Dear Diary

My movie project describes the fascination diaries have for readers, the topics women write about in their journals and highlights one ordinary American woman’s diary preserved in the Library of Congress’ American Memories Collection.

This digital learning object will be used in a Library Web 2.0 Tools course unit on blogging to illustrate the value in narrating our own life stories. It will also be an example for the unit on creating podcasts and videos.

Script for Dear Diary

What is it about a diary that makes for fascinating reading? Is it the chance to get a glimpse into someone else’s private world? Or is it perhaps the opportunity to see life through someone else’s eyes? Maybe it’s just plain old curiosity!

Diaries are for everyone not just the famous. Even the most ordinary of lives has its moments of drama. Women have written about their hopes, their dreams, their jobs, their families, their hardships.

In 1864, Mrs. Mary Ringo kept a diary of her pioneer journey across the Great Plains. Her story began:

May 18 Wednesday

Left my family and started on my long trip across the plains, went 10 miles, had some trouble with the oxen and camped for the night and here I took my first lesson in camp life, cooked my supper and went to bed but couldn’t sleep until the chickens crowed for day and after a short nap I awoke.

She told of the unexpected dangers of travelling by covered wagon.

June 2 Tuesday

...Today Johnnie got his foot hurt quite badly by the wheels running over it, it seems to have been a day of accidents, a little boy was run over by a wagon and killed.

She recorded an encounter with Native Americans amid the domestic details of her life.

June 29 Wednesday

...Several Indians came to camp this morning, one of them had a saber, we asked him where he got it, he said he killed a soldier and took it. I have cut myself a dress and am going to try and make it this week.

She wrote of terror after dark.
July 11 Monday

...In the night the wolves come in and howl and scares me a great deal at first.

Mary’s courage was tried when on July 30 her husband accidentally shot himself. She buried him on a hillside and bravely continued the journey westward to Nevada with her children, her loneliness, and her grief.

To find out the end of her story and read the diaries of other American women, visit the Library of Congress’s American Memory Collection website.

Resources from the Library of Congress American Memory Collection

Silent movie actress, Edna Mayo, sitting in a room, reading a book
Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/cdn:@field(NUMBER+@band(ichicdn+n066369))

Anita Leos sitting and reading a book
Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/cdn:@field(NUMBER+@band(ichicdn+n080807))

Woman reading book behind window on Trinity College campus
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Theodor Horydczak Collection [LC-H814-T-2525-050 DLC (interpositive)]
Washington as it was: photographs by Theodor Horydczak, 1923-1959
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/horyd:@field(NUMBER+@band(thc+5a45143))

Washington, D.C. Girl sitting alone in the Sea Grill....
Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection,[LC-USW3-021005-E DLC (b&w film nitrate neg.)]
America from the Great Depression to World War II: Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1935-1945
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field(NUMBER+@band(fsa+8d27122))

Three women standing in front of bookcases in a room, one woman reading a piece of paper
Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/cdn:@field(NUMBER+@band(ichicdn+n084666))
Mrs. William H. Winslow, Chicago Woman's Club president, sitting reading book
Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/cdn:@field(NUMBER+@band(ichicdn+n071646))

Freida Hemple sitting at a desk with pen and paper in her hands
Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/cdn:@field(NUMBER+@band(ichicdn+n061898))

Mrs. Henry J. Cox looking toward the camera and holding a pen to a piece of paper
Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/cdn:@field(NUMBER+@band(ichicdn+n087455))

Belle Monroe looking toward the camera and sitting at a desk, holding a pen to a pad of paper
Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/cdn:@field(NUMBER+@band(ichicdn+n079344))

Isabella Dalton sitting at a desk and holding a pen to a piece of paper
Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/cdn:@field(NUMBER+@band(ichicdn+n078198))

The journal of Mrs. Mary Ringo; a diary of her trip across the Great Plains in 1864, with a foreword and conclusion by her daughter Mattie Bell Cushing.
[Images 1, 2, 3, 8, 17, 20, 26, 29]
American Women: A Gateway to Library of Congress Resources for the Study of Women's History and Culture in the United States
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/awhbib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(gcmisc+awh0014))

wagon train
Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library
History of the American West, 1860-1920: Photographs from the Collection of the Denver Public Library
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hawp:@field(NUMBER+@band(codhawp+10021874))
Miscellaneous subjects. Two oxen in field I
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Theodor Horydczak Collection [LC-H832-3028-x DLC (b&w glass neg.])
Washington As It Was: Photographs by Theodor Horydczak, 1923-1959
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/horyd:@field(NUMBER+@band(thc+5a35639))

Carriage, wagon, and tent, possibly reenactment of pioneer or Civil War camp
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/detr:@field(NUMBER+@band(det+4a26829))

Moon. Moon obscured by clouds.
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Theodor Horydczak Collection [LC-H824-T-2402-002-x DLC (interpositive)]
Washington As It Was: Photographs by Theodor Horydczak, 1923-1959
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/horyd:@field(NUMBER+@band(thc+5a49246))

A pioneer family
Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library
History of the American West, 1860-1920: Photographs from the Collection of the Denver Public Library
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hawp:@field(NUMBER+@band(codhawp+10011929))

Tomahawk and sabre, or even odds:/Copyright by Charles Schreyvogel
Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library
History of the American West, 1860-1920: Photographs from the Collection of the Denver Public Library
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hawp:@field(NUMBER+@band(codhawp+10033739))

A Northern Michigan timber wolf, Sault Sainte Marie
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/detr:@field(NUMBER+@band(det+4a21003))