

Women of Power

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About this Lesson

This lesson, which includes a pre-lesson and post-lesson, is intended to be used in conjunction with the National Constitution Center's Women of Power program. Together, they provide students with an overview of the contributions made by powerful women throughout United States history.

In this lesson, students begin by testing their knowledge of how famous men and women have impacted the country's cultural, social, political and economic development since the colonial period.

After the NCC program, students learn about the mission of the National Women's Hall of Fame, located in Seneca Falls, NY, and examine the Declaration of Sentiments, written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and passed at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. They conclude the lesson by nominating women of power to the Hall.

Designed for students in grade 9-12, this lesson takes approximately four to six class periods from beginning to end.

Background

Grade(s) Level

9-12

Classroom Time

One 45-minute class period (pre-lesson)

Three or four 45-minute periods (post-lesson)

Handouts*Who Am I? Part One* student worksheet*Who Am I? Part Two* student worksheet*The Declaration of Sentiments* student worksheet**Constitutional Connections**

Nineteenth Amendment

Throughout United States history, women have made significant contributions to the country's cultural, social, political and economic development. From the colonial period to 2010, from Dolley Madison to Hillary Rodham Clinton, women have influenced everything from legislation to the arts.

The purpose of the National Constitution Center's *Women of Power* program, and of this accompanying lesson, is to offer students an opportunity to learn more about how women have shaped the U.S. throughout history. Even though women did not get the right to vote until the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920, their actions have affected life in the U.S. for more than 300 years.

In the *Women of Power* program, students will meet figures like Deborah Samson, who disguised herself as a man and fought in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. They will learn about Sojourner Truth, who was born into slavery but escaped at the age of 19 and became a leader of the abolitionist movement. And, they will understand how women began organizing themselves in the mid-1800s and early 1900s to fight for equal rights. Led by key figures like Alice Paul, who organized thousands of women to march in Washington, DC, their campaign for women's suffrage (the right to vote) was a long, but successful journey.

Objectives

Students will:

- Test their knowledge about the contributions of famous men and women in U.S. history;
- Learn key facts about how women have contributed to the cultural, social, political and economic development of the U.S. throughout the country's history, beginning with the colonial period;
- Familiarize themselves with the National Women's Hall of Fame's mission and members;
- Read and discuss Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Declaration of Sentiments*; and

- Nominate a woman to the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Standards

5.1.9.C: Analyze the principles and ideals that shape United States government.

- Liberty / Freedom
- Democracy
- Justice
- Equality

5.1.9.D: Compare and contrast the basic principles and ideals found in significant documents:

- Declaration of Independence
- United States Constitution
- Bill of Rights
- Pennsylvania Constitution

8.3.9.A: Compare the role groups and individuals played in the social, political, cultural, and economic development of the U.S.

Activity

Pre-Lesson

1. Divide students into mixed-ability groups of 3-4 and distribute a copy of the *Who Am I? Part One* worksheet to each student. Ask students to work in their groups to complete the worksheet as best as they can. Encourage them to discuss their answers within their groups, but do not allow them to use textbooks, the Internet, or any other materials.
2. After 5-10 minutes, review the correct answers. Ask students how many questions their groups were able to answer correctly, and record the numbers of correct answers for each group on the board. While students may not understand the importance of this information now, they will likely understand it later on during the pre-lesson.
3. Have students return to their groups and distribute a copy of the *Who Am I? Part Two* worksheet to each student. Ask students to work in their groups to complete this worksheet as best as they can. Once again, remind them that they may discuss their answers within their groups, but do not allow them to use textbooks, the Internet, or any other materials.
4. After 5-10 minutes, review the correct answers. Ask students how many questions their groups were able to answer correctly, and record the numbers of correct answers for each group on the board.

5. More likely than not, the majority of the groups will have answered more questions correctly on the first worksheet, largely because most resources about U.S. history (textbooks, websites, videos, etc.) focus more on the contributions of famous men than on those of women. Using the questions below as a guide, lead a brief discussion about the quizzes and the upcoming NCC program. At the end of the discussion, make sure that students understand that the purpose of taking these two quizzes was not only to review (or learn) important information about figures in U.S. history but also to begin thinking about the contributions that women have made to the country.
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- Think about the quizzes that your group just took. Which quiz was easier for your group? Why do you think this is?
 - Which people were you able to correctly identify? How did you know who they were/Where did you learn about them?
 - Which people were you unable to correctly identify? Why do you think that you were less familiar with them?
 - Think about all of the different ways in which you learn about U.S. history (textbooks, websites, videos, field trips, etc.). Which types of people do these resources tend to focus on? Why do you think this is?
 - While many resources about U.S. history tend to focus on the contributions of famous men, many women have also made incredibly important contributions to the country over the past 300 years. Think about some of the women included in the second quiz that your group took. Why do you think it is important to learn about who these women were and what they did?
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Post-Lesson

1. At the end of the NCC *Women of Power* program, students are asked to think about women who have recently held or currently hold positions of power in the U.S., including Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Introduce students to the National Women's Hall of Fame, which was established in Seneca Falls, NY, in 1969 as a permanent home to honor the contributions of America's women. Share the following information with students about the Hall:
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- The National Women's Hall of Fame was founded by both men and women in Seneca Falls, NY, in 1969. In 1979, it moved to its permanent home in a former bank building in the town's historic district.
- In 1848, Seneca Falls was the site of the first women's rights convention. Organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the convention was attended by more than 300 women and men, all of whom gathered to

discuss the importance of granting women equal rights. They passed the *Declaration of Sentiments*, which was modeled after the *Declaration of Independence* and declared that women should have the right to vote.

