



Twentieth Century Girl: The Diary of Flora Bonnington, London, 1899-1900

Carol Drinkwater

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The diary of Flora Bonnington, London 1899-1900: 'A day slips away like sand in a sand glass and so we are caught up in this inevitable passage towards 1900. I bought a journal...it will record my journey into the new century. I shall call it 'Twentieth Century Girl' for that is what I intend to be'.

Twentieth Century Girl: The Diary of Flora Bonnington, London, 1899-1900 Details

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Molly says

This entire series is a wonderful way to learn history or teach it to adolescents. I find today's generations seem to recall more when they learn through other people (pop songs, celebrity gossip, etc.), so what better way to teach history than through someone else's perspective? Yes, "authentic" diaries would be "better", but would the language really hold the modern student's attention? Did the diary writer know what WOULD be important in the context of history? Probably not.

Joey Susan says

I thought this book would be more exciting than it actually was.

The story follows Flora a rich girl during the turn of the century, a fifteen year old girl who has dreams and passions of becoming a cinematograph capturing events in time to show to all that will view them, her father only sees it's a joke and a waste of her time refuses to give in and let her have what she wanted or to be who she wanted to be. With the suffragette movement starting to form she finds many women including lower class women have opinions and right too and finds what's she believes in, finding out that she is just as passionate as her mother was over these issues.

I liked Flora's character she was interesting and was very ahead of her time in what she dreamed to be and to do. The story itself felt like there wasn't really much of a story there honestly, i would have liked a little more excitement happening, some sort of event that could have changed her life in some way some obstacle she had to overcome, but alas we didn't get that in this book.

It wasn't a horrible read by any means but it also wasn't a spectacular or thrilling read either unfortunately.

S.J. says

This story is about a 14 year old girl, Flora Bonnington, who fell in love with motion pictures during the time of the suffragettes and Votes for Women. Flora keeps a diary of her life and explains a teen's point of view of early 1900. It was interesting because I realised how much more we have now, compared to what they had. For example: I did not know that in the early 1900s - If a woman were to lose her husband, she did not get rights to her own children, as she was deemed 'unfit' - because she was a woman. It was not until later that women were actually allowed to keep their children without a male guardian.

The story begins with Flora in December 1899, and takes us through the months to the end of 1900. Flora Bonnington is part of a wealthy family and initially she does not seem to grasp the reality that women in the UK at that time, were afforded very little indeed. Men had all the power and considered woman to have little if no intelligence. The thought of a female going to University or even working was unheard of. The story flows well, although I did find it a little slow at times.

The main characters are Flora, her elder sister Henrietta (or Henry), their (stuffy) father, Thomas and their grandmother, Violet. Flora is full of wonderment and the need to know what's new and how everything

works. Henrietta is very happy with not knowing anything and simply playing the dutiful daughter/wife. She does not seem to care about women's rights.

There were references to 'coloureds' being in London and the obvious ignorance of the more wealthy area of the UK. The Boer War was also mentioned and the London Dock strikes.

I feel that this book does hold some very good and very interesting historical facts both in the story and in the historical timeline at the end of the book. This is a scholastic book and so is aimed at those in secondary school. I would however, suggest that more able primary school children may enjoy this book as well. It is also, suitable for adults and perhaps those learning to speak English.

Sally says

A nice, quick read on the tram to and from the city today. I really enjoyed this one, it's one of my favourites of the series. Set partly in 1899 and mostly in 1900, Flora is a fifteen-year-old "Twentieth Century Girl", who is more interested in women's rights and the art of cinematography than in coming out to society and finding a nice beau, like her older sister. I really enjoyed the moving pictures storyline, that was a fascinating touch!

Carolynne says

Motherless Flora aches to become a cinematographer, after having seen just one brief flickering film with her governess. Of course, in 1900 London this is frowned upon by her stiff, traditional father and regarded with horror by her patronizing older sister Henrietta (whom Flora calls "Henry" purely to irritate her). But Flora persists, learning as much as she can about the new technology, supported by her grandmother, a suffragette. Fans of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* will enjoy the connections (George Melies, for one). However as a story this book is only mildly interesting, and oddly riddled with grammatical errors. An example: "Grandmama has given me a most beautiful leatherbound book of plays by a Russian playwright who I do not know . . ." Of course it is in Flora's voice, but elsewhere her language is almost dignified. For instance, in a conversation with the explorer Mary Kingsley, she tells her about the invention of moving pictures: "The idea was that by looking at the photographs displayed together in quick succession, the differing styles of movement in animals could be more easily understood." To me that sounds rather more adult than adolescent.

I am put off by the cover illustration with no face, as the current editions of the "My Story" series all feature. There is a historical note at the end, but no pictures. In this respect the "Dear America" series is more useful for the classroom.

Freya says

it was cool
