



Suffragette: The Diary of Dollie Baxter, London, 1909-1913

Carol Drinkwater

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18th June, 1910

We marched from the Embankment to the Albert Hall. It was a glorious day. The sun shone warmly. Everyone was in good spirits. There were aristocrats, artists, even my mother looked happy. She who has been so opposed to my work with the WSPU. More than 10,000 people had rallied and there were dozens of bands playing. It was quite incredible. We waved banners, carried flowers, sang along with the tunes. Hundreds who have been imprisoned for our Cause marched together in a powerful band. It was all very rousing of spirit. I felt proud to be a woman, proud to be alive, proud to be a part of a movement that is fighting to make a difference.

Suffragette: The Diary of Dollie Baxter, London, 1909-1913 Details

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From Reader Review Suffragette: The Diary of Dollie Baxter, London, 1909-1913 for online ebook

Ruth says

"So you dream of being a suffragist, Dollie?"

"No, I intend to be a suffragette." . . .

"We of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the NUWSS, are suffragists, Dollie, not suffragettes. We advocate legal means of campaigning such as parliamentary lobbying, whereas the more militant activists, those in the WSPU, . . . are the women the Daily Mail dubbed "suffragettes."

Stef Rozitis says

I read this some years ago. I remember being very moved by it and feeling it was a part of history that wasn't brought to the attention of children enough. I think I convinced one of my sons to read it too because at the time he was reading anything and everything historical.

I thought this book was clear, positive and informative about history and the fact women had to work very hard to get the vote.

K.J. Chapman says

This review is featured on my blog: [Writerly Bookish Stuff](#).

Although Dollie and her diary are fictional, Drinkwater uses factual people and events of the Suffragette movement in London. If it was a historical fiction story without the diary layout, I would have preferred it more. I'm not a huge lover of diary narratives, and prefer them to be real memoirs, not fictional. That being said, it is an absorbing way to learn about the Suffragette movement, especially for the young adult audience it is targeted at.

I already know quite a lot about the events in this book and believe Drinkwater has integrated them with Dollie's life and experiences masterfully. As a child, Dollie, by sheer good fortune, is plucked from a life of poverty and taken in by Lady Violet. Her background story makes her need to join the WSPU all that more believable. At just fourteen, she joins the WSPU, and her reactions and frustrations to certain events, unpassed bills, and treatment of the political prisoners are replicated in the reader.

In summary, an informative read to educate young adult readers in the Suffragette movement in London.

Meghan says

I did not like Dollie and thought she was foolish and did not have her priorities right. Also the whole back story did not seem very likely.

Lucy says

I never read this book in the set of 'My Story' that I received as a child. I didn't understand what it was about and I thought the Tudor period to be much more interesting. (I was OBSESSED over the Tudor period.) Recently, however, I've been looking for something light and enjoyable, and something I could easily read in one sitting. I turned to 'My Story', which were the only books I really read as a child, along with the Harry Potter books. So, I picked up 'Suffragette', and I still had a limited idea of what Suffragettes were about. I know they campaigned for Rights for Women, but that was about it. 'Suffragette' was very informative, and very enjoyable. I'm pleased to have learnt things that I didn't know before. I thought I wouldn't enjoy it as much as 'Anne Boleyn and me', because I didn't have memories of loving 'Suffragette' as a child, but I found it very enjoyable and the main character, Dollie didn't get on my nerves at all. I would highly recommend 'My Story' to any children with and interest in history, or if you are a teenager/adult and you want to know some basic things that happened in a certain period.

Marta says

I love the topic but the book is simply boring and monotonous and reading it was a very tedious experience. So sad, because I'd love to read something good about the suffragette movement and the fight for women's rights.

Cat Tobin says

An accessible telling of the story of the suffragette movement in London from 1909-1913, ideal for younger readers as a taster of the issues and history involved.

Joey says

First off I am not going to lie, I honestly didn't like this book at all, the author clearly knows how to write and to tell a story but for me this was just not something I enjoyed reading.

I didn't like Dollie Baxter the protagonist in the story one little bit. I felt she was a horrible person, ungrateful, very dull and unfeeling. She wasn't very rational and didn't consider anyone else's point of view for anything at all, she was highly selfish and that's what initially threw me off enjoying this book at all.

The story was set around a poor girl who had been taken in by a rich old lady, when she died her caring and sweet granddaughter continued her care and to help pursue the education her grandmother wanted for her. But as the suffragette movement continued used to rise she is drawn into their world, enrolling in the bad and illegal behaviours of the others within the group. She wound herself imprisoned for her illegal acts and soon sees even high actions taken with highly unethical and illegal actions taken.

I went into this book excited, it had been one I wanted to read for a while now, but alas I just couldn't bring myself to enjoy what I was reading at all. There were minor parts that weren't so bad and that I enjoyed a bit, but generally this book was certainly not one for me.

Laura says

"We act with courage, proud to be women. And so our fight goes on."

As I turned 18 in October last year, a few weeks ago i participated in my first election vote. I found myself wanting to learn more about the votes for women and suffragettes so i picked up this book. I learnt a lot that I didn't know to do with NUWSS and WSPU in addition to the politics and the conditions people were living in at the time.

It was a nice short book which I would recommend to anyone interesting in learning a bit more on how these women dedicated their lives so that we could vote today.

