

WOMEN USING THEIR GUNS: Women During WWI

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Abstract

Women were expected to be beautiful, quiet, stay at home, and not express their opinions. That changed during The Great War (WWI). With millions of men leaving the country to fight in Europe, women had to “hold down the fort” at home. Women were strongly encouraged to do anything they were capable of, to help the war efforts. Food conservation and agricultural work are just two of dozens of aspects of life that were in need of help. Women were called to register themselves to work or volunteer services and were offered many opportunities to acquire training in areas they would be helping in. This unit is designed to first provide some background information about WWI and women’s history. Students will have an opportunity to analyze a number of written documents, synthesis primary sources and demonstrate historical thinking through writing diary entries and letters from the perspective of women during the war.

****PLEASE NOTE:** Many parts of this unit may be completed independent of the entire unit, as it is lengthy and may more suitable for an enrichment-type class. Much of the background information lessons may be unnecessary if students have already studied those topics; and many of the activities can be effective as a stand-alone lesson. Finally, please find further suggestions for additional lessons, extensions, or alternative ideas within each lesson.

Essential Questions

- How did WWI affect the United States, at home?
- What were some of the problems that arose due to millions of men leaving the country?
- How were the problems of WWI solved on the home front?
- What role did women play during WWI?
- What effects did WWI have on life for women during and after the war?

Lesson 1: Mini-lesson on World War One

Students will gain a very brief background on who was involved in WWI and how the United States became involved (which may not be needed if the unit is being used within a larger WWI unit.)

Lesson 2: Introduction to Women’s Roles

Students will examine some differences between women now and those alive during WWI. They will analyze a primary source, and imagine themselves as women during the early 20th century.

Lesson 3: Problems on the Home Front

Students will brainstorm what problems might have resulted from US involvement in WWI. Then, 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 these primary documents.

Lesson 4: Registration

Students will analyze part of a pamphlet with emotional statements and specific reasons why women should register. They will re-write one reason pointed out in the pamphlet, and register themselves (as females) for the war efforts, by inventing a profile using an actual registration card from 1918.

Lesson 5: Life on the Training Farm

Students will read a newspaper article that provides examples of how women felt about the training farm and what they did. They will look at photographs, a map of the farm, and a daily schedule. Students will use their exposure to the Training Farm to write a diary entry and letter home about life on the farm from the perspective of the character they invented in the previous letter.

Lesson 6: Conserve!

Students will reference one of the many pamphlets that were created to encourage women to help on the home front by conserving resources such as material, food, or metal. They will use the information they gather and create a poster to encourage other people in society to take part in this conservation effort.

Lesson 7: Reflection

Students will reflect on the project from the perspective of their imaginary female character.

Ties to national primary source and other resources

National Archives:

The National Archives is home to collections of documents from women's work during the Great War. The following site offers interactive documents: [http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=subject%3A%22World War, 1914-1918 -- Women's work%22](http://www.archive.org/search.php?query=subject%3A%22World+War,+1914-1918+--+Women's+work%22)

United States. National Archives and Records Service.; United States. Council of National Defense. Minutes of meetings of the Committee on Women's Defense Work, May 2, 1917-February 12, 1919, and weekly and monthly reports of the Committee on Women's Defense Work, May 12, 1917-October 15, 1918. Washington, National Archives and Records Service, 1978.

Children's books:

- CHANGING THE PATTERN the Story of Emily Stowe by Sydell Waxman

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- Never jam today by Carole Bolton
- Shining by Julius Lester
- The ballot box battle by Emily Arnold McCully
- You Forgot Your Skirt, Amelia Bloomer by Shana Corey and Chesley McLaren