

## Writing a Journal— the Old-Fashioned Way

*Can your students write diary entries and newspaper accounts the way they might have been written a century ago?*

**Objective:** Students practice reading, writing, and comprehension skills by trying to mimic the century-old language of Miss Columbia's original journal.

### Background

Styles of writing (and speech) change over time. People speak and write much differently today than they did 100 years ago. This may seem intuitively clear to adults, but may come as a surprise to some children — after all, it is the same language. Studying the differences and trying to mimic outmoded patterns can help students become more sensitive readers and writers.



### Materials

- ◆ Paper and pencils
- ◆ Copies of the “In Her Words, and Yours” student handout (see page 66)
- ◆ Other samples of different styles of writing (see Box below and Procedures on the following page)
- ◆ Student notebooks or journals (if they already keep one)

### Getting Started

Explain to students that people who speak, read, and write the same language (such as English) don't always speak and write it in exactly the same way. Have students ever seen a movie set in historical times and noticed differences in speech? Ask them to brainstorm different “forms” of English.

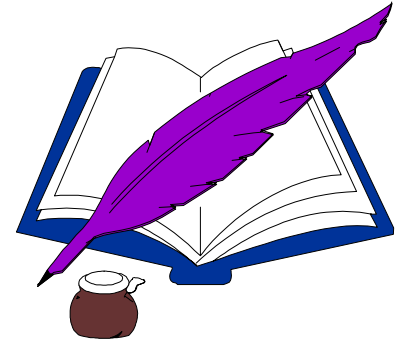
Some ideas:

- ◆ Spoken English (ask about the use of slang) vs. written English (how is it different?)
- ◆ English in England vs. English in the United States
- ◆ Highly academic English vs. “newspaper”-reading-level English
- ◆ English in old times vs. English in the present

Note: Students in grades 2 and 3 will find it a challenge to mimic old styles of speech in their writing, but they are not too young to appreciate and discuss differences in styles of speech.

**WRITING A JOURNAL—  
THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY****Procedures**

1. Ask students to write a diary entry describing a visit to Oregon. They should note the perfect fall weather and describe a visit to a school with beautiful views of surrounding mountains, and where they meet children from twenty classrooms. Encourage them to let their imaginations go.
2. Distribute the “In Her Words and Yours” (see page 66) handout and ask students to read Miss Columbia’s description of her trip to Oregon (as penned by one of her traveling companions). Can students pick out phrases and vocabulary words that seem different from those in more common use today? What else do they notice that’s different from their own diary entry?
3. If students seem interested, have them read sections from Miss Columbia’s journal, included in Part 2 in this Interdisciplinary Guide.
4. If you and/or your students have made any visits to a local museum or historical society and uncovered samples of old diary writings or newspaper accounts, have students read them aloud. Ask them to say in their own words the same meaning imparted by the old writings.
5. Ask students to try to write a short essay in the style used by Miss Columbia. They might write:
  - ◆ A journal entry about a favorite trip they took;
  - ◆ A newspaper account of a sports event, concert, or other news story;
  - ◆ A letter to a friend.



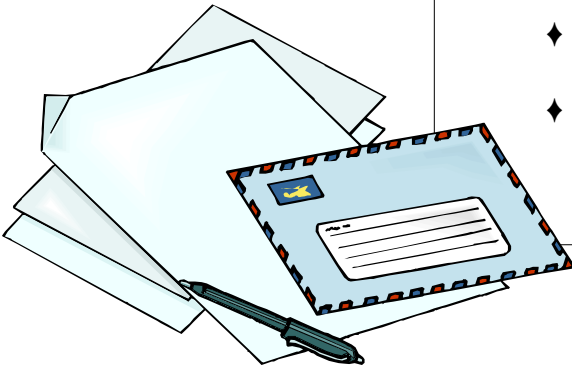
When they’re done, ask them to describe what makes this form of writing different from the way they would have written it, using their normal style.



## Getting Help from Local Sources

For this and many other activities that are part of *Around the World with Miss Columbia*, you can add a local dimension by tapping the resources of local libraries, museums, or historical societies. You may, for example, be able to find:

- ◆ Letters or diaries from people living in your town or city 100 years ago;
- ◆ Newspaper accounts of events back then;
- ◆ Artifacts, including old photographs, that can give students a better picture of what life was like;
- ◆ Municipal histories that describe what your town or city was like;
- ◆ People who have become experts in your town or city's history and who would be willing to be interviewed or to visit your school.



Your town or city hall will probably have a record of any official historical society, and your local librarian will also be a good resource for ideas on conducting local research. If your community isn't 100 years old, consider choosing the oldest nearby community or investigating whether there might have been a different community (i.e., a Native American one) on the site at any time before the present town or city began to take shape, and make that the focus of your research.

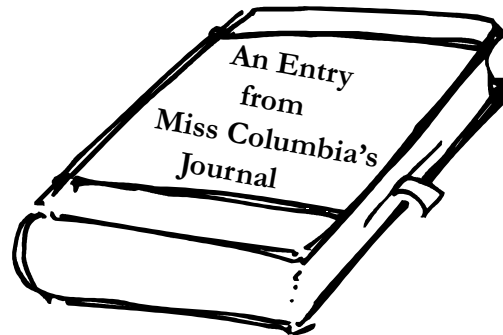
## Resource Tip

### Inventing New Words

Students in grades 4-6 may enjoy the book *Frindle* (Andrew Clements, Aladdin Paperbacks, 1996), which tells the story of a young boy who invents a new word for "pen" which — somehow — becomes popular across the nation. It's an entertaining story with good lessons about the ways the language we use can change — and sometimes for the strangest reasons!

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## In Her Words, and Yours



Portland, Oregon  
November 16, 1900

Much to my surprise on arriving in Oregon, I found no rain had fallen for several weeks and never before have I enjoyed such perfect Autumn weather. I was to have had a reception at the Free Kindergarten but owing to the illness of one of the teachers' mother, I missed that pleasure. Instead of this, the teachers of the Harrison St. School took charge of me for a week. I visited each of the twenty rooms and found the children delighted with my visit. They wondered how I could undertake such a journey, even with Uncle Sam's protection.

I was loathe to leave the School where so many beautiful views could be had of the city and surrounding hills. I particularly admired the views of Mt. Hood and Mt. St. Helen's, so the teachers presented me with pictures of them which I have pasted in the book for safe keeping. Why the West is called "wild and wooly" I cannot imagine, for I should certainly enjoy living here. I trust it will be my good fortune to return some day.

—Miss Columbia