

Who was Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low?

Name _____ Class · period _____ Date _____

THE SHORT VERSION

Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low (1860–1927) lost most of her hearing as a young woman and went on to found the Girl Scouts of the USA. Her rule for every decision was simple: ask the girls.

EARLY LIFE

Savannah society, a “tomboy,” and a wedding that took her hearing

01 SAVANNAH AND SCHOOL

- 01 Juliette “Daisy” Gordon was born in Savannah, Georgia during the Civil War, and went to the Virginia Female Institute at age 13.

Her schooling included arts and etiquette, and she also had a love for animals. However, Daisy tended to have interests that were considered “tomboy” interests at the time, such as running and climbing, and did not enjoy lessons on becoming a lady.

Daisy later went on to another boarding school in Virginia, eventually concluding her education at a finishing school in New York. She then returned to Georgia as a young woman ready to enter Savannah society.

02 EXPLORING THE WORLD

- 01 After finishing her education, Daisy embarked on a trip to Europe. While traveling, Daisy continued to mingle with the elite who populated her life up to this point and met William Mackay Low. Low was a rich shipping magnate’s son, and was also from Savannah.

- 02 Just before Daisy married William she suffered a painful ear infection that led to hearing loss in most of her left ear. It was exacerbated by a grain of rice that lodged into her right ear during the traditional rice throwing at the end of a wedding ceremony. Sadly, this random incident led to full hearing loss in that ear as well, leaving her almost completely Deaf for the remainder of her life.

03 A DARK SIDE

- 01 Even as Daisy continued to live the high-class lifestyle in England, Scotland and Savannah, her life had a dark side that others may not have noticed.

Daisy's husband William was a drinker who treated her unkindly. Eventually it got bad enough to warrant divorce proceedings, but before it was finalized she became a widow when William died from ailments associated with his drinking.

A NEW DECADE

A social gathering in London, and an idea that crossed the Atlantic

04 MEETING SIR ROBERT BADEN-POWELL

- 01 In 1911 Daisy was 10 years into widowhood and met Sir Robert Baden-Powell at a social gathering in London.

She had studied sculptures in Paris and could have become an artist. She and Sir Robert both shared an interest in sculptures, but Sir Robert had started a new organization called the Boy Scouts, and Daisy learned through him that girls were interested in joining his group.

- 02 This intrigued Daisy, and she teamed with Sir Robert's sister Agnes to start the *Girl Guides*, which spread across Great Britain.

Daisy was interested in bringing it to the United States, and while she was in America she contacted her cousin Nina, who was the headmistress of a girls' school. With Nina's help, the group was started in the United States as well.

- 03 By 1912, within a year, the U.S. Girl Scout patrol was registered.

BUILDING THE GIRL SCOUTS

First aid, camping, and a leader who told everyone to ask the girls

05 KEEPING IT AFLOAT

- 01 Daisy used her public relations and fundraising skills to ensure that the Girl Scouts remained strong, and she even used her own funds to keep it afloat at times.

Although she never had children, it could be seen that she had millions. Today the Girl Scouts can boast membership of at least 2.6 million.

- 02 The skills learned included first aid, cooking, camping, sports and more, and the girls were treated with interest and respect.

One of the best parts of Daisy’s leadership was her insistence that “we mustn’t lose sight of the girls. The girls must always come first!” Whenever decisions were being made, Daisy always suggested that people “ask the girls!”

06 DAISY’S LEGACY

- 01 After fighting breast cancer for four years, Juliette died at age 66 in 1927.
- 02 Daisy is almost always shown in uniform. She wore the Girl Scout uniform with pride, including a knife, whistle and tin drinking cup hanging from the belt wherever she went. Daisy was laid to rest in her uniform.
- 03 Daisy’s birthplace is now a National Historic Landmark, and she was inducted into the Women’s Hall of Fame and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The Juliette Low World Friendship Fund was also started, which some of her friends helped to create.

The work of today is the history of tomorrow, and we are its makers.

JULIETTE “DAISY” GORDON LOW

07 NAMES AND TERMS TO KNOW

NAME OR TERM	WHY IT MATTERS IN THIS STORY
Sir Robert Baden-Powell	Founder of the Boy Scouts, whom Daisy met in London in 1911, and who told her girls wanted to join.
Agnes Baden-Powell	Sir Robert’s sister, who started the Girl Guides with Daisy.
Girl Guides	The British organization that spread across Great Britain and became the model Daisy brought to America.
Nina	Daisy’s cousin, a headmistress, whose help got the group started in the United States.
Juliette Low World Friendship Fund	The fund started in her honor, which some of her friends helped to create.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer in complete sentences using what you read

08 WRITTEN RESPONSE

01 Describe the two events that led to Daisy’s hearing loss.

02 Who did Daisy meet in 1911, and what did she learn from him that changed her plans?

03 How did the Girl Guides become the Girl Scouts in the United States? Name the two people who helped.

04 What kinds of skills did early Girl Scouts learn, and why were those unusual for girls at the time?

05 Daisy told people to “ask the girls” whenever decisions were being made. What does that tell you about the kind of leader she was?

- 06** Daisy said the work of today is the history of tomorrow. What work of hers became history, and who is still affected by it?

09 WHERE THIS INFORMATION COMES FROM

Girl Scouts [girlscouts.org](https://www.girlscouts.org)

Great Deaf Americans (2nd ed.) Matthew Moore and Robert Panara · Deaf Life Press, 1996

Juliette Gordon Low: Founder of the Girl Scouts of America Deborah Kent · Child's World, 2004

National Women's History Museum [womenshistory.org](https://www.womenshistory.org)