



Discussion ideas for On the Road to VE Day – The Final Six Months Diaries

After reading the two diaries, what do you really know about the two main characters?

Put together a biography for each of them. Record what you know for a fact.

Throughout the diaries, you will find information that gives you some understanding of each character without truly knowing the facts in all detail.

The question that never gets answered is “Who is Ethel?” What do you know about her? With this in mind, who could she be? Which details lead you to that conclusion?

The two diaries vary in style; Isabella always starts with “Dear Diary” while George addresses his wife directly or uses no salutation. Why do you think this might be?

Why does George’s style change occasionally?

Once you answered the questions or at least gave them some thought, here is what we know:

Isabella – we know that her birthday is 18 March. Since she turns 27 in 1945, she was born in 1918. She is married to George and has been for over four years (late summer of 1940 – 6 December 1944). She has a three year old son named Peter whose birthday falls outside of the six months of the diary. While she is living in Toronto, she is not from there (22 April 1945). She has lived in Toronto most likely since the beginning of 1939 but we have no knowledge as to why or where she came from. She works at Tip Top Tailors (a company that made uniforms during the war and was located at 637 Lakeshore Blvd West in Toronto), though in what capacity we do not know. We can surmise that she lives on the west side of Toronto based on some references (Queen Street Streetcar, Trinity Park) and that she lives in a house (front porch 25 December 1944, our garden 8 March 1945).

George – he is a prisoner of war (POW) held at Stalag Luft 3 (we know this from the introduction of the diary). This was a camp for air force officers, so it is safe to surmise that George serves in the RCAF and is an officer. In his last entry (9 May 1945) George expresses how much he had missed flying, this is the only hint that he might be a pilot. It could however also be a reference to one of the other crew positions. He has been a POW for over three years (if you do the math and go back 1003 days, you arrive at 10 August 1942 as the day he became a POW – 1944 was a leap year!)

Ethel – all we truly know about her is that she lives with Isabella and is very important to George (12 December 1944). We also know that she is an adult and given her knowledge of/interest in William Davis most likely an older woman who is not married (1 January 1945). She appears to be home during the day while Isabella goes to work (15 May 1945) which would most likely make her the caregiver for Peter.