

Open Up the Textbook (OUT)

Women's Roles in WWI

Enlarge

Complicate

Contest

Vivify

In this OUT analysis, 8th grade students will study women's roles during WWI in order to better understand how women contributed to WWI at home and abroad? This OUT analysis provides students with documents that are meant to deliberately enlarge and vivify the textbook.

Source A: The Textbook – [*United States History*, William Deverell and Deborah Gray White, page 728]

New Wartime Opportunities

Three main factors led to a shortage of labor in the United States during the war. First, American factories were working nonstop to produce weapons and supplies for the Allied forces. Factories need new workers to meet this huge demand. Second, the war almost completely cut off immigration. As you know, immigrants had provided a steady source of labor to the American industry. And third, many of the young men who would normally take factory jobs were fighting in Europe.

Women's War Efforts

This labor shortage created new opportunities for many workers. American women took on new roles to help the war effort. Some 1 million women joined the U.S. workforce during the war years. For many, this was their first experience working outside the home.

Women also worked for the war effort in Europe. About 25,000 American women volunteered as nurses, telephone operators and signalers, typists and interpreters in France. Women were not given jobs in combat, but they braved gunfire at the front lines as nurses and ambulance drivers. One female driver described her World War 1 experiences:

"We had our first air-raid work last night. I was the night driver on duty...Some bombs fell very near us as I got to the [hospital]...when shrapnel [metal fragments] whizzed past my head and there was a tremendous crash close beside...Then an ambulance call came and I tore off."

~Mrs. Guy Napier-Martin, quoted in, The Overseas War Record of the Winsor School, 1914-1919

Other women, meanwhile, spoke out against U.S. participation in the war. Social reformer Jane Addams was against U.S. entry into the war. Jeannette Rankin of Montana, the first female member of Congress, was against declaring war in 1917/ "I want to stand by my country," she said, "but I cannot vote for war."

Source A Questions for Consideration

1. What two sources are used in this excerpt, name the title of the sources and the authors?
2. What circumstances does this source claim assisted women in entering the American workforce?
3. How does this document help you to understand women's roles and contributions to WWI?

Source B: Women's Gender Roles In American ["Women's History in America," Women's International Center and *Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia*, 1995]

Beginning in the 19th century, the required educational preparation, particularly for the practice of medicine, increased. This tended to prevent many young women, who married early and bore children, from entering professional careers. Although home nursing was considered a proper female occupation, nursing in hospitals was done almost exclusively by men. Specific **discrimination**¹ against women also began to appear. For example, the American Medical Association, founded in 1846, **barred**² women from membership. Barred also from attending "men's" medical colleges, women enrolled in their own for instance, the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania, which was established in 1850. By the 1910s, however, women were attending many leading medical schools, and in 1915 the American Medical Association began to admit women members.

In contrast, the teaching profession was a large field of employment for women. In the late 1980s more than twice as many women as men taught in elementary and high schools. In higher education, however, women held only about one third of the teaching positions...

Women constituted more than 45 percent of employed persons in the United States in 1989, but they had only a small share of the decision-making jobs... they were outnumbered about 1.5 to 1 by men.

Working women often faced discrimination on the mistaken belief that, because they were married or would most likely get married, they would not be permanent workers. But married women generally continued on their jobs for many years...

Source B Questions for Consideration

1. Who originally wrote this source and when was this it written?
2. What claims does this source state about women's roles in the American workforce during the late 1800's to the early 1900's?
3. How do the underlined words and phrases; prevent, exclusively, held only about one third, only had a small share help you understand the meaning of the words "**discrimination**" and "**barred**" in relation to women?
4. How does the language the author uses persuade the document's audience when analyzing women's roles in American society?
5. Compare the information in this source to source A. Cite several ways this source expands on women's roles in America before and during WWI?

¹ Treatment of making a decision in favor of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category; such as gender, race, religion, age, and economic status.

