

# Example of annotations essay

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



## **Summary (Chapters 12 to 21) of Mary Chestnut's Diary**

### Summary

Mary Boykin Chestnut has encapsulated the experiences of her fellow Confederates at the time of the Civil War in her autobiographic novel *Mary Chestnut's Diary*. Mary went through various endeavors during the Civil War with her Senator husband, James Chestnut, with most having been eye opening for her. Serving as quite a fitting historical account for the Civil War, the novel by Mary has provided deeper insights on the way Confederates carried out their resistance against the Unions (Chestnut).

During the Civil War, slavery has become a highly controversial issue, although the majority from both the Union and the Confederation treated it as somewhat of a norm especially during the prewar days. There have been resounding calls for the abolition of the practice of slavery, which have grown stronger as the war ended in 1865. Although Mary emphasized on the sordid affairs of female slaves at the onset of the novel, accounts from chapters 12 to 21 showed that many of her contemporaries, particularly the male ones, are more concerned with removing slavery in its entirety.

Advocates against slavery have emerged as the war progressed. For instance, Mary cites a certain Dr. Palmer for his strong views against slavery. Mary has described Dr. Palmer as a person who “is not for slavery for freedom, and the freedom to govern our own country as we see fit” (Chestnut 284). Wilmot de Saussure, a contemporary of James, once approached Mary to declare that he and her husband “always think alike” as he declared that “slavery is stronger than ever” (Chestnut 326). Apparently shocked by the words of Wilmot, Mary quickly rebuffed him by saying that

James does not think like him, for he has thought, “ slavery was a thing of the past, this many a year” (Chestnut 326). Such revealing accounts have exposed the growing conflicts between the abolitionists and those who favored the maintenance of the status quo back then (Chestnut).

As Mary sought to press on her point on the inferior status of women during her time, she has expressed throughout chapters 12 to 21 that many women have grown to express their openness towards the emergence of liberated personas of women, far from their quiet and submissive stereotypes. In that case, Mary tells the story of Mrs. Preston, who rode the train alongside Mr. Prioleau Hamilton. During the journey, Prioleau noted that they have along with them a group of “ strictly unfortunate females”, a term he used to refer to a faction of aggressive yet physically enchanting women (Chestnut 326). Mary noted that women during that time would usually shun and disapprove the idea of women as aggressive beings; that even the most ladylike women “ would have made a fuss or would have fidgeted” (Chestnut 326). As that thought came about when Prioleau informed Mrs. Preston on the matter, Mary described a notable instance. Instead of showing dismay over the news that “ strictly unfortunate females” are on the train, Mrs. Preston remained calm and innocent looking, not minding at all such fact. Verily, Mrs. Preston did not mind at all that women different from the normal stereotype that time are riding the same train as them (Chestnut).

The novel sufficiently showed how Mary and James have strongly established their rejection of slavery. Such was despite the fact that Mary and James are from the elite faction of the Confederation. Mary and James consistently denounced slavery towards the end of the novel. The fact that their family

have been set to lose a large portion of slaves as the period of emancipation of approach did not seem a problem to them (Chestnut).

Towards the end of the novel, Mary strongly showed that she rejected slavery alongside James, while further denouncing the brutalities the Civil War has brought unto them. Although many would see the Civil War as mainly a battle fought by the Unions and Confederates against one another, the novel provides deeper perspectives into the lives of people who were actually involved in said war. The result of the Civil War, particularly towards its conclusion, has been highly violent, yet it revealed improvements in the form of the increasing awareness of people against slavery. Moreover, the emphasis of Mary on discrimination against women somewhat gained ground as personalities towards the end of the novel expressed no dismay over the emergence of relatively liberated images of women. Said changes effectively characterized the developments that flourished as the Civil War neared its end.

Mary thoroughly reflected her accounts on social change brought forth by the Civil War by citing several observations and experiences she had with a variety of personalities. The intricacy of the accounts of Mary was to the extent that she even noted observations while being in third-person mode, greatly exemplified in the example involving Prioleau and Mrs. Preston. Moreover, Mary did not show fear in confronting people with views on slavery different from hers. The shameful assumption made by Wilmot met a fateful response from Mary, which noted that her husband James denounces slavery as part of a bygone era.

## **Works Cited**

Chestnut, Mary Boykin. *Mary Chestnut's Diary*. New York City, NY: Penguin Group, 2011. Print.