

Arkansas, a Feminine Perspective

Revised 2007-08 School Year Utilizing 2006 Social Studies Frameworks Including 2007 Arkansas History Amendments and 2007 School Library Media Frameworks

History has traditionally been written and told from a male perspective. As gender and ethnic awareness have gradually influenced the study of history, research and writing from feminine perspectives have increased. In Arkansas' history women were not merely passive bystanders; they often took active roles in spite of lingering stereotypes. This lesson will make students aware of the importance of women in the history of our state.

Students will be introduced to the struggle for women's rights in the U.S. first by reading a quote from Carrie Chapman Catt. They will then study and discuss gender attitudes and the roles of women in Arkansas from colonial times to the present. Finally, students will research specific Arkansas women and their contributions to our state's history.

Grades: 7th – 8th
The lesson may be modified for sixth grade students and adapted for ninth through twelfth grade students.

Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks:

Arkansas History Student Learning Expectations:

H.6.6.34	Identify significant individuals whose lives impacted the Civil Rights movement
EA.3.AH.7-8.2	Identify key individuals and groups related to the settlement of Arkansas
RP.6.AH.7-8.6	Discuss the contributions of political leaders in Arkansas during the Progressive Era
W.7.AH.7-8.1	Describe the contributions of Arkansans in the early 1900s
WWP.9.AH.7-8.1	Identify contributions of Arkansans during World War II
WWP.9.AH.7-8.5	Identify political leaders and their major contributions after World War II
WWP.9.AH.7-8.12	Identify significant contributions made by Arkansans in the following fields:
EA.3.AH.9-12.2	Research key individuals and groups related to the settlement of Arkansas
SR.5.AH.9-12.5	Analyze the contributions of noteworthy Arkansans during the Civil War period

RP.6.AH.9-12.6	Examine the contributions of political leaders in Arkansas during the Progressive Era
W.7.AH.9-12.2	Describe the contributions of Arkansans to the early 1900s
WWP.9.AH.9-12.5	Investigate the major contributions of political leaders after World War II
WWP.9.AH.9-12.8	Research significant contributions made by Arkansans in the following fields: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art • Business • Culture • Medicine • Science

Social Studies Student Learning Expectations:

H.6.6.9	Explain how the Women’s Rights movement led to the Nineteenth Amendment
H.6.6.32	Identify the cultural changes of the 1920s
H.6.6.33	Explain the social changes caused by World War II
H.6.8.24	Describe the societal changes that resulted from the industrial revolution
H.6.8.25	Investigate late 19 th century social and political reform movements

School Library Media Student Learning Expectations:

I.1.7.9, I.1.8.9 – Access various types of information for an overview of a topic, for background information, and as a starting point for research

- print
- non-print
- electronic resources

A.3.7.1, A.3.8.1 – Practice organizational strategies to record and synthesize information

Related Encyclopedia of Arkansas Entries:

[Maya Angelou](#); [Bernie Babcock](#); [Daisy Bates](#); [Betty Bumpers](#); [Sarah Caldwell](#); [Hattie Caraway](#); [Civil War through Reconstruction](#); [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#); [Early Twentieth Century](#); [European Exploration and Settlement](#); [Ellen Gilchrist](#); [Tess Harper](#); [Joan Hess](#); [Blanche Lambert Lincoln](#); [Louisiana Purchase through Early Statehood](#); [Married Women’s Property Law](#); [Martha Mitchell](#); [Modern Era](#); [Patsy Montana](#); [Pearl Peden Oldfield](#); [Post Reconstruction through Gilded Age](#); [Pre-European Exploration](#); [Women](#); [Women’s Suffrage](#); [World War II through Faubus Era](#)

Introduction

The teacher will select the appropriate student learning expectations for his or her class, review the key terms, and make copies of selected activities included in the lesson. Collaboration with the school library media specialist for assistance with the utilization of the technology resource tool for Arkansas History is suggested. See above links or visit the online *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net>.

The school library media specialist can also make suggestions for other resources which are not listed in lesson plan.

Key Terms:

infer	gender	women's rights	feminism
suffrage	social history	common law	chauvinism

Materials:

- **Access to a computer lab**
 - Five pieces of paper, each with one of the following time periods written on it: *Colonial Times, Antebellum South, Victorian Age, The Twenties, and Contemporary Times*

Activities:

WARM UP

1. Write the following quote on the board:

To get that word, male, out of the Constitution, cost the women of the country 52 years of pauseless campaign; 56 state referendum campaigns; 480 legislative campaigns to get state suffrage amendments submitted; 47 state constitutional campaigns; 277 state party convention campaigns; 30 national party convention campaigns to get suffrage planks in the party platforms; 19 campaigns with 19 successive Congresses to get federal amendment submitted; and the final ratification campaign.

--Carrie Chapman Catt, on the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment

2. Without discussion, ask students to write a one-sentence reaction to the above statement. Then ask students to share their responses. Their reactions may range from extreme feminism to male chauvinism. Steer the discussion toward the roles of women in general history and in Arkansas history in particular.