² To stop or prevent

Source C: Women's Roles In the U.S. Military. "The Story of the Female Yeomen during the First World War" Nathaniel Patch, fall 2003, Vol. 38, No. 3 Retrieved from the National Archives www.nara.gov

Until World War I, the military establishment did not officially **accommodate**³women who wished to serve. Some women had to dress like men to fight in the field, and others risked their lives as frontline nurses, but these brave women were not recognized by the military.

The Naval Act of 1916 Opens the Door

The call to arms went out, and hundreds of thousands of men volunteered for or were drafted into military service. Even with increase of manpower, the Navy remained shorthanded... How were these new ships going to be manned? The answer lay in the **unassuming**⁴ language of the Naval Act of 1916, which unintentionally opened the door to women volunteering in the U.S. Navy. As in previous wars, women were prohibited from joining the Navy and other Regular armed services.

But the act's vague language relating to the reserve forces did not prohibit women. The act declared..."all persons who may be capable of performing special useful service for coastal defense."

After reviewing the act, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels and the Bureau of Navigation (the forerunner to the Bureau of Personnel) **concluded**⁵ that the language did not **prohibit**⁶ women from enlisting in the reserves...The Navy began recruiting women immediately...

At the beginning, it was assumed the [female] yeomen would perform only administrative duties... the women also worked as mechanics, truck drivers, cryptographers, telephone operators, and munitions makers.

Source C Questions for Consideration

1. Who wrote this document and what online organization published it?
2. How do the underlined words unintentionally and vague help you to understand the meaning of **unassuming**?
3. After reading the definitions for the bolded words, how do those words help you to understand women's abilities to participate in the United States military before and after WWI?
4. After the passage of the Naval Act of 1916, would you describe women's roles as limited, stagnant or expanding? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
5. What do sources A and B say about women's roles in the United States military?
6. How are women's roles changing from the late 1890's to the early 1900's based on evidence from sources A-C?

³ assist

⁴ not specific; unclear

⁵ decided

⁶ stop

Source D: Women's Roles during WWI in the U.S. (secondary source, Smithsonian Special Report) –
[“Before Rosie the Riveter, Farmerettes Went to Work,” by, Elaine F. Weiss, May 28, 2009]

From 1917 to 1919, the Woman's Land Army of America brought more than 20,000 city and town women to rural America to take over farm work after men were called to war. Most of these women had never before worked on a farm, but they were soon plowing fields, driving tractors, planting and harvesting. The Land Army's "farmerettes" were paid wages equal to male farm laborers and were protected by an eight-hour workday. For many, the farmerettes were shocking at first--wearing pants!--but farmers began to rely upon the women workers.

While California fruit growers held **lucrative**⁷ contracts with the U.S. military to supply troops with dried and canned fruit, the extreme wartime farm labor shortage enabled the California Woman's Land Army to demand extraordinary employment terms: a guaranteed contract, equal pay to what local male farm laborers could command, an eight hour day, and overtime pay. The employers also agreed to worker protections--comfortable living quarters, designated rest periods, lifting limits, and workers' compensation insurance—considered radical for the time.

The *Los Angeles Times* sent one of its star reporters, Alma Whitaker, to spend a day working with a Land Army unit, and she came away rather dazzled... Whitaker was taken with the farmerettes' serious attitude:

*“This woman's land army, composed of able-bodied young women, selected just as the men are selected by the army, for their physical capacity, their good **characters**⁸, their general **deportment**⁹, and trained and disciplined even rather more strictly than the men... are **acquitting**¹⁰ themselves with amazing efficiency.”*

Source D Questions for Consideration

1. Who wrote this document and when was it published?
2. Do you think this is a reliable source? Why or why not?
3. What evidence does the author use to support women's roles changing in American society because of WWI?
4. How does Los Angeles Times reporter, Alma Whitaker, compare women to men?
5. How might popular newspapers publishing positive stories about women in new roles during the early 1900's change society's view of women and their capabilities?
6. How does this source complicate what the Source A explained regarding women's roles during WWI?

