World War II through the eyes of Emilia and Manya

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Project Reflection

When I started this project, I thought that it would be somewhat hard to find the information first of all, but then I also thought that it would be difficult to create someone's life. I don't remember where I got the idea to do this as a project, but I remember wanting to do a project about World War II. The more I thought about this project though, the more I liked the idea. It seemed to get more and more interesting as I added new ideas to it too.

Gathering the information was also easier than I thought it would be. I knew that there would be books about the fighting and related topics, but the information that I thought would be hard to find was about the Jewish people. I was wrong however. There was just as much information about both subjects.

Also, when I first started writing Emilia and Manya's Diaries, I found it to be challenging, but not difficult. I realized that if I wouldn't have had the information that I gathered it would have been very difficult to write these diaries, but having the information was what mattered. I did run into problems when I was writing, but the problems weren't too serious. It was usually just a problem of not knowing exactly what to write next.

The parts that I liked the most about this project were when I was able to just write. Not having to worry about getting all of the words spelled correctly, not having to have perfect grammar, and just being able to write. I never thought about all this before I had Dee proofread the diaries. I thought that she would correct things, but when I got them back and they had no marks on them I thought about it and realized that they didn't have to be perfect. They could have blemishes in them because it was to look like a person wrote them. It was to be an account of their life and it didn't matter if they could spell or have perfect grammar.

I also liked this project because I learned much more than I expected to. When I was gathering the information, reading the text went over my head most of the time, but as soon as I was able to write the information into the lives of people, I learned. I think I learned it so much better this way because I had to relate it to a person's life. It made me look at it like it could have been my life, or even someone I know. I feel that it was also good for me to cover both areas of this project that I did. I got to look at both areas concerning this time in world history. Some people might only learn about the war and the fighting, whereas others would only look at the Holocaust. I am very glad that I covered both though because I feel it gives me a more complete knowledge of World War II.

Emilia Coen

When I started researching for Emilia's "life", I found information that I could use, and some that I could not. When I looked at the information that was found, I would try to see if I could use it to create someone's life from it. In this case it was Emilia's life.

At first I didn't have a name for her, I just knew that she was going to be a Jewish mother and was going to be living through a rough time in world history. It wasn't until after I was done collecting information that I found a name for her. As I was reading a story about someone who had actually survived from World War 2, they mentioned someone named Emilia. I liked the name, but most of all I liked the way they spelled it. So that was to be her name. Now I just needed to come up with names for her family members. The other names I found the same way as Emilia's. This was helpful because I wanted to use names that were common in that time, not just names that you hear everyday now. I decided that she was going to be married to Stuart, and they had three children: Isak - 19, Felicia - 17, and Alberto - 7. This made up the Coen family and now I could start writing Emilia's diary.

I knew from research, some dates of events that happened during World War 2 so that's what I used as a basis for the first entry in her diary. After that, the rest of the dates I just made up to fill space between the dates I knew. I thought at first that it would be really hard to create a life for someone, but I found out that after I started writing, it was really easy. I think that it would have been harder for me to write the diaries if I didn't have the information to base them off of.

It was really interesting to learn all of this information too, but it was even more interesting for me to use it in someone's life. This made it easier for me to learn the information too because I had to learn it as the person experiencing it. This was cool because I had known some of the information before, but with this way of looking at it, I saw it totally different.

Manya Riebel

Manya was the mother I choose to have as a mother living right in the middle of the German world. She was going to love her country, but not support what was taking place during World War 2. This was my original thought, but then when I was finding information, I thought I might have to change the idea. I was wrong. I was able to keep this thought the same while creating a life for her and her family.

Manya's family consists of her sons Erich – 18, Levi - 12, Leo – 8, and daughter Jennine – 5. Her husband died some time before I started the entries in her diary. As with Emilia and her family's names, I didn't have names for the Riebel family when I first started either. I found the names the same way too.

After I had the names picked out for her family, I could use the information I had gathered to write her diary. I thought it would be just this easy as it was with Emilia's diary, but I found out differently. I started with a date and something to write about when I wrote Emilia's diary, but with Manya's, I had to just start with something. I had to do this because with the information I had I needed to create her sons life first. It was harder to do this, and I found out through writing this diary that I ran into this problem many more times. I had to create more of a background for Erich than I had to for Isak. This made the writing a little more difficult, but once I got started on it, the words just seemed to come out.

