

## **Core Curriculum Guide: Mira's Diary: California Dreaming by Marissa Moss**

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### **Mentor Text for: Plot development, Research, Activating Background Knowledge, Making Connections, Expository, Personal Narrative**

#### **Research to Build and Present Knowledge:**

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of a topic:

Read Mira's Diary as if it's a primary source, take notes, gather relevant information, categorize and list the information.

#### **Suggested topics:**

##### **Censorship vs 'Safe Space':**

When does it make sense to curb free speech? Should organizations warn people that they may experience something that will make them uncomfortable or should people learn to handle these kinds of situations? Would you rather be “protected” or would you rather face potentially unpleasant experiences? Why did you make your choice?

The Watcher feels that people would be better off having limited knowledge if information leads to discomfort or conflict. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Have you ever been censored or told to use different language to avoid hurting people's feelings? Have you ever been offended by someone else's use of language? What lines would you draw to keep people from being hurt while still allowing the most freedom of speech?

##### **Art & Culture:**

Many of the writers and artists Mira meets are real people. Some of the writers, like Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), Ina Coolbrith, Bret Harte. What kind of subjects did they write about? Read stories by Bret Harte and Mark Twain and compare their styles. Both wrote about similar things, life in the Sierra foothills, in mining camps. Imagine you're panning for gold and write your own mining camp story. Another character in this story is the city of San Francisco. How has the city changed over time? What did you learn about the city that you didn't know before? Write about your own city as if it's a character. What kind of personality does it have? Friendly? Cold? Bustling? Cozy? Draw a map of the places that matter to you most. Design your own bridge, like the Golden Gate.

##### **Jewish History:**

Throughout the Mira's Diary series, Mira and her mother fight injustice, they try to right historical wrongs. How does this connect to the Jewish concept of Tshuvah, of healing the world? Mira comes to realize that changing history is risky, that it might not solve issues. Instead, she's convinced she needs to make a difference in her own time. What kinds of things could she do to make the world a better place? How can we make a difference? What kind of healing can we bring about?

##### **Writing Prompts:**

Write about a time when you felt threatened by another person's language. Imagine different ways you could have reacted to the situation.

Write about a time when you read something that shocked and upset you. Do you wish you hadn't read the upsetting pages? Was it okay to be disturbed because you learned something? How do you handle facing unpleasant subjects, both on the page and in real life?

**Topics Covered:** Censorship, Free Speech, Early California History, the Gold Rush