3. Ask students to brainstorm a list of famous women from Arkansas history. The list will probably be very short. Ask students why women don't always have leading political and economic roles. Ask them their opinions about women's traditional roles in history. (If your class has a sense of humor, you might suggest that history is, after all, his-story.)

MAIN ACTIVITIES

1. Through lecture and discussion, explain that women's roles have traditionally been strongest behind the scenes or in social aspects of history. You may want to mention that history has many different perspectives (social, economic, political, cultural, environmental, etc.).
2. Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Give each group a piece of paper with one of these time periods written on it: Colonial Times, Antebellum South, Victorian Age, The Twenties, and Contemporary Times. Ask them to write down any information they know about women's roles during their group's time period, as well as the names of any famous Arkansas women who lived during that time. (Their knowledge may be limited.)
3. As a class discuss the groups' information. Write the main points from each group on the board according to the time period.
4. Have each group research women's roles during their specific time period using the media center, library, Internet, and other resources.
5. After allowing groups enough time to do their research, have each group design a poster that creatively displays their findings. They can present their findings to the class as an overview of women in Arkansas.
6. Using the student information as a backdrop, discuss/lecture about each time period to expand on students' knowledge. Some suggestions are:
 - a. Colonial Times: Mary John, a black businesswoman of the early 1800s, was well known for running one of the three famed hotels on the Arkansas River. Located in Arkansas Post, her hotel was the only one in the county. She was born a slave while Arkansas was still a French colony, and named "Marie Jean," which was anglicized to Mary John. For additional information refer to The Grand Prairie Historical Bulletin article about her (see Sources below).
 - b. Antebellum South: During this period women created a "social fabric" that bound together not only the women in Arkansas' frontier but also their families. Activities such as cooking and quilting fostered this social network. Only two percent of Arkansas households were headed solely by women. Before 1835, married women had very few legal rights. Under common law women ranked with children because a wife's property was completely her husband's. The passage of the "Married Woman's Property Law" in 1835 made Arkansas a leader in the nineteenth century feminist movement.
 - c. Victorian Age: Women's roles changed little during the Victorian Age in Arkansas, with the exception of the effects of the Industrial Revolution as a catalyst for future changes. A woman's place was still considered to be in the home; in school girls were still not expected to learn chemistry, mathematics, and similar subjects. Some colleges did begin admitting women for the first time. A few women did enter the professions of medicine and law, while a few others became successful

businesswomen. You might give students this quote from an 1880 diary and ask them how this description compares with their current lifestyle:

Mrs. Jackson made all the clothing for the family—including sheets, pillow cases, and towels—cooked on a wood stove, carried water from the bayou, washed clothes on a scrub board and saved the water to scour the kitchen floor. She cooked three meals a day, did the gardening and the milking and fed the chickens. She took her turn sitting up with the sick and the dead, loved to read and found time to visit with her neighbors.

d. The Twenties: Although in many ways women's roles had still changed very little, women took an active part in the prohibition movement of the 1920s. Their activities raised their political consciousness as they joined temperance societies, studied issues such as child labor, educational reform, and community betterment. Governor Thomas McRae, the first governor of Arkansas after the Nineteenth Amendment became law, appointed some women to state jobs. (They were all removed by his successors.) During this period Pearl Peden Oldfield succeeded her deceased husband, Representative William Oldfield, in Congress in 1928. This perhaps led the way for the election of Arkansan Hattie Carraway in 1938 as the first woman ever elected to the United States Senate.

e. Contemporary Times: Arkansas has produced many successful women since the 1930s. However, traditional gender attitudes toward women have continued into recent times, as this 1963 speech by Representative Paul Van Dalsem of Perryville demonstrates:

We don't have any of these University Women [American Association of University Women] in Perry County, but I'll tell you what we do up there when one of our women starts poking around in something she doesn't know anything about. We get her an extra milk cow. If that don't work, we give her a little more garden to tend. And if that's not enough, we get her pregnant and keep her barefoot.

The Representative's "barefoot and pregnant" statement became infamous. Although it did much to draw attention to chauvinist attitudes, old ways still persist. Arkansas did not vote for the Equal Rights Amendment, nor did most other Southern states. Arkansas is still attempting to change many of its traditional attitudes towards women.

7. As evidence that Arkansas has produced successful women, assign each student a brief research project on one of the following Arkansans:

Maya Angelou	Hattie Carraway	Mary John
Bernie Babcock	Hillary Rodham Clinton	Blanche Lambert Lincoln
Daisy Bates	Ellen Gilchrist	Martha Mitchell
Betty Bumpers	Tess Harper	Patsy Montana
Sarah Caldwell	Joan Hess	Mary Steenburgen

Extensions:

1. Have students dress in period clothing and tell a "woman's story" from a first person perspective.

2. Ask each student to interview their oldest female relative and write a list of five ways their lives were different.

Sources:

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These lesson plans are made possible in part through the support of the Arkansas Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities

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