

# TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY 2005 CURRICULUM TEMPLATE

NAME: Rachel Draper	SCHOOL: Benson High School
UNIT TITLE: Women Workers on the Homefront During WWII	
TARGET GRADE LEVEL: High School	
APPROXIMATE TIME NEEDED: 7 class sessions	
PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE: Basic knowledge of the consequences for women of World War I, the Depression, and the New Deal.	
<p>UNIT OVERVIEW (Abstract): During World War II, the United States faced a severe labor shortage. Many thousands of workers entered the armed forces to fight the war, and there was increased the demand for industrial production. The federal government launched a recruitment drive to mobilize women workers for defense industry jobs. During the war, Portland, OR, and Vancouver, WA, became major shipbuilding centers where women were recruited to work. In this unit, students will be exposed to the immediate and long-range impact for women on the homefront during World War II. The lessons will explore the effects on gender roles and the American family.</p> <p>Note: The lessons are intended to add to any WWII unit.</p>	
<b>STANDARDS</b>	
<p><b>NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS:</b> 7-12 Explain U.S. military and economic mobilization for war and evaluate the role of labor, including women and African Americans. 9-12 Analyze how the emergence on the ‘New Woman’ challenged Victorian values. [Examine the influence of ideas]. 7-12 Analyze the effects of World War II on gender roles and the American family. [Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas] 7-12 Analyze the economic and social effects of the sharp increase in the labor force participation for women and new immigrants after 1968. [Analyze cause and effect relationships]</p> <p><b>PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS HISTORY STANDARDS:</b> Understand the changes in society and culture during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mobilization for WWII and the impact on the homefront.</p> <p><b>GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS:</b> Standard 6: How culture and experience influence people’s perception of places and regions. Standard 11: The patterns and networks of economic interdependence on the Earth’s surface. Standard 17: How to apply geography to interpret the past.</p>	

## **LESSON ONE: The National Connection**

### **Lesson Objectives:**

During World War II, the United States faced a severe labor shortage. Many thousands of workers entered the armed forces to fight the war, and there was increased the demand for industrial production. The federal government launched a recruitment drive to mobilize women workers for defense industry jobs. Students will view a 20-minute video/DVD about the women shipyard workers during WWII in Portland, Oregon.

Many of the issues raised in the video are still significant today. Some of these issues are sex segregation in the work force, difficulties confronting women working in fields which have traditionally been considered men's, and women's continuing responsibility for child-raising and housework.

Note: Some of the questions are directed at Benson students because of the professional technical majors offered. Questions can be modified to fit the needs of your students.

### **Outcomes/Goals:**

Upon completion of this lesson the student will understand the rise in the female labor force, the importance to the war effort, the effect women working had on the family, and the myths and reality after the war ended.

### **Time Needed:**

2 class periods depending on class discussions.

### **Materials/Resources Needed:**

The video *Good Work Sister! Women Shipyard Workers of World War II: An Oral History* Video available through the Northwest Women's History Project. PPS will order a copy when the DVD is released in 2006. Questions were taken from the *Good Work Sister! Women Shipyard Workers of World War II: