

“It’s a Woman’s War, Too”: The Women of WWII

Lesson plans for primary sources at the Tennessee State Library & Archives

Author: Whitney Joyner, Northeast Middle School

Grade Level: 11th

Date Created: 2017, standards updated 2019

Visit <https://sos.tn.gov/tsla/education> for additional lesson plans.



Introduction: During the course of WWII, more than 200,000 women served in the United States military, while over six million flooded the American workforce. In addition, countless women, single and married, supported the Allied war effort through activities such as civic campaigning, planting victory gardens, and rationing. As men went off to battle, women were also needed for non-combat jobs such as switchboard operators, telegraphers, mechanics, and drivers. In this lesson, students will explore the many essential roles that women carried out during World War II, analyzing the social, cultural, and economic impacts this movement had on American society.

Guiding Question(s):

- What contributions did women make to the war effort during WWII?
- How did these contributions contribute to a shift in the attitude regarding the role of women in American society?
- What were the short and long-term impacts of this movement?

Learning Objectives: In the course of the lesson, students will

- Students will gain an understanding of the many ways that American women contributed to the war effort during World War II.
- Students will gain an understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and military impacts made by women's efforts during World War II.
- Students will analyze primary and secondary sources in order to determine the central idea
- Students will cite textual evidence to analyze these sources.

Curriculum Standards:

US.52 Examine and explain the entry of large numbers of women into the workforce and armed forces during World War II and the subsequent impact on American society.

Examples to consider: Avco in Tennessee, women in the armed forces, including Cornelia Fort.

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the KWL Chart
- Copies of, or computer access to the following primary sources:
 - [Rationing Means a Fair Share for All of Us](#)
 - [Gasoline Alley Comic Strip about Women in Industrial Work During World War II](#)
 - [United States Women Chalk Up Proud Year Both at Home and on Battlefield](#)
 - [These Pictures Show How WAVES Replace Men for Duty on Sea and in the Air](#)
 - [I'll Carry Mine Too!: Trucks and Tires Must Last Till Victory](#)
 - [Women in Industry: Will the Gal Who Has Your Job Keep on Working After the War or Does She Think Her Place is in the Home](#)
 - [Abbie an' Slat's Comic Strip About Women in the Military](#)
 - [Use it up- Wear it out- Make it do!](#)
 - [At the Twilight's Last Gleaming](#)
 - [Essay submitted by Rubye L. Fowler, United States Marine Corps Women's Reserve](#)
 - [Killed in crash: air crash kills Cornelia Fort](#)
 - [Women in the Workforce During World War II](#)
- Copies of the "Gallery Walk: Women in WWII" Graphic Organizer
- A copy of the writing prompt

Page 2 of 13

Preparation for the Lesson:

1. Read the articles listed in the background section.
2. Print the “KWL Chart” graphic organizer for each student to use in the introductory activity.
3. Preview the Scholastic video and decide if you will stream or use the download option on the page.
4. This lesson assumes that your students have experience in analyzing primary sources. If you feel they will need more guidance in the analysis process, the Tennessee State Library and Archives has analysis guides available for you.
5. Print the primary sources for students use during their gallery walk. Be sure to number each source as well. (Note: You may wish to also include the description provided by TSLA on the back of each printed source.)
6. Print the “Gallery Walk: Women in WWII” graphic organizer for each student to use.

Background for Teacher:

*All articles can be used for follow-up student notes (Cornell, worksheets, guided notes, etc.) at teacher’s discretion.

- [World War II](#)

Author: Patricia Brake

Source Location: [Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture](#)

- [Women in World War II](#)

Source Location: tn4me.org

- [Partners in Winning the War: American Women in World War II](#)

Author and Source Location: [National Women’s History Museum](#)



Lesson Activities: Lesson 1: Introductory Activity

The teacher will begin by presenting students with an empty KWL chart (following this lesson plan). Students will then fill in the “Know” column with information and facts they already know about the roles women played during WWII. Following time to fill in their column, students will share out ideas/responses they wrote, participating in a whole class discussion. Next, the teacher will lead students in a discussion asking them what they want to know about the topic and asking them to fill in the “Want to Know” column as well.

Following the completion of the KWL chart, show the following video clip from Scholastic. The teacher may also wish to read the following background articles with students prior to the discussion.

Video Clip Link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxDdVoiLHcg>

Background Articles

[World War II](#)

Author: Patricia Brake

Source Location: **[Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture](#)**

[Women in World War II](#)

Source Location: **[TN4me.org](#)**

Following the video, begin a whole class discussion of the following questions, asking students to fill in the “Learn” column on their KWL chart with any new information.

- What were the traditional roles of women from the 1920's to the start of the war?
- How did life change for some women during the 1920's?
- In what ways did the Great Depression affect women's lives?
- What do you think life was like for women during the war?
- What emotions or feelings might these women have experienced as they left their traditional roles to become a part of the war effort?
- What adjustments did these women need to make to their daily routines?
- What jobs were created to supply war needs?
- What skills might they have needed to gain in order to meet varying job demands?
- What opposing opinions might women have faced as they entered the work force or military?
- How did the shift in the roles of women alter the economic situation in America?

Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 2: Analyzing Primary Sources

The teacher will divide students into groups to complete a gallery walk through a set of primary sources. Primary Sources should be displayed “gallery-style” - in a way that allows students to disperse themselves around the room, with several students clustering around a particular source. Sources can be hung on walls or placed on tables, but each source should be numbered, so that students are able to complete the graphic organizer provided. In this activity, students will have the opportunity to view a variety of sources related to Women in WWII. Let students know that some of these primary sources are connected to women in Tennessee and come from the Tennessee State Library and Archives. The graphic organizer is broken down into exploring and examining 3 categories of sources related to Female Contributions in the War:

1. Women at War (Women Who Served in the Military During WWII)
2. Women at Work (Women Who Joined the American Workforce During WWII)
3. Women at Home (Women Who Contributed to the War From Home)

Gallery Walk Primary Source List

Note: Twelve sources are included from the Tennessee State Library and Archives to be used in this activity. Teachers may choose to use all that are included or may select a smaller number of sources to use from those provided.

- [Rationing Means a Fair Share for All of Us](#)
- [Gasoline Alley Comic Strip about Women in Industrial Work During World War II](#)
- [United States Women Chalk Up Proud Year Both at Home and on Battlefield](#)
- [These Pictures Show How WAVES Replace Men for Duty on Sea and in the Air](#)
- [I'll Carry Mine Too!: Trucks and Tires Must Last Till Victory](#)
- [Women in Industry: Will the Gal Who Has Your Job Keep on Working After the War or Does She Think Her Place is in the Home](#)
- [Abbie an' Slats Comic Strip About Women in the Military](#)
- [Use it up- Wear it out- Make it do!](#)
- [At the Twilight's Last Gleaming](#)
- [Essay submitted by Rubye L. Fowler, United States Marine Corps Women's Reserve](#)
- [Killed in crash: air crash kills Cornelia Fort](#)
- [Women in the Workforce During World War II](#)

Following the gallery walk, the teacher may wish to address any questions students had about the documents they viewed.

Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 3: Writing Prompt

The teacher will instruct students to write a short piece on the following prompt:

What contributions did women make to the war effort during WWII, and how did these contributions lead to a shift in the attitude regarding the role of women in American society?

In your writing, consider the short and long-term impacts of this shift in American society and cite at least 3 pieces of evidence from the primary and secondary sources you have reviewed in the last few days.

Extending the Lesson

- Have students locate a woman in their local community who lived during WWII, and have the students conduct an interview to create an oral history project on the individual.
- Have the students create a children's book that tells the story of a woman living during WWII. They could choose to write it from a variety of perspectives and even illustrate it and present to a group of students in a lower grade level.
- Have students create an original propaganda poster to recruit women for a particular job/task during WWII.



Tennessee State Library & Archives

Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett

KWL Chart- Women in WWII

Topic: Women’s Roles in the War Effort During WWII

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Have Learned

Gallery Walk: Women in WWII

Source #1	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
<p>Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; text-align: center;"> Women at Work Women at War Women at Home </div>		
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?
Source #2	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
<p>Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; text-align: center;"> Women at Work Women at War Women at Home </div>		
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?

Source #3	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls: <div> <div>Women at Work</div> <div>Women at War</div> <div>Women at Home</div> </div>		
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?
Source #4	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls: <div> <div>Women at Work</div> <div>Women at War</div> <div>Women at Home</div> </div>		
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?

Source #5	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
<p>Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls:</p> <p> Women at Work Women at War Women at Home </p>		
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?
<p>Source #6</p> <p>Title of Source:</p> <p>Type of Source:</p>		
<p>Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls:</p> <p> Women at Work Women at War Women at Home </p>		
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?

Source #7	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls:		
Women at Work	Women at War	Women at Home
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?
Source #8	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls:		
Women at Work	Women at War	Women at Home
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?

Source #9	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls: <div> <div>Women at Work</div> <div>Women at War</div> <div>Women at Home</div> </div>		
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?
Source #10	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls: <div> <div>Women at Work</div> <div>Women at War</div> <div>Women at Home</div> </div>		
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?

Source #11	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls: <div> <div>Women at Work</div> <div>Women at War</div> <div>Women at Home</div> </div>		
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?
Source #12	Title of Source:	Type of Source:
Circle/Highlight the Category under which this source falls: <div> <div>Women at Work</div> <div>Women at War</div> <div>Women at Home</div> </div>		
What facts can I learn from this source?	What is the main idea of the source?	What questions do I still have about this source?