

What to do today

IMPORTANT Parent or Carer – Read this page with your child and check that you are happy with what they have to do and any weblinks or use of internet.

1. Read about the Mass Observation Project

- Read [A Brief History of Mass Observation](#).
- How would you explain what the project does? When did it start?

2. Revise Formal Features

- Use the [Checklist](#) to revise formal features of writing.
- Which of these features can you find in the [Brief History of Mass Observation](#)? Highlight and annotate the text to show them.

3. Now for some writing

- Read [Mass Observation Directive](#).
- Plan what you will include in your diary on the [Planner](#).
- Now write a diary entry. Can you include some features of formal writing as you do?

[Well done. Share your writing with a grown-up. Can you show them the formal features that you have included in your writing?](#)

Try the Fun-Time Extras

- The actual Mass Observation website asks for contributions from children as well as grown-ups. Could you visit the website and see what you have to do to contribute?
- Each year on 12th May the Mass Observation Project asks people to keep a one-day diary. Why not join in? You can find out how to contribute [here](#).
- Can you ask others in your house to also write a diary? You could keep them all safe together and read them when times have changed again.

A Brief History of the Mass Observation Project



The Mass Observation Project began life in the late 1930s when a group of writers, artists and journalists decided it would be interesting to keep a record of how ordinary British people felt about events of the time and how they went about their lives.

The organisers asked volunteer writers to keep diaries of their day-to-day activities, which would then be sent into the Mass Observation offices to be kept in their archive. They hoped that in the future people would be able to read the diaries and find out how ordinary people lived their lives in the past.

Mass Observation also asked writers to respond to special questionnaires they sent out about a particular theme or topic. These questionnaires were called 'Directives'. For instance, you might have received a Directive asking you to write about where you went on holiday, or how you cooked things in your own home.

The Project was wound up in the 1960s but was then started again in 1981. It is still going strong today, with hundreds of volunteers sending in their diaries and their responses to Directives.

The Mass Observation website is at

<http://www.massobs.org.uk/about/mass-observation-project>

Checklist of formal features

Feature	Example	*
Standard English vocabulary not colloquialisms that we might use in speaking	acquaintances <i>rather than</i> mates collected the potatoes <i>rather than</i> grabbed the spuds	
Looks and sounds different to spoken English	We had a lengthy discussion about what to do. <i>rather than</i> We just couldn't agree our next move!	
No unnecessary asides or questions	The weather forecast was good (yeah, right!) . What's new? Nothing it seems. <i>becomes</i> Nothing new appeared to be happening.	
No contractions or abbreviations	should have <i>rather than</i> should've I would have <i>rather than</i> I'd have television <i>rather than</i> telly	
May use passive voice for verbs	The camera was placed ... The information was given by...	
Makes use of formal expressions	One may suppose that... It may be imagined that...	
Occasional use of subjunctive as a formal device	If I were to complain... We ask that dogs be tied up...	
Frequently written in the third person form and making use of generalisations	It is anticipated that many people will be interested... <i>rather than</i> I'm about to tell you why you guys will love it...	
Often uses the longer words rather than shorter informal vocabulary	More provisions were required ... <i>rather than</i> More food was needed It is necessary to inform everyone... <i>rather than</i> We need to tell you...	



Directive

We want to hear about the everyday lives of primary school children across the country.

No matter how insignificant or unimportant you feel, future generations will be intrigued to learn what kind of things you did at this time.

We need you to write a blog post about recent days. Because this is an historical document we ask that you write your blog post in formal language so that future readers will more easily understand what you have written.

Simply recount your activities on for some recent days. You don't need to spice things up or make your lives seem more dramatic...but obviously if dramatic things have happened to you, that's fine! Just describe what you have done, seen and thought in plenty of detail so that people reading your diaries in the future will be able to really bring our times to life in their imaginations.

Good luck and thank you!

The Mass Observation Project Team

Planner

Make notes about what you will include in your account. It can be the events that you will mention and what you have seen and thought.

What I have done:

What I have seen:

What I have thought:

Other ideas:



Diary page

Male: _____ Female: _____ (please tick)

Age: _____

Please use extra sheets if necessary