⁷ Producing profit, making money

⁸ Attitude of an individual person

⁹ Behaviors and manors

¹⁰ The way individuals conduct themselves

Source E: Women’s Roles in the Military during WWI (primary source, diary entry) – [The Roses of No Man’s Land (Diary excerpt of Hester Cotton, 1914-1915), Lyn Macdonald, 1980]

“I could never get the smell of that stuff out of my nose. I can still smell it even now, a sort of chlorate of lime smell, and of course the smell of the wound themselves was terrible. If there was a case of **gas gangrene**¹¹ in a ward you could smell it as you opened the door. We used to put on enormous **dressings**¹² of lint soaked in this stuff—Eusol, we called it...

You couldn’t clean a wound up properly, it was absolutely suppurating. All you could do was slap on this quite large dressing soaked in the solution and then dressed it again every four hours. So there was a tremendous amount of dressings to be done and a lot of pain for the men, because there weren’t all the pain killers there are now. I don’t know how they survived what they did...

It was very hard to do the dressings sometimes, because we weren’t trained nurses and were only helping to hold things and pass them to **Sister**¹³, but it was dreadful to have to look at them nevertheless. I only had to leave the ward once, and that was for the very first wound I saw. It was a man who’d had half his buttocks shot off, all the fleshy parts, and never having seen a real wound before I was a bit taken aback. If the wound had been clean it would have been red, because it was absolutely raw flesh. As it was, it was full of pus, absolutely suppurating with pus. You simply couldn’t clean it up; you just had to keep on putting these wet things on until gradually it got cleaner and cleaner. He did get better, that man, but he had a terrible time. He had to be kept lying on his stomach and I remember when he was first able to inch round on the one side for the first time. That was a great day.”

Source E Questions for Consideration

1. Who is the author of this source? What type of text is it?
2. Do you think this is a reliable source? Why or why not?
3. What evidence does this document to support the main idea of source B paragraph one?
4. “Suppurating” is used twice by Hester Cotton. Use context clues to write a definition of the word.
5. How does this document compare to the previous documents in demonstrating how women’s roles are changing from before WWI to during WWI?
6. How does this document vivify women’s roles during WWI compared to source A, the textbook entry?

¹¹ An infection where unclean wounds cause skin and soft tissues to become infected and rot. .

¹² Fabric bandages used to treat wounds

¹³ Reference to a religious female nurse in charge of the medical wards

Source F: Women's Roles in Organizations and Industry (primary and secondary sources, multiple digital resources)

Digital Source 1: What America Looked Like: Collecting Peach Pits for WWI Gas Masks

BRIAN RESNICK FEB 1 2012, 8:27 AM ET: Patriotism, at times, demands odd sacrifices from Americans. During WWI, it asked for peach pits -- and lots of them.



National Archives

In this photo, taken on a September 1918 day in Boston, a proud military officer stands tall on top of a pile of something that would save thousands of lives on European battle fronts -- peach pits. Yes, peach pits.

During World War I, the Germans blindsided the Allies with chlorine gas, a hellishly toxic chemical weapon. Once in the body, the yellow-green gas tortured and killed at the same time, causing asphyxiation, convulsions, panic, and a slow death... American chemist James Bert Garner discovered in 1915, [the gas] could be **subdued**¹⁴ with activated charcoal, made from natural fibers such as those found in peach pits.

The chemical warfare spurred a nation-wide call for peach pits and walnut shells, as the *New York Times* reported that same September. "A **campaign**¹⁵ will be launched here this week... In each state, several centers will be established for the reception of parcel post packages of seeds from Red Cross agents in smaller towns or from farmers and other persons who are unable to forward the seeds to their own chapters."

Source F Digital Source 1 Questions for Consideration

1. What is the primary source and what is the secondary source of this document?
2. Where and when was the primary source taken?
3. What role are women portrayed as doing in the photograph?
4. How did women contribute to the war effort in the United States during WWI?