Sara says

Good book! I learnt a lot about the Suffragettes and the fight for women's rights. In 1909 14 year old Dollie Baxter's guardian Lady Violet Campbell dies and in her will names her granddaughter Lady Flora as Dollie's new guardian. Dollie is from a working class family who's father died when she was 10. She has 4 brothers who are all older than her. Her mother gives her up in a hope of a better life for her. Her mother hates women like Flora but softens up towards the end of the book about them and the rights of women. Flora like her grandmother is a member of the NUWSS the suffrage group known as Suffragists. Dollie longs to join WSPU the militant suffrage group known as Suffragettes. Against Flora's wishes she joins Emmeline Pankhurst and her fellow Suffragettes in the fight to give women the right to vote. They break windows, throw rocks at people, burn buildings etc. Most of them including Dollie get arrested and thrown into prison. They go on hunger strike and experience the horrible thing of force feeding. However the Suffragettes never give up until the rights of women are won. Dollie is a smart girl who fights for what she believes in. She would do anything for those she cares about. She develops a strong bond with Flora like a sister bond. Her diary goes on for 4 years from 1909-1913 and she mentions at the end of the book she intends to get into University and after that become a journalist and report what happened when she was a suffragette. Some of her last words are "We act with courage, proud to be women. And so our fight goes on." They really were fierce and brave women especially Emily Wilding Davison who threw herself under a horse for the cause and died from serious injuries in hospital 4 days later becoming a famous martyr. This line really made me sad its when Dollie visits her home in the East End aka the poor section she sees children digging through garbage bins hoping to find food " They stared hard and mistrustfully at my passing silhouette or chased after me gazing in awe, holding out their filthy palms, eyes peering out of underfed faces, in the hope of a coin." It's really sad to how poor people were then.

Hannah says

This is the first book in the 'My Story' series that I have read and based on this book, it will not be the last in the series I will read!

I feel like I have learned more about suffragettes (and suffragists) and their methods, values and ideas. I don't

think that Dollie's story isn't entirely believable but hey... It's fiction.

Freya says

It was alright

Charlotte Clarke says

This is a fictional book, but based on the realities of the English Suffragette movement of the early 20th Century. Presented in diary format, it does a fantastic job of weaving a huge amount of factual and anecdotal information into an engaging and dramatic text.

Dollie is about 14 when the book begins, which is when she first becomes interested in women's suffrage. We follow her as she goes to meetings, plans protests and attends marches in the suffrage cause. She reflects on contemporary events and debates as they happen, from the division between Suffragists and Suffragettes (something I hadn't heard of before reading the book) to the reactions given by the men in Parliament and other places of power in reaction to this latest campaign for the rights of women. The diary format allows the author, through the character, to really dissect and analyse the meanings and implications of events within the period, and is therefore able to give an interpretation accessible and appropriate to the young reader. It's deliberately written to help children to understand the contemporary context of the women's Suffrage movement. There's a real element of excitement in the story; it takes place at the cusp of a great social change, and you can feel that resonating in Dollie's diary entries and the excited way she details the plans of the movement's latest campaign. The book spans four years, during which time Dollie is arrested, and even spends time in prison. Here is one word of warning: Dollie describes force-feeding, which was an extremely common punishment used on incarcerated female hunger strikers at the time. It's a brutal, unpleasant and invasive process and is described as such; this could be upsetting for younger or sensitive readers, so if you're reading the book to or with a class, this should be borne in mind.

This book has obvious cross-curricular links to History, but could also be used in a citizenship or PSHCE context, when discussing issues around the right to vote, or women's rights/gender equality generally. It would also be an ideal take-home reading book for a confident and mature Key Stage 2 reader.

Sarah says

It's 1909 London.

Dollie is a young 14 year old girl who is being put through school by the generosity of Lady Violet Campbell.

Dollie initially becomes interested in the WSPU via an article in the paper written by Emmeline Pethwick-Lawrence, the treasurer and a friend of Emmeline Pankhurst - the leading figure in the fight for women's votes. I love the fact that even when you google the names of these women their personalities are so strong it comes through in their pictures! And even our own Kiwi Legend Katherine Mansfield gets a mention in the early part of the book :) Dollie recounts a conversation with Katherine about the fact that women in New Zealand already had the vote and makes mention of Melbourne "finally conceding and becoming the last state of Australia to follow suit"

In May Dollie officially joins the Suffragette movement. By August it was illegal for women to attend public gatherings, especially those organised by or involving the Liberal party as the govt was becoming embarrassed by the heckling from the women.

In March 1913 Dollie is arrested for the first time. 14 days later (19th March 1913) she gives a horrific account of being force fed. The action of the times was barbaric and was an act of violence against the women rather than an act of saving their lives. Worse, the tubes used were never sterilized before moving on to the next "patient" Dollie is imprisoned for 2 months before being released.

Dollie's diary ends on 21 June 1913 with the funeral of the first martyr of the movement, Emily Wilding Davison who was killed after a collision with the Kings horse at the 4th June Epsom derby

(<http://www.theguardian.com/society/20...>) Amazingly it wasn't until 1918 that women over 30 got to vote and it wouldn't be until 1928 (35 years after NZ gave it's women the right to vote) that all women in England were free to vote.

Through out the book there are stories of women being hauled off to jail, going on hunger strikes, being force fed, and having food thrown at the all for fighting for their rights. It amazed me that Dollie was only 14/15 at the time - and I seriously couldn't imagine a 14/15 year old girl of today going through the same fight for their rights. Kind of sad really.

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.