- Today, the National Women's Hall of Fame continues to celebrate the many contributions that women have made to the arts and sciences, athletics, business, government, education and many other fields. The Hall currently honors 236 women, including Louisa May Alcott, Julia Child, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Harriet Tubman, and Oprah Winfrey.
- The Hall welcomes nominations. Information about the nominating process can be found on its website (<https://www.greatwomen.org/home.php>).

2. Distribute copies of the *Declaration of Sentiments* to students. After they have read the document (10-15 minutes), lead a discussion with the following questions as your guide:

- How does Stanton believe that women are treated unjustly by men? What specific examples does she cite of unjust treatment?
- What changes to the treatment of women does Stanton propose in the resolutions?
- What reasons does Stanton offer for why women should be treated equally?
- How is the *Declaration of Sentiments* similar to the *Declaration of Independence* in both content and structure? (Consider having students re-read the *Declaration of Independence* before this discussion if they are not already familiar with it. See Further Resources for a website that provides the document's full text.)
- Why do you think Stanton modeled her document after the *Declaration of Independence*? What purpose did this serve?

3. Divide students into mixed-ability groups of 3-4. Explain that the National Women's Hall of Fame invites the public to nominate "outstanding American women" whom they think deserve to be inducted. Nominees may be living or deceased, but they must be citizens of the U.S. and meet the following general criteria: "To honor in perpetuity those women, citizens of the United States of America, whose contributions to the arts, athletics, business, education, government, the humanities, philanthropy and science, have been the greatest value...."

The Hall of Fame's website includes complete information about how to nominate a woman and a link to the official nomination form, which asks students to include a nominee's biographical information and answer three questions about

the nominee's contributions to society
(http://www.greatwomen.org/nominate_2.php).

After reviewing the criteria and nomination form with students, lead a class brainstorm about women whom they believe should be nominated to the Hall. Have each group pick a different person from the list and research her life and accomplishments before completing the nomination form online. See Further Resources for recommended websites for research. Once students have completed their forms, allow them to submit their nominations officially to the Hall.

4. If time permits, have each group give a brief presentation to the class about their nominee.

Further Resources

- <http://www.usconstitution.net/sentiments.html> (Complete text of the *Declaration of Sentiments*)
- <http://www.ushistory.org/DECLARATION/document/index.htm> (Complete text of the *Declaration of Independence*)
- (<https://www.greatwomen.org/home.php>). (The National Women's Hall of Fame)
- <http://www.nwhp.org/resourcecenter/biographycenter.php> (The National Women's History Project's Biography Center)
- <http://womenshistorymonth.gov/> (The Library of Congress' Women's History Month website)
- <http://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/womens-history.html> (The National Archives)
- <http://www.nwhm.org/> (The National Women's History Museum)

Who Am I? Part One

Directions: Each of the following questions asks you to identify a famous man from U.S. history. Using what you know – but without the help of a textbook or the Internet – work with your group members to answer each of these questions. An answer bank is provided at the bottom of the worksheet. Use each answer only once.

1. I worked as a printer, conducted many famous experiments with electricity and wrote *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Who Am I? _____
2. I invented the light bulb, the phonograph and the motion picture projector. Who Am I? _____
3. I was the first president of the United States and served as the commander-in-chief of the colonial armies during the Revolutionary War. Who Am I? _____
4. I was a poet and one of the most important figures in the Harlem Renaissance. Who Am I? _____
5. I delivered the "I Have a Dream" speech about civil rights in Washington, DC, and was the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Who Am I? _____
6. I was the fourth president of the United States and wrote the Bill of Rights. Who Am I? _____
7. As president, I led the United States through the Civil War, but I was assassinated during my second term in office. Who Am I? _____
8. I was the first African American justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. Who Am I? _____
9. I wrote some of the greatest American novels, including *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Who Am I? _____
10. I invented the telephone. Who Am I? _____

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| Alexander Graham Bell | Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. | Abraham Lincoln |
| James Madison | Ben Franklin | George Washington |
| Mark Twain | Thurgood Marshall | Langston Hughes |
| Thomas Edison | | |

Who Am I?
Part One
Answer Sheet

1. Ben Franklin
2. Thomas Edison
3. George Washington
4. Langston Hughes
5. Martin Luther King Jr.
6. James Madison
7. Abraham Lincoln
8. Thurgood Marshall
9. Mark Twain
10. Alexander Graham Bell

Who Am I? Part Two

Directions: Each of the following questions asks you to identify a famous woman from U.S. history. Using what you know – but without the help of a textbook or the Internet – work with your group members to answer each of these questions. An answer bank is provided at the bottom of the worksheet. Use each answer only once.

