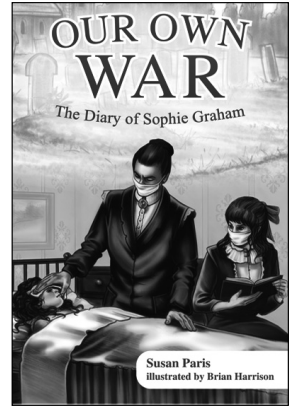


Our Own War: The Diary of Sophie Graham



by **Susan Paris**

illustrated by **Brian Harrison**

Book Summary

A young girl recounts in her diary the struggles of day-to-day life during the influenza epidemic of 1918.

Features of the Book

- Fictional diary
- Preface with factual information
- Historical photographs and newspaper cuttings
- Causes and effects

Purpose

Our Own War: The Diary of Sophie Graham can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills and understandings:

- S** determining the differences between fact and fiction;
- S** making inferences;
- S** exploring the author's purpose;
- S** making connections;
- S** discussing how pandemics spread and affect populations.

Investigation Tools

- Looking Closer – Viruses, page 29
- Making Connections – The SARS Epidemic, pages 30–31
- Digging Deeper – Life in the Trenches, page 32

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Determining the differences between fact and fiction
- S** Making inferences
- S** Exploring the author's purpose

Introducing the text

You may need to build the students' knowledge of this event. This should include the First World War, influenza, and epidemics. If they have very little prior knowledge, you may need to allow time to do this. You could show documentaries, read novels set in 1918, or visit a local museum or war memorial.

Discuss the cover illustration and the blurb, prompting the students to recall anything they know about the events of 1918.

- *What can you infer about the contents of the book?*
- *Do you think this is going to be a true story? Why/why not?*

Tell the students that, in this lesson, they will be making inferences and discussing how to tell fact from fiction. When they finish reading, they will discuss the author's purpose.

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read the preface (pages 3 to 5). Think about the style of the writing and whether the information is likely to be true or made up.

- What features indicate that this is true? (sounds true, matches what we already know, authentic poster and photographs)
- How could you verify this? (cross-check in an encyclopedia or on the Internet)

Read aloud the last sentence on page 5.

- Do you think this diary will be authentic or one that the author has made up? Why do you think that? (Leave this question open as the students read the diary.)

Ask the students to read the first chapter. Discuss the events, helping the students to make inferences.

For example:

- What can you infer about the members of this family? Where is Dad? How did you work that out? Who is Ellen?
- What can you infer about school discipline in 1918?

Set the following guiding questions for each chapter and discuss them when the students have finished reading the chapter.

Chapter 2:

- What can you infer about the kind of person Sophie's mother is?
- What factual information does the author give us about the war?

Chapter 3:

- How is the flu being treated? What can you infer about the knowledge of disease in 1918?

Chapter 4:

- Why do you think going to Aunt Heather's will be safer? Why didn't they go there sooner?

Chapter 5:

- What do you think the title will refer to?
- How do you think this story will end?

When the students have finished reading the diary, review the question about authenticity.


- What led you to think the diary was written by Sophie Graham? Why?
- What led you to think it was written by Susan Paris? Why?
- Why would an author make up a diary?

Explore the students' responses and discuss the purposes that authors have for writing. Encourage the students to examine why an author might use a diary style (for example, to convey feelings as well as factual information).

Revisiting the Text

The activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson, during later reading sessions as mini-lessons, or as independent activities.

S Determining the differences between fact and fiction

 The students can review the diary and identify details that are facts and those that are fiction. They may need to refer to the preface and pages 29 to 32 to check for facts. They can record their findings on the blackline master.

S Making connections

S Discussing how pandemics spread and affect populations

Read the information on pages 30 and 31 with the students. Discuss the similarities and differences between the SARS epidemic and the 1918 flu epidemic. The students can share information about other diseases that spread through a population, for example, the common cold, AIDS, and bird flu. They can also find out about the risks of another pandemic occurring and outline precautions to prevent infection. Alternatively, the students could use the text as a model and write a fictitious diary about a pandemic affecting their community.

The students can research and record information about the effects of a pandemic, such as SARS or bird flu.