¹⁴ Reduce

¹⁵ An organized social activity

Source F

Digital Source 2: "Poison Gas and World War One" (EXCERPT), (HistoryLearningSite.co.uk., 2014)

“World War I was the first war to involve chemical warfare, and approximately 90,000 soldiers were killed by toxic gas alone...

Armies quickly produced gas masks that gave protection as long as sufficient warning was given of a gas attack. Soldiers also used make-shift gas masks if they were caught in the open without a gas mask during a gas attack - cloth soaked in their own urine and placed over the mouth was said to give protection against a chlorine attack. By the end of the war, relatively sophisticated gas masks were available to soldiers in the trenches on the Western Front.”

Source F Digital Source 2 Questions for Consideration

1. What is the title of this source and where did I find it?
2. Is this source a primary or secondary source? Why do you think that?
3. What new military technology is this excerpt discussing?
4. What did Digital Source 1 state about this new military technology?
5. How are they different?

Digital Source 3 "Son's of Men", Evansville's war record. (Excerpt) Compiled by Heiman Blatt, 1930

“Peach pits were collected during the war to process for charcoal. They would first be soaked in urine and the resulting charcoal was used as a filter for the gas masks.”

Source F Digital Source Questions for Consideration

1. Where did this source come from?
2. Do you think this is a reliable source? Why or Why not?
3. How does this source support Digital Sources 1-2?
4. How did women contribute to new war technologies used during WWI?
5. Using evidence from 3 other previous sources, how have women's roles changed during the United States involvement in WWI?
6. How do these sources enlarge your understanding of women's roles during WWI compared to source A, the textbook entry?

Source G: WWI Propaganda Posters (primary sources, propaganda posters from www.vintagraphs.com)



Poster 1

This Red Cross recruitment poster from WWI shows a Red Cross nurse seated at a desk, with her left arm raised: 'The Red Cross serves humanity. Join now.' Illustrated by C.W. Anderson between 1914 and 1918.

Humanity: people. It can also mean kindness.



Poster 2

A young girl, symbolizing the Near East, clings to the legs of a woman holding a sword and U.S. flag, symbolizing America: 'They shall not perish. Campaign for \$30,000,000. American Committee for Relief in the Near East. Armenia - Greece - Syria - Persia.' The relief organization was created during WWI to help people suffering under Ottoman rule. Produced by American Lithographic Co. of New York, 1918.

Perish: to die

Source G Questions for Consideration

1. **Poster 1** (Read caption under Red Cross poster): What role are women playing in this propaganda poster?
2. How does the word "humanity" help you to understand the role of women nurses during WWI?
3. How does the role of Red Cross nurses compare to women's roles in American society before WWI?
4. **Poster 2** (Read caption under the poster which states "They Shall Not Perish"): What role are females playing in this propaganda poster?
5. What country is portrayed as protecting other countries?
6. What role is America portrayed playing in this propaganda poster?
7. What evidence do the posters illustrate showing women's roles before WWI and during WWI?
8. **Writing Task**

This is an informative writing task based on NVACS standards: RH.1-2, RH.4-7, WHST.2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the texts as well as the ways in which the textbook was enlarged, complicated, and vivified.

How did women contribute to WWI at home and abroad and how did these contributions change women's roles?

- Answer the above question in approximately 3 paragraphs, using evidence from at least 4 of the texts or posters provided.
- Write a clear informational claim and provide 5 pieces of evidence to support your idea. After each piece of evidence cited in a direct “quote” or paraphrase (your own words), please add the source letter in parentheses, for example (Source B).
- For each piece of evidence, clearly reason (this is your explanation or your warrant) why this piece of evidence helps support your thesis. Underline your reasoning. Reasoning can be in the same sentence of the evidence or come before or after the sentence that includes the evidence.
- Choose 3 of the important vocabulary terms from the box below to include in your writing. Add at least two context clues for each term to demonstrate your understanding. Circle your context clues for each term.

Vocabulary Terms

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. prohibit or exclude | 2. Humanity or compassion |
| 3. deportment or behavior | 4. vague or unclear |