Lesson Plan

Women on the Home front
Grade: 5th
Length of Time: 20 minutes

History of Topic:

One of the most dramatic changes during World War II was the number of women who went to work. As the armed forces filled its ranks with manpower, industry filled its jobs with womanpower. For the duration of the war, the U.S. government and industry wooed American women to work in the war effort. The title of a song, "Rosie the Riveter," quickly became the catchphrase that represented all women war workers.

During World War II, more than six million women joined the workforce. In August 1943, Newsweek magazine reported: "They [women] are in the shipyards, lumber mills, steel mills, foundries. They are welders, electricians, mechanics, and even boilermakers. They operate streetcars, buses, cranes, and tractors. Women engineers are working in the drafting rooms and women physicists and chemists in the great industrial laboratories." More than two million women joined the war effort as clerical workers, nearly one million of whom were hired by the federal government. Women also became police officers, taxicab drivers, lawyers, statisticians, journalists, and members of symphony orchestras, as men left for the armed forces. Women ran farms, planted crops, tended animals, and harvested tons of vegetables, fruits, and grains.

In addition, three million women served as Red Cross volunteers. Millions of women worked for the Civilian Defense as air-raid wardens, fire watchers, messengers, drivers, auxiliary police. Women volunteers also devoted hours to scanning the sky with binoculars, looking out for enemy planes. Thousands of women joined the military through organizations like the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) and the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), and the Women's Army Corps (WAC).

About the time World War II ended, American factories had produced 296,429 airplanes, 102,351 tanks and self-propelled guns, 372,431 artillery pieces, 47 million tons of artillery ammunitions, 87,620 warships, and 44 billion rounds of small-arms ammunition. Time magazine called America's wartime production a miracle. The "miracle" would not have happened without Rosie the Riveter.

When the war ended in 1945, so did America's need for women workers. Rosie the Riveter disappeared as quickly as she had been created, but her memory lived on. Although America no longer needed women workers, the story of their wartime achievements and contributions to the war effort lives on in employment records and in statistics; in magazine and newspaper articles and on radio programs; and in thousands of posters, pamphlets, and photographs. This is an amazing story about a time when traditional barriers that had blocked women workers were lowered, and when women finally had a chance to prove what they could do on a national scale.
Materials/Resources/Equipment Required:
- Worksheets
- Your thinking cap and a smile!

Objectives/Outcomes
- Students will learn about the social tensions brought about by women entering the workforce during WWII by analyzing portrayals of women in editorial cartoons.

Groupings:
- Students break into groups of three after introduction of lesson.

Procedure/Activity Sequence/Script:
- We will present a brief lesson on the women’s experience in WWII. We will focus on the large amounts of women going to work to increase war production. We will ask the students what social conflicts there were as a result of the increase of women in the workforce. (Explore)
  - We will break the students into groups of 3 for the activity. We will then pass out copies of the “Anything you can do” list and give students a few minutes to complete this activity. (Engage) The students will review within their groups then we will have a class discussion reviewing the activity.
  - The students are informed that they may keep their list.
  - Next well will pass out the two editorial cartoons. The students are still in the groups and will answer the questions as a group then we will discuss the results as a class.
  - The students will be informed that they will turn in their cartoons for assessment.
  - Ask students which cartoon they liked best and why? (Explain)
  - Ask students to recall the importance of women during WWII. (Extend)

Student Modifications/Special Needs/Behavior Expectations:
- Students will have been put in groups that had the largest benefit to their learning during class time. The groups will have already been assigned before the lesson begins. Meaning we will “assume” everyone already knows what their groups are. Students will be notified when their behavior is out of line and dealt with accordingly.

Student Assessment/Assignments (Evaluate):
- We will assess the students by listening to their answers when we are in a class discussion. We will read their responses.
  - Also we will walk around and observe their work in progress and evaluate that way as well.

Reference Page:
- On the back of this packet.
Discussion of Standards Addressed in Lesson:

Service Learning Possibilities:
- Have students speak with their parents about conservation of waste, energy and fuel consumption. Make sure the students get the connection between conserving now and women in the work force in the 1940’s.
- Have the students ask their parents for names of females working, and then write a letter to them about how much it means that they are doing their part to support our country.
- Ask the students to write to soldiers over seas saying we support them and are doing our part back at home.