1. I disguised myself as a boy and fought in the Revolutionary War, but my secret was discovered when a doctor examined me after I became ill. Who Am I?

2. I organized thousands of women to march for equal rights in Washington, DC. Who Am I?

3. I was a novelist and an influential figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Who Am I?

4. Along with others, I organized a famous women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, NY, in 1848. Who Am I? _____
5. I was a sculptor and the first African American female artist to receive a federal commission for my work. Who Am I? _____
6. I was a teacher and nurse and founded the American Red Cross. Who Am I?

7. I was born a slave but escaped and became a leader of the abolitionist (anti-slavery) movement. Who Am I? _____
8. I was a first lady and worked as my husband's unofficial speech writer. Who Am I?

9. I worked as a seamstress and owned my own shop on Arch St. in Philadelphia. Who Am I? _____
10. I was married to one of the country's first presidents and saved a portrait of George Washington from being destroyed in a White House fire. Who Am I?

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|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Elizabeth Cady Stanton | Zora Neale Hurston | Clara Barton |
| Deborah Samson | Betsy Ross | Alice Paul |
| Sojourner Truth | Sarah Polk | Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller |
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Who Am I?
Part Two
Answer Sheet

1. Deborah Samson
2. Alice Paul
3. Zora Neale Hurston
4. Elizabeth Cady Stanton
5. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller
6. Clara Barton
7. Sojourner Truth
8. Sarah Polk
9. Betsy Ross
10. Dolley Madison

The Declaration of Sentiments

Written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the *Declaration of Sentiments* was debated and passed in July 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention in New York. Along with Lucretia Mott, Stanton organized the convention, which was attended by more than 300 women and men, all of whom gathered to discuss the plight of women in the 19th century. Modeled after the *Declaration of Independence*, Stanton's document expressed outrage with the fact that women did not have the same rights as men *and* proposed a series of resolutions to improve the treatment of women in society.

When the *Declaration of Sentiments* was later shared with the public, it initiated dialogue among others who were also committed to securing equal rights for women. But it was also met with criticism and anger. It is credited, however, with being one of the catalysts for the subsequent ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, which granted women the right to vote.

Text of the *Declaration of Sentiments*:

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience has shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they were accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to law in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men, both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right as a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master — the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes and, in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of the women — the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in church, as well as state, but a subordinate position, claiming apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the church.

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation, in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the state and national legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of conventions embracing every part of the country.

Resolutions

Whereas, the great precept of nature is conceded to be that "man shall pursue his own true and substantial happiness." Blackstone in his Commentaries remarks that this law of nature, being coeval with mankind and dictated by God himself, is, of course, superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries and at all times; no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this, and such of them as are valid derive all their force, and all their validity, and all their authority, mediately and immediately, from this original; therefore,

Resolved, That such laws as conflict, in any way, with the true and substantial happiness of woman, are contrary to the great precept of nature and of no validity, for this is "superior in obligation to any other."

Resolved, that all laws which prevent woman from occupying such a station in society as her conscience shall dictate, or which place her in a position inferior to that of man, are contrary to the great precept of nature and therefore of no force or authority.

Resolved, that woman is man's equal, was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such.

Resolved, that the women of this country ought to be enlightened in regard to the laws under which they live, that they may no longer publish their degradation by declaring themselves satisfied with their present position, nor their ignorance, by asserting that they have all the rights they want.

Resolved, that inasmuch as man, while claiming for himself intellectual superiority, does accord to woman moral superiority, it is preeminently his duty to encourage her to speak and teach, as she has an opportunity, in all religious assemblies.

Resolved, that the same amount of virtue, delicacy, and refinement of behavior that is required of woman in the social state also be required of man, and the same transgressions should be visited with equal severity on both man and woman.

Resolved, that the objection of indelicacy and impropriety, which is so often brought against woman when she addresses a public audience, comes with a very ill grace from those who encourage, by their attendance, her appearance on the stage, in the concert, or in feats of the circus.

Resolved, that woman has too long rested satisfied in the circumscribed limits which corrupt customs and a perverted application of the Scriptures have marked out for her, and that it is time she should move in the enlarged sphere which her great Creator has assigned her.

Resolved, that it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise.

Resolved, that the equality of human rights results necessarily from the fact of the identity of the race in capabilities and responsibilities.

Resolved, that the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for the securing to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions, and commerce.

Resolved, therefore, that, being invested by the Creator with the same capabilities and same consciousness of responsibility for their exercise, it is demonstrably the right and duty of woman, equally with man, to promote every righteous cause by every righteous means; and especially in regard to the

great subjects of morals and religion, it is self-evidently her right to participate with her brother in teaching them, both in private and in public, by writing and by speaking, by any instrumentalities proper to be used, and in any assemblies proper to be held; and this being a self-evident truth growing out of the divinely implanted principles of human nature, any custom or authority adverse to it, whether modern or wearing the hoary sanction of antiquity, is to be regarded as a self-evident falsehood, and at war with mankind.

Source: <http://www.usconstitution.net/sentiments.html>