

## Core Curriculum Guide: *Mira's Diary: Lost in Paris*

**Mentor Text for:** Plot development, Research, Activating Background Knowledge, Making Connections, Expository, Personal Narrative

### Research to Build and Present Knowledge:

**Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of a topic:**

**Read *Mira's Diary* as if it's a primary source, take notes, gather relevant information, categorize and list the information.**

#### Suggested topics:

Prejudice, Race/Religion, Injustice:

What is Mira's supposed to do to change the Dreyfus Affair? What are the issues involved? Why is Dreyfus accused? List the evidence against him. Write up an argument for the prosecution and one for the defense. If you were the judge in this case, how would you decide? What would be the basis for your decision?

Human rights, Conspiracy, Justice system

How did the military try to cover up their actions? What happened to military officers who thought Dreyfus was innocent? What role did the government play? Make your own Dreyfus game board, like the one Mira draws. Note on spaces significant moments in the Dreyfus Affair, make game cards of all the key players.

Moral Responsibility, Role of a Free Press, Journalism

Why did Zola get involved in the Dreyfus Affair? What was at stake for him? How did Zola use journalism and the power of words to fight for justice? Were words effective tools in this battle? Why or why not? Did Zola pay a price for his actions? Was he rewarded?

Make a list of pros and cons, reasons why Zola should speak out, why he shouldn't. What would you have done? Why?

What was Zola's argument for Dreyfus' innocence? Was Zola's article libel, as the government charged? List reasons why or why not.

Art & Culture

Mira is torn because she likes Degas as a person and admires him as an artist, but doesn't like his anti-Jewish attitudes. Should she have been his friend, knowing about his prejudices? Does his prejudice change how you look at his pictures?

Does it matter what artists believe or what their personal lives are like or does only their work matter? Should artists be good people? Do they have to act as role models? Write an argument for and against each position.

What is the role do artists have in society? What role did the painters Mira meets play? Choose Monet, Renoir, Degas, Oscar Wilde, Rodin, Seurat, Whistler, Mary Cassatt, or Zola, and write about the influence they had on their time. How did they make a difference through their art? Do a drawing imitating the style of your chosen artist.

Jewish History

The Dreyfus Affair convinced Theodor Herzl that the Jewish people needed their own homeland, that Jews could only be safe in their own country. Before seeing the mass anti-Dreyfus rallies in Paris,

Herzl thought assimilation was a good solution for Jews. Why did the Dreyfus Affair convince him that wasn't possible? How would you have responded as a Jew living in France at that time?

**Writing Prompts:** Research one of the artists mentioned in the book, write about his or her life, artwork, beliefs, etc. Write about a time in your life when you had to trust your instincts, when you weren't sure what to do but had to make a decision based on what felt right to you in the moment.

**Topics Covered:** History, Paris, Art (Photography, Sculpture, Drawing, Painting), Jewish ghetto, Notre Dame, Eiffel tower, Madeline books, Anti-semitism, Degas, Van Gogh, Mary Cassatt, Monet, Gauguin, Seurat, Renoir, Manet, Whistler, Toulouse-Lautrec, Rodin, Patriotism, Oscar Wilde, Emile Zola, Zionism, the Dreyfus Affair, Military, Conspiracy, Human Rights, Justice system, Journalism, Race/Religion

Read more: <http://www.teachmentortexts.com/2012/11/miras-diary-lost-in-paris.html#ixzz2YT81Tx4>