

READING UNIT 8

The world's biggest blog

One Day in History, called by some 'the world's biggest blog', was an ambitious project designed for people of all ages in the UK to leave a historical record of a single day in their lives. Several British heritage organisations, including the National Trust, created an official website, 'History Matters', onto which some 46,000 people uploaded entries of between 100 and 650 words. The submissions are now being held at the UK Web Archive at the British Library, and at the University of Sussex.

There have been some criticisms of the project. Blogs were intended to be a snapshot of life in the early 21st century. Critics of the project claimed that people's lives were simply mundane, and that they would have no impact on others. Who cares what some stranger had for supper or what his wife did with the kids all day? As newspaper journalist Robert Booth pointed out with disdain after reading people's entries, the 'monotony of most of [the British public's] lives was all too painfully obvious.' Perhaps some of the contributors were of the same mind, if the following blog entry is to be taken into consideration.

Dave, London

Got up, ate breakfast, set off to work, got stuck in traffic, got to work, worked, ate lunch, worked again, set off to go home, got stuck in traffic, got home, ate dinner, watched TV. Done.

Supporters, however, argued that the project was an excellent idea and that part of its beauty was not being clear about exactly how or why it would be used by future generations. David Cannadine, from the Institute of Historical Research, was quoted as saying, 'The wonderful thing about these records is we don't know yet what it is about them that will be interesting in the future.' What would capture people's imagination about the following extract, for example, the climate, the technology in use, the insight into an individual's thought processes, the use of language ... ?



Sara, Oxfordshire

I woke up on a beautiful autumnal morning, crisp and clear, in a village a few miles outside Oxford. With a classical music station playing on the radio quietly in the background, I checked my emails – and that's when I heard the story on the news about *One Day in History*. 'What a wonderful idea,' I thought 'What a superb way to get not only a sense of people's lives and minds, but also a snapshot of culture and history.'

The number of contributors argued strongly in favour of the project. Clearly, people were interested in recording something of their own lives. By the end of the afternoon of the first day of the project, already more than 5000 contributions had been received from people of all ages, from nine to ninety-odd.

Ivy, Carmarthenshire

I am unable to type this out myself, so I'm dictating my thoughts to a kind neighbour of mine. Why can't you type? you may ask. Well, I could probably knock a few words out on an old-fashioned contraption known as a typewriter but I'm afraid, at the age of 93, I haven't quite mastered the new-fangled contraptions called computers. Anyway, enough of that. I have lived many years, and seen many people come and go, but I never fail to wake each day with a sense of joy, of wonderment of being alive on this fragile place called Earth.

We will probably never know the full impact of *One Day in History*. Generations of people to come will be the judge of this project's legacy as a historical record of life in the early 21st century. One thing is for certain, however: the tens of thousands of contributors surely felt that they left a tiny imprint on time itself, a mark to say something as simple as 'I was here.'

1. Read the text quickly. Are the sentences true or false?

- 1 *One Day in History* is a UK-based history project. TRUE/FALSE
- 2 It involves young and old people writing blogs. TRUE/FALSE
- 3 People blog about several days in their lives. TRUE/FALSE
- 4 The project has been supported by everyone who knows it. TRUE/FALSE
- 5 Supporters of the project know how it will be used in the future. TRUE/FALSE

2. Read the article again. Choose the correct names to complete the sentences.

- 1 *Dave / Sara / Ivy* likes the project because it teaches us about other people.
- 2 *Dave / Sara / Ivy* likes the project, but is uncomfortable using computers.
- 3 *Dave / Sara / Ivy* thinks daily life is mundane and boring.

3. Choose the option that means the same as each extract.

- 1 Who cares what some stranger had for supper or what his wife did with the kids all day? As newspaper journalist Robert Booth pointed out with disdain after reading people's entries, the 'monotony of most of [the British public's] lives was all too painfully obvious.'
A Some people care about the details of what people do all day. After reading some of the blog entries, a newspaper journalist, who enjoyed reading the blogs, remarked that most people's lives are boring but interesting.
B It is unlikely that people care what people eat or do during the day. A newspaper journalist who dislikes the project has commented that most people's lives are awfully boring.
- 2 Supporters, however, argued that the project was an excellent idea and that part of its beauty was not being clear about exactly how or why it would be used by future generations.
A However, people who support the project believe it is a good idea, and that not knowing precisely how it will be used in future is one of the project's interesting points.
B However, people who support the project believe it was a great idea, partly because we know how people in the future will use it.
- 3 Generations of people to come will be the judge of this project's legacy as a historical record of life in the early 21st century. One thing is for certain, however: the tens of thousands of contributors surely felt that they left a tiny imprint on time itself, a mark to say something as simple as 'I was here.'
A In the future, people will decide whether this record of early 21st century life has achieved its desired goal. But it is certain that the large numbers of people who contributed only said the words 'I was here'...
B In the future, people will decide whether this record of early 21st century life has been a success. But it is certain that the large numbers of people who contributed have each made a small mark on history.