how would your experience of the diary differ?
2. In addition to the division of her writing into diary entries and notes, Florence Lockwood also regularly pastes in items including newspaper articles, and even one poison pen letter.
 - a. How does the incorporation of mixed media into the diary affect your reading of it?
 - b. Can you see the influence of the media in her diary entries?



3. Some entries include a combination of pen and pencil notes. What does this suggest to you about the process of writing these diary entries?

ACTIVITY 5: Comparing diary entries

Compare and contrast the diary entries made by Florence Lockwood and William Crick.

1. These entries are clearly very different in some ways, and it is easy to make generalised assumptions based on them. What kind of assumptions should we resist and what kind of questions do we need to ask to provide a rigorous analysis of these entries?
2. Can you find any similarities between the diaries?
 - a. How do they approach the same events (the Battle of Jutland or the death of Lord Kitchener for example)?
 - b. How do newspaper cuttings feature?
3. What can the different kinds of diary entries made by Florence Lockwood and William Crick tell us about the experiences of individuals during the First World War?
4. You might also want to compare Florence Lockwood's manuscript diary to her published [Private Diary](#) (part 11) which is also held by Special Collections. Here the incidents recorded in only a few of the entries from the manuscript diary are included, framed by an explanatory narrative, and written in the past tense.
 - a. What is the effect of these changes and omissions on your reading of the diary?
 - b. How does the form of the diary – printed pamphlet rather than handwritten manuscript with pasted inserts – affect your reading of it?

TEACHING NOTES for ACTIVITIES 3 and 4

- **Biographical Information**

Florence Lockwood was the wife of a cloth manufacturer and mill owner, and she lived in the Colne Valley, Yorkshire during the First World War. She was born in 1861 and was a pacifist.



- Generally, the left hand pages of Florence Lockwood's diary are diary pages and the right hand side pages are notes pages. Sometimes the links between the two sides are unclear, and as a subject on the notes page might be continued over several pages (for example the trade war with Germany) it is unclear whether the dates given in the diary can be read across to the notes page. In at least one instance Florence Lockwood notes that the newspaper cutting pasted in the notes page is from a date in the month previous to the diary entry.
- Sometimes the tone of the notes page appears markedly different to the diary page, and although it is not always clear, in these pages Florence Lockwood is sometimes explicitly paraphrasing or repeating speeches that she has listened to, or perhaps articles that she has read (see for example her notes on William Hughes' 'Open door' policy, on notes page opposite diary entry for 5th June 1916).
- It's interesting to note that both William Crick and Florence Lockwood paste newspaper items into their diaries, suggesting the pervasive importance and influence of the press, but that these cuttings are used differently. William Crick finishes his account of the Battle of Jutland with a newspaper map entitled 'Scene of the Great Battle' which appears to cement the role that he has played in the war and its national significance. Florence Lockwood's use of newspapers is various. Her nuanced understanding of the information that they convey is suggested in her comment 'Maggie's heroe! Northcliff' above a pasted newspaper cutting about the alarmist Northcliffian Press (February 1916), but on the death of Lord Kitchener her diary entry mirrors the words used in the newspaper cutting she pastes below: 'The strong silent man he has gone silently. Typical of the national spirit' (6th June 1916). Crucially the newspaper cuttings are all without their context – the diary reader has no idea which paper they are from, from which page, or with what kind of article they were initially juxtaposed. Even their dates are uncertain and they are not necessarily pasted in chronological order. While articles on the death of Lord Kitchener appear in the same diary entry which concerns his death in June 1916, a later page has a note reading 'May 5th 1916' next to a newspaper article.



Teaching notes (continued)

- On some of the diary entries and notes pages made predominantly in pen there are pencil notations, adding the date, indicating 'notes', or adding a few words. The occurrence of these across pages suggests that they were made at a later date for coherence or to add further information. These annotations highlight the possibility of entries being added to / amended after the date they were written, and the invite the diary reader to consider how these additions might alter any reading of the initial content. They highlight that diary entries may have undergone processes of formal/informal editing/revision even if they are still in manuscript rather than published form.
- It would be easy to read these diaries as simple examples of a gendered divide in experiences of the war – the trenches vs. the domestic front. However, other factors need to be taken into consideration in our reading of diaries, including age, class, location and further context. Many men who were in reserved occupations or who were conscientious objectors during the war did not fight, while many women in their capacity as nurses or ambulance drivers served in France. At the same time, as Liz Stanley has noted in her research on the Mass-Observation day diaries from the nineteen-thirties, gender expectations and experiences do account for some differences in diary writing practices in the early twentieth-century. In particular, she noted that men were more likely to see their day-diaries as public accounts or reports (Stanley, 1995, pp. 95-96).



Related resources

If you have enjoyed this workshop and would like to research further into any of the ideas or questions raised, you might be interested in the following resources held by Special Collections.

- [Florence Lockwood](#)
Special Collections holds more material relating to Florence Lockwood including printed diary extracts.
- [William Crick](#)
Special Collections holds more material in relation to William Crick, including further diaries, photographs and manuscript recollections.
- [The Liddle Collection](#)
The Liddle Collection includes the personal papers of over 6,000 people who lived through the First World War and over 500 who experienced the Second World War. These include individuals on active service in the military or as medical personnel, conscientious objectors, and those who experienced the war from the 'domestic front'.
- **Diaries**
Special Collections holds a wide variety of diaries. If you are interested to browse these do a keyword search using 'diary' as your search term, then refine your search results by a number of filters including, collection, date and record type using the menu on the left hand side.

Further Reading

Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (eds), *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of texts from nineteenth- and twentieth- century history* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009)

Liz Stanley, 'Women have servants and men never eat: issues in reading gender, using the case study of mass-observation's 1937 day-diaries', *Women's History Review*, 4.1 (1995), 85-102.

External Links

- More of Florence Lockwood's diaries (1914-15, 1916-18) are held by the [West Yorkshire Archive Service](#).
- [The Great Diary Project](#) which offers some links to diary holdings across the country.



Becoming a Researcher: Diaries – Handout 1

Case Study 1: William Crick and the Battle of Jutland

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Case Study 2: Florence Lockwood

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Handout 2: Key Questions to ask

Content

- Is there a particular purpose for the diary, - is it purely personal, or is it the record of a public person designed to collect information for a future memoir, for example? Do you think that when the diary was written it was intended to be read by others?
- What does the diary record? Is it purely an engagement diary or does it include commentary on the events of the day? What is the tone of the diary – is it formal or informal?
- Is the diary kept regularly or sporadically? Is there a focus on important events or are routine, daily occurrences also mentioned?
- Are there gaps in the text? Are there points or events which you think should be named but aren't? Why do you think this is?

Context

- Who wrote the diary and when?
- Where do the events of the diary take place?
- Who donated the diary to the archive? Is it part of a wider collection?

Structure and Materials

- How would you describe the colour, texture, or quality of the paper? Does this tell us anything about its function?
- Has anything been pasted in to the diary, e.g. photographs, newspaper cuttings, event tickets or notices.
- What kind of a diary is it? Is it large or small? Is it portable? Are days sectioned off or is it blank?
- Has the diary been damaged or repaired? Can we learn from this anything about the frequency of its use? Have any additions been added to entries at a later date?

Handwriting

- Is the diary written in a particular script? For older diaries, does this tell us anything about the profession or education of the writer?
- Was the diary hurriedly written down? Was it meant for personal or public use?

