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Mini Project 4 Write-Up:
Excerpts from Amelia Bancroft's Diary

September 18, 1850

Dear Diary,

For my 10th birthday, Mother and Father gave me this journal as a gift. I hope to be a teacher one day. They know this and told me I could use this journal to practice my penmanship! Already, my teachers tell me I have the best penmanship in the class, but I really enjoy practicing it!

Let me tell you a little about myself. I was born in Massachusetts, where both Mother and Father are from. Father has a job as a banker here in Granville. I go to school here now. I have made a few friends, but mostly I have fallen in love with learning! My teacher this year is Miss Shepardson. Every week, she lends me a new book to read. I told her about how I want to be a teacher when I grow up. She told me I can do it as long as I keep up my good grades!

Mother and Father are happy that I have ambition, but Father is less pleased with my hope to become a teacher. Traditionally, teachers cannot marry. Father is worried, then, that I will have no one to care for me.

I asked mother why Father feels this way. I figure I will be making good money teaching . . . but Mother told me Father just doesn't want to worry about caring for me, especially after he is too old to take care of me. She told me I would understand one day.

Until then, I will keep working hard at school. It is what I enjoy!

Sincerely,
Amelia B.

July 21, 1860

Dear Diary,

This summer should be a busy one. I am studying hard in preparation for the beginning of the school year in September . . . I'm finally going to teach!

This is a peculiar time in my life, though. I think I am starting to understand what Mother told me so many years ago . . .

All of the other ladies I grew up and went to school with are set to marry before fall. It seems marriage is all they ever hoped for. I am quite excited for them, yes. My good friend, Jane is engaged to a fine man and she seems truly happy. It is important to her and her family that there is someone to that can take care of and provide for her.

However, it is not so easy for every young woman. There is the stress of finding a decent husband and, really, the only alternative for women my age is teaching. I am therefore not alone in my studies this summer. I am very excited for this experience, but there are a few you women who are less than thrilled. Eleanor is especially unhappy about becoming a teacher. I have worked hard to convince her of the significance of this job, though!

I must admit that Eleanor's ambivalence has caused me to ponder my choice. I have always wanted to become a teacher, but lately I have noticed so much worry about finding a husband. It makes me wonder if I will be missing something. Nevertheless, I hope to make the best of my choice! And I know I can really be a great teacher.

I must return to my studies. There is more reading than I could ever have imagined as an ambitious ten-year-old!

Sincerely,
Amelia B.

September 12, 1870

Dear Diary,

Mother has slowed down recently. As I am busy with my work at school, I have little time to help her around the house. Father noticed this and decided to hire a house servant.

Ellen Jones has been a wonder! She helps with the cooking and cleaning and takes on all of the extra chores that I cannot find time to do when grading papers. I am so grateful that Father has the means to afford her services. Had Ellen not come into our lives, I'm afraid it would have been necessary to retire from teaching to work at home. So blessed I am to be able to do the work I enjoy.

Ellen is from Wales, so she speaks with a funny accent! But she has provided nice comradeship for me. Although she is a little older than I (by about ten years), she and I have found a connection. Unmarried herself, she was sent to America to find good work. She is a very smart woman, though. We find great joy in exchanging stories about our experiences growing up in the different countries and respective cultures. I have even shared some of her great stories with my students!

The students seem to enjoy these contributions. I find it important that they learn about a variety of things and that they have an education that expands their horizons beyond the small village of Granville.

I am truly happy as a teacher. Despite my episode of ambivalence at the beginning of my career, I have found true happiness in this choice. I work with so many talented young children. In the role as their teacher, I really believe I am helping them in their development as citizens. The women I grew up with, who are married, send some of their children to my school. These women seem happy enough in their roles as mothers and wives, but I am lucky play my own motherly role for children in their school-lives.

Sincerely,
Amelia B.

February 23, 1880

Dear Diary,

Over the past few years, I have found my life to be rather steady and uneventful. Things at the school continue to go well as long as I keep up my work. Still, my love for teaching and working with children has not dulled.

Since Mother's death in 1874, I find I have less of a place at home, though. Naturally, Father remarried. I find Cynthia agreeable and I get along well enough with her daughter, Lillie. Both of them are a great help around the house, and so Father decided that we were no longer in need of Ellen's services.

It was sad to see Ellen leave. She is still working in Granville, as a laundress for a very prominent family. During Mother's illness, I found so much solace and comfort in her friendship, and so I find that I am especially lonely at home. I do make an effort to visit with Ellen at least once a week. However, sometimes our busy schedules simply do not allow this.

Father's sister, My Aunt Rosie McGervin was recently widowed as well. Having no family left in Massachusetts, she and her daughter, Rozilla, came to live with us. Aunt Rosie is a wonderful cook and provides plenty of help around the house, as well. I therefore have even less responsibility here. This allows me to put a lot of effort into my work, but forces me to feel more and more disconnected in my home. And as Rozilla is busy with her studies, I feel in need of some comradeship.

Yet, I find solace in the smiles that greet me each morning at the school. I find it has become more like home than anything else for me.

Sincerely,
Amelia B.

May 2, 1900

Dear Diary,

I am at the ripe age of 60 years. No longer young enough to work at the school, I spend my days reading for enjoyment and keeping house for myself. It is a simple, but pleasant life. I am so lucky to live it with the comfort that I do. In his will, Father left me with plenty to make ends meet. I am alone and take care of myself, after all! What would Mother think?

A silly thought to ponder.

Sincerely and Loyally,
Amelia B.

November 18, 1930

Dear Diary,

I regret writing so sparingly in these past few years. I have weakened with age.

Anna keeps me strong, though. She has lived with me for a few years now, working as my helper. Not only does she keep me healthy and fed, she keeps house quite well. She has many years of experience from her late marriage.

Ms. Pond is an exceptional friend as well. Although we chose different life paths (with she as a wife and mother and I as an unmarried teacher), in our conversations, we find plenty of similarities in one another.

Our situation is very unique, two single women under the same roof. After years of living comfortably on my own, it is not remarkably different for me. However, Anna feels the opposite. She is happy and comfortable in our situation now, but is astounded by how significantly her current lifestyle differs from her past.

Until her husband passed, Anna had always lived under a man's roof. In fact, she would probably be living with a male relative now if there were any left in Granville. Her only choice, though, was to find a job in service. This is the case for almost all women. Anna shared with me that the same happened when her sister was widowed. While still married, Anna opened her home to her mourning sister. Elizabeth really had no male relatives to care for her, and so lived with Anna and her husband for quite some time, helping with the housework. This is exactly what happened when my Aunt Rosie lived with my father and I so many years ago . . .

And so after all of these years, I see the truth in my mothers and fathers' worries. Though I had a job of my own, as an unmarried woman, I lived with my father until his

dying day. After his death, I found a way to support myself, but living alone was very unique.

My life has run a smooth course, but an extraordinary one. Choosing to be a teacher, I never had to worry too much about housekeeping. I must say I owe a lot of this to the comfort that my father's occupation provided. What if I had to retire from the school when my mother passed? Where would I have been at Anna's age?

Anna and I also discuss the newest generation of young women. We wonder if their lives will be much different? I'm sure they will. These days, more and more schools are open to young girls. And especially since the war, grown women have more choice in the working world. One can be married and teach! And if woman must work, she is not restricted to teaching! How different my life may have been . . . A wondrous thought to ponder.

Sincerely and always yours,

Amelia B.