Emily Davies: Empowering Women to Seek Higher Education
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Junior Division
Group Website
Emily Davies Process Paper

We got our idea to research Emily Davies for our History Day Topic from a classroom book about women’s rights activists. We chose this project because we were interested in learning more about how hard it was for women to go to school and pursue their goals. Our generation takes equal education for granted. Prior to reading Emily Davies’ name in the book, neither of us had heard of her. We read more and found out that Davies did a lot to change society, especially concerning women’s rights and their education. We saw an opportunity to teach others about her accomplishments. It was easy to find pictures of Emily Davies and Girton College. The challenge was finding information concerning Davies, especially compared to more famous women’s advocates like Susan B. Anthony. Another challenge was finding quotes from Davies herself.

Much of our research came from books written in the 1800s by Davies or others associated with the movement. We owe a lot of our information to the personal papers of Emily Davies via the Girton College website. We also made contact with experts, including an interview with Rachel Neiwert from St. Catherine University. Lastly, we attended many History Day Hullaballoos where we had one-on-one conferences about our project, attended mini-lessons, and sought primary and secondary sources. We learned new research strategies for finding facts about a lesser known subject. Now, after months of hard work, we are surprised by how much we have learned and how much more there is to learn. Working in a group was a good learning experience. We learned how to collaborate by setting goals, assigning tasks, and writing together using Google documents. We enjoyed working together as friends and it was helpful to have a partner to keep you on track.

Preceding this project we had no experience making a website, which is partly why we chose to make one. We developed better note taking skills during this project. We took a risk by setting a goal to go to regionals, because neither of us had entered such a large competition. We gained computer, problem solving, researching, and writing skills during this process. We also learned how to write professional emails to experts.

Emily Davies is related to the theme, ‘Turning Points in History,’ in many ways. She used her life, energy, and resourcefulness to change the role of women through expanding their educational opportunities. Davies is not well known today, but she is important to history. Opening the first residential women’s college in the United Kingdom, Davies ushered in a new approach to women’s fight for equal rights.