

Fanny Burney, Diary, selections

What was Fanny Burney's position in the royal household? Was she a servant? Why or why not?

To what social class did Burney belong before she entered the royal household? How did that influence her responses to the conditions of her employment? Which of those conditions did she find particularly problematic?

Why does Burney use marriage as a metaphor for her position (155)?

What can you tell from the diary entries and letters about Fanny Burney's character? Is she a careful observer? A trustworthy judge of character?

Can you see any difference between the letters (addressed to others) and the diary (addressed to herself)? Was the diary intended for an audience of one?

How does her account of events (especially the King's illness) differ from or corroborate those in other sources (the textbook, the movie)? Does her eyewitness perspective and involvement in the emotional ups and downs of the household make her more or less reliable as a source?

How does Burney portray the Queen? The King? The Prince of Wales? How does her sense of their personalities accord with that you have gleaned from other sources?

What was the like of the royal household like (schedule, etiquette, etc)?

How would you characterize the King's literary tastes (144-7)? The breadth of his reading?

There is a lot weeping in these selections. What was the value and significance of tears in Fanny Burney's view?

In describing the King's illness, how does Burney juxtapose the political and personal dimensions of the story? What is the effect of the repeated phrase: "the Royal sufferer"?

What is the point and the effect--of the episode in which she inadvertently encounters the recovering King and flees from him through the shrubbery (213-20)?

What about the episode in which the "Royal sailor" commands members of the household to drink toast after toast (231-4)?

Why was it so difficult for her to leave the royal establishment?