I think that it was good for me to write a diary like this too because I had never really learned anything about the fighting of World War II. I learned what it might have been like to be someone who was fighting. I thought that it was really cool to learn this, but it was also hard to believe. The numbers of people who were killed, the amount of fighting that went on, the thoughts behind what Adolf Hitler thought was a "perfect" human race, and just other things that I never knew before. I really enjoyed writing these diaries too.

Performance Rubric

Documentation of Time and Learning: For this project I was proud of myself because I have kept my journals very well. From last year I have gotten better at keeping them together. This was really good for this project because it would have been really bad not to have kept journals.

Tasks: Also in this area I was proud of myself because in most other projects that I have done I have never made a task list to follow. On this project I made a task list and also put dates to have them completed by.

Project Assessment: In this area I usually do well because I always review a project by writing this form of performance rubric. It really helps me see my project and what was good and what was bad.

Project Quality: I feel that this project is one of my best projects. The more and more that I thought about the idea I had for it, the more I liked it. It was something that I could learn the history of World War II with, but it also gave me an insight into someone's life even though I created the life.

Resources: This is one area I could have done better in. I didn't use as many, or the exact resources I wanted to, but it still turned out well. I didn't use a live person, which would have been really cool, but I was glad that I had about 4 books that I used more than anything.

Ownership: This is also the best project of mine in this area. I don't really know where I came up with the idea to do this, but it came from somewhere in my head! I knew last year that I wanted to do a project on World War II, but I didn't want to just want to do what everyone does. I wanted mine to be interesting to others, and most of all to me. I learn better when things are interesting to me, and I knew that if I couldn't make history interesting to learn, then I would forget most everything. But, I did a good job to make it interesting enough for me to learn.

Task Completion: This was a great area in my project because I made a task list and I put deadlines on them, but best of all I completed the tasks by the set time.

Comprehension: I think that this area was covered as much as possible because when I needed more information, which was the case very often, I had to go looking for it. Otherwise my project would have just stopped. I had times when I couldn't find much of anything helpful, but

then at other times one thing would be more helpful than I thought it would be.

Competency: Again, this was the main thing that happened for this project because I couldn't write anything new until I had new information to base it off of.

Context: I guess the information that I had was only used once when I wrote, but it was used in more ways than one as I learned the information.

Implementer & Performer: I think that I am able to apply constructive criticism to my projects, and so far I haven't had too much on this project, but if I do, it'll be okay.

Problem Framer/Solver: Well, I guess you could say that I solved real life problems, but it was only when I created the lives for Emilia and Manya. I created the problem, but then I fixed it too.

Innovator & Designer: This was a project that I totally created and designed, so this area was very high on the performance rubric.

Producer & Contributor: This wasn't perfect, nor will much of anything in life be, but I was very proud of the end result of this project.

Proposal Form Questions

These are the questions that I put on my proposal form for this project. I decided when I wrote the form I was going to go back at the end of the project and answer the questions. I wanted to do this because usually the questions don't mean anything towards the project. They are just something you have to fill out to propose anything. I wanted to make them something more.

Will this project give me a better understanding about WW II?
I think that this project did just that. I have learned some stiff about WW II in the past, but none of it had sunk in and I never really remembered any of it. This project, however, made me learn the information in a different way and I do remember things. I learned tons because I had to so I could make this project what I wanted it to be.

Will making the diaries for people give me a better understanding of what happened than if I would just write a report?
Once again, this way to present what I learned was very helpful. I had to know what I was talking about when I wrote the peoples diaries rather than just being able to read from a book and the write a report. I'm glad that I did do this project this way because I learned much more than I thought I would.

What will I think about the war once I complete this project?
Well, I always thought that this war was terrible, as any war is, but knowing the details of what happened and all made me think twice about this war. It was still not a good thing, but now I see two points, instead of only one. Before I always just thought that it was the Germans who were bad because they started this whole thing and they killed so many people, but even though that is true, the Germans suffered too. I learned that in this project. They lost many people too. They had families that didn't want this to happen and they lost many people. The Jewish suffered because they were almost wiped out, but the Germans lost lots too. I'm glad that I know this all now too because I don't feel as judgmental towards people in this war anymore. I feel that I can look at those who were at fault and know that, but also know they got hurt too.

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World History, Comprehensive Volume, Second Edition
        William J. Duiker and Jackson J. Spielvogel
*I used chapter 26 – The Crisis Deepens: World War II

Survival in Auschwitz, The Nazi Assault on Humanity
        Primo Levi

A Short History of WWII
        James L. Stokesbury