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READERMAKERS: Exploring Places, People, and History through Diaries

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After reading Zlata’s Diary, eleven-year-old Zlata Filipovic’s account of the first two years of the Bosnian war, I thought that the perfect Readermakers article would explore books that helped children understand current world problems. Then, realizing that it was the format in which this book was written that conveyed so personally the turmoil of this recent event, I decided to see what other books utilized the diary or journal format. What I found was exciting! This format is used to explore everything from the life of a rabbit to an account of a boy’s life on a farm in New England. Both fiction and non-fiction genres are represented. While the majority of books are for the older elementary and young adult age level, the diary or journal format is also used in books for younger children.

Why is this format so widely used? Because they are usually written in the first person (an already powerful means of communication) journals make it easy for readers to relate to the main character. Journals and diaries enable the reader to have an intimate look into a character’s personality, circumstances, and experiences.

I have chosen to arrange the following list of publications by subject. ISBN, prices, and suggested grade levels are also included. These selections can help the readers under your charge to better understand people, places, and animals in the world today and make current as well as historical events come alive.

These titles are natural springboards to “What would it be like . . .” discussions at school and at home. Teachers, match your social studies, science, and history unit topics with the subject headings in the list to provide enrichment reading experiences for your students. Special projects such as plays, readers’ theaters, and reenactments are just a few of the many creative ways students can share the interesting characters and events they have read about.

Perhaps this Readermaker article will have a "Writermaker" effect. As we encourage literary expression, let’s not forget that each child is unique. Zlata,
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an only child, did not know, as she wrote in her diary, that it would have import beyond herself and eventually be published. She wrote to assuage and express her personal feelings about war. Have your readers write their own journal accounts of their experiences. Their personal accounts may, like Zlata’s, become a vehicle to help others.

AMERICAN AUTHORS - NONFICTION - LOUISA MAY ALCOTT, 1832-1888


AMERICAN AUTHORS - NONFICTION - ELIZABETH YATES, 1905-


BOSNIA - NONFICTION


CAMP - FICTION - PICTURE BOOK


CHINA - HISTORY - TIANANMEN SQUARE INCIDENT, 1989-FICTION.

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CIRCUS PERFORMERS - NONFICTION


DRUG ABUSE - FICTION


ENGLAND, MEDIEVAL CIVILIZATION - FICTION


EXPLORERS - NONFICTION


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FARM LIFE, 1800s - NEW ENGLAND - FICTION - PICTURE BOOK


GALAPAGOS ISLANDS - NONFICTION


GARDENING - NONFICTION


GUIDE DOGS - TRAINING - NONFICTION


HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS - FICTION


JUNIOR HIGH - NEW YORK - NONFICTION

JUNIOR HIGH - GREAT BRITAIN - FICTION


MENTALLY HANDICAPPED - FICTION


MISSING PERSONS - FICTION


NUCLEAR WAR - FICTION


OWLS - NONFICTION


PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED - FICTION

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RABBITS - NONFICTION


SNAKES - NONFICTION


SYRIA - FICTION


TITANIC (STEAMSHIP) SHIPWRECK - NONFICTION - PICTURE BOOK


UNITED STATES HISTORY - CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865 - NONFICTION


UNITED STATES HISTORY - CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865 - FICTION


UNITED STATES HISTORY - COLONIAL PERIOD CA. 1600-1775 - FICTION


UNITED STATES HISTORY - INDIANA, 1830's - FICTION


UNITED STATES HISTORY - JEWS - NONFICTION


UNITED STATES HISTORY - REVOLUTION, 1775-1783 - NONFICTION

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UNITED STATES HISTORY - REVOLUTION, 1775-1783 - FICTION


UNITED STATES HISTORY - SLAVERY - FICTION


UNITED STATES HISTORY - SOCIAL LIFE AND CUSTOMS TO 1775 - FICTION


UNITED STATES HISTORY - SOCIAL LIFE AND CUSTOMS 1865-1918 - FICTION


UNITED STATES HISTORY - WOMEN - NONFICTION


UNMARRIED MOTHERS - FICTION

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**WORLD WAR, 1939-1945 - NONFICTION**


**WORLD WAR, 1939-1945 - JEWS - FRANCE - FICTION**


**WORLD WAR, 1939-1945 - JEWS - NETHERLANDS - NONFICTION**


**WORLD WAR, 1939-1945 - JAPANESE-CANADIANS - NONFICTION**