

## **Diary of Mary Martin, Monkstown, Co. Dublin**

### **Senior Cycle Lessons**

Mary Martin's diary is known as a "diary of situation" – she started writing it as a response to a specific event, and stopped making entries when that event was resolved.

Mary's way of coping with her grief and worry was to start a diary. She wrote each entry in the form of a letter to her son so that he might read them on his return. Mary lists many of the ordinary day-to-day activities of Dublin before during and after the Rising. She addresses her entries to "Dear Charlie", and so they are easy to read and to understand. He never came home, and his death was confirmed in July 1916. The last entry is listed on 25 May 1916. Even when she knew for certain that her son Charlie was dead, she kept it.

#### **1. How can you explain the ending of the diary entries on 25 May?**

It is a contemporary document, written at the time when the events took place.

It was a private document until it was sold by a bookseller to the National Library in September 1997. In September 1997 the National Library of Ireland purchased Mary's diary from Eamonn De Búrca, of De Búrca Rare Books. The diary was then made available to researchers in the reading room of the library in Dublin.

When the library made a digital copy of the diary, it was made available on the Internet. Therefore, it is available to any reader who wishes to read it online.

#### **2. How did this diary, nearly 100 years old, survive and make its way to the National Library of Ireland?**

#### **3. What difference does it make if a document is available only as a physical copy in a library?**

We will use the digital copy of the [diary](http://dh.tcd.ie/martindiary/) (<http://dh.tcd.ie/martindiary/>).

This site contains a photographic scan of each entry in the diary, as well as a transcription (a printed version) of each of the handwritten daily entries.

Under the heading "View the Diary", you can locate each of the daily entries, as well as summary ("abstract") of the contents of the diary for each month. This will give you an excellent overview of Mary's opinions, and the life of a busy and wealthy woman in Dublin during this period.

We will look at two entries to get a flavour of the diary, the first entry, written on 1 January 1916, and the second from 25 April 1916, the second day of the Rising.

### **Activity One**

#### **New Year's day, 1916**

Click on the diary entry for New Year's Day, 1 January 1916.

Look at the image. Below is a transcript of the entry for that day.

#### **Saturday, 1st January, 1916**

Dear Charlie

Since I heard you were missing as well as wounded, it has occurred to me to write the diary in the form of a letter. We hope to hear from you soon. till then cannot communicate with you & later on

when you read this it will you know what has been happening. Today I went to Mass at Clarendon St & Met Uncle Charlie & Auntie. Horribly wet & windy day. Called at Wiers & bought a christening present for Aunt Rita's baby. Jack is god father but could not be present as he is staying with Bernard O'Kelly for a few days shooting & hunting. Nana & Cecil, Desmond & Andrew went to the church, baby is called Noel Andrew "he was born on Xmas Day". The boys had a great afternoon with Dermot & Brendan who have wonderful 1st Lieuts uniforms sent them by Dermot Donelan. Beatrice, Leo, Richie & Adela Woolett went to Hippodrom but the entertainment was very poor. Had cable from Marie – "No news Good luck best wishes for 1916."

#### **Questions:**

1. Why did Mary decide to write the diary?
2. In your opinion, what is the most important piece of evidence to indicate Mary's state of mind when she starts to write the diary?
3. What evidence is there that Mary had other friends in the British army?
4. Mary gives some example of how her friends are enjoying themselves on the first day of 1916. Select one activity that shows how people relaxed at this time.

#### **Activity Two**

##### **Tuesday 25 April 1916, the second day of the Rising.**

Click on the diary entry for 25 April 1916.

Look at the image. Below is a transcript of the entry for that day.

##### **Tuesday 25 April 1916.**

A very quiet peaceful day here but we hear (no newspapers published or mails arriving) that the Sinn Feiners are still in possession of G.P.O, & Westland Row & are defying the military. They say several people have been killed & that the G.P.O has changed hands a couple of times.

A ship came into Kingstown with some troops & there is also a cruiser in the harbour & the approaches are well guarded by the military. We also hear there were Risings in Cork, Limerick, Belfast & Derry.

We do not know what will happen out about the boys, it is very doubtful if the mailboat will arrive & if it does here, they are to get to Ashton. Richie cannot travel with them having to remain behind with tonsillitis.

#### **Questions:**

1. Mary lived in Monkstown, County Dublin. Why did she have little information about the Rising?
2. Can you identify any comment that she makes about the fighting that we now know to be false?
3. What evidence is there that the British made a strong military response to the Rising?
4. Can you see any evidence that Mary did not react positively to the outbreak of the rebellion?

#### **Activity Three**

Mary's diary entries for the week of the Easter Rising.

Read Mary's entries about the Easter Rising.

Q. What is the importance of this diary for historians and students who want to understand the Easter Rising?

#### Activity Four

Letters from Charles Martin to his mother, 1915

[The letters are available under the heading, “image gallery”. Click on the “letter gallery” to read the letters.]

This [site http://dh.tcd.ie/martindiary/](http://dh.tcd.ie/martindiary/) contains images of four letters sent from Charlie Martin to his mother, Mary Martin, between April and July 1915. During this time, he was based at the Curragh Camp, Ireland and Basingstoke, England.

Q. What are the main concerns that he expresses in his letters?

Q. What can you learn from these letters and Mary’s diary about the relationship between Charles and his mother?

Activity: Charlie died in Salonika. Research the battles that took place at Salonika,