

Student Worksheet 1--Analyzing the Letter

Imagine receiving hundreds of letters a day. It would be fun to get interesting letters, but how would you reply to so many? What would you do if the people writing the letters were asking you for something?

Eleanor Roosevelt was the First Lady of the United States when her husband Franklin D. Roosevelt was president from 1933 to 1944. During his early presidency our country went through many hard times. One of these difficult times was the Great Depression, which began in 1929.

Because President Roosevelt had polio, which weakened him physically and left him in a wheelchair, Mrs. Roosevelt was a different kind of first lady than the ones who came before her. She had to be the “eyes and ears” of her husband, going places and doing things that other first ladies had not done in the past. She made herself available to people in many ways. She made visits to the poorer parts of cities, went into coal mines, and inspected hospitals and prisons. Because of all of these things, Mrs. Roosevelt became known as the First Lady that cared about people. During the first year of her husband’s presidency, she received over 300,000 letters. Thousands of those letters came from children asking for her help.

Read the letter written by a child to Eleanor Roosevelt during the Great Depression. Answer the following questions:

Who is writing the letter? (Give as many details as you can about the person’s age, gender, location)

What is the writer asking of Mrs. Roosevelt? Why? (Give many details, examples and reasons)

How would you describe the writer’s tone? (mood and feelings)

From reading the letter, what can you tell about life for the writer at the time of the Great Depression? Support your response with many details from the text.

What was the writer’s attitude towards Mrs. Roosevelt? What can you infer (understand) about the writer’s opinion of Mrs. Roosevelt? Why do you think the writer wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt and not to someone else such as the president or governor?