

WOMEN USING THEIR GUNS: Women During WWI

by Tina Gersdorf - Whobrey

Summer Fellowship 2007

LESSON THREE – Problems on the home front

Abstract

Many problems arose at home, when the United States entered WWI. Students will brainstorm what they think some of those problems may have been. One way in which problems were solved was by the development of the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense. There were a number of departments within the Women's Committee and each dealt with its own set of problems caused by the war, and the large number of men leaving the country. Students will analyze documents showing the organization of the Women's Committee and compare their original brainstorm list with what they discover while looking at the different departments. The lesson wraps up with students evaluating which problems were difficult to brainstorm, which were easier, and why.

Essential Questions

- How did WWI, fought in Europe, affect the United States, at home?
- What problems arose when millions of men left the United States to fight in "The Great War"?
- How were those problems solved?
- What were the challenges of women taking on the responsibilities typically held by men?

Duration

2-3 class periods

Assessments

- Brainstorming worksheet
- Written Document Analysis worksheet
- Participation in class discussion about Women's Committee
- Discussion or write-up about which problems were easy and hard to think of

Materials

- [*Full of Problems*](#) brainstorming worksheet
- [*Organization Document A*](#)
- [*Organization Document B*](#)
- [*Organization Document C*](#)
- [*Written Document Analysis worksheet*](#)

Setting the Purpose

- Discuss student responses from the "[*Can You Imagine!?*](#)" worksheet.
- When you get to the diary entry portion, have students explain why they felt the way they did.
- Discuss the following possibilities of how women may have felt:

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- excited that the opportunity finally arose
- angry that they are now expected to do these jobs even though they were not able to in the past
- worried because they do not have the experience and this is a big responsibility
- empowered because they now have the opportunity to prove themselves
- others
- ***Remind students to place themselves in the mind of an American woman in the early 20th century...does that influence their responses?

Procedure

1. Hand out *Full of Problems* worksheet and explain task to students. Students will be brainstorming the problems that may have needed to be solved at home while the United States was involved in "The Great War". Remind students to think about the possible effects of so many PEOPLE being out of the country, and the effects of so many MEN being out of the country in the early 20th century. They should be specific; so rather than write "jobs", they should write the types of jobs they think were affected.
2. Put students into groups of 2, 3, or 4 (depending on class needs). Assign students roles (or have them choose their own from a list).
**Roles may include:
 - a. Recorder - there may be more than one
 - b. Facilitator - to keep group focused and to assure that everyone has a voice
 - c. Time-keeper - to keep group on track
 - d. Fact-checker - to ask teacher questions for group or look-up difficult words
3. Give students approximately 10 – 20 minutes to discuss and brainstorm the issues. (Time in groups will depend upon the class needs and personality).
4. When students have finished, show the class *Organization Document A* (on overhead or pass out copies).
 - a. Explain that the US government put together a Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense to organize the war efforts at home and that this document is from the Illinois division of that committee.
 - b. This document shows the constitution and bi-laws of the committee.
 - c. This committee also put out the "Women! Girls!" Flyer from Lesson 2
5. Go through Articles II and III with the students in order to help explain the purpose of the committee. Read each line and ask students what it means. Ask for volunteers to summarize the purpose in her/his own words.
(EXTENSION: have all students write down their own summary to turn in)

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6. Show students *Organization Document B*.
 - a. Tell students this is the page before the one they just saw (with the bi-laws).
 - b. Ask students:
 - i. "What information is provided by this document?" (It shows the people on the organization committee of the Illinois Division...those 'in charge')
 - ii. "What do these people all have in common?" (They all live in Illinois. More importantly, they are all women).

7. Show students *Organization Document C*.
 - a. Hand out copies of the document and the *Written Document Analysis* worksheet.
 - b. Students will work in their groups to complete the Written Document Analysis.
 - c. Review students' responses when they have finished.

8. Lead the group work: Explain to the class that these departments are set up to solve problems. Have each group recorder pull out their brainstorming worksheet ("Full of Problems").
 - a. Go through each of the departments in the first row of specific categories ('Health and Recreation' through 'Women and Children in Industry').
 - b. For each department, ask students: "What problems do you think they were trying to solve with this department?" They should refer their brainstorming worksheet for ideas.
 - c. Each group-timekeeper should write a list of all the problems mentioned by the class.
 - d. At the same time, group-recorders should circle any problems they had listed on their worksheet, that were mentioned by the class.
 - e. Go through the sub-departments under 'Women and Children in Industry'.
 - i. Ask students the same question as was asked for the other departments.
 - ii. They should focus primarily on the right side of their brainstorming worksheet for ideas.
 - iii. Again, the recorder should circle those on their brainstorming worksheet and the timekeeper should write the list as said by the class.

9. Ask students to discuss which problems were the easiest to predict, which were the most difficult, and why.
(EXTENSION: have students write a reflection of this))

Annotated list of resources

- National Archives website: "Teaching with Documents"
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/>

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- *Organization Documents A, B, & C*
Woman's Committee of Council of National Defense: Illinois Division and Women's Organizations, The State Council of Defense. Pamphlet No.6.
Chicago, IL. {Illinois State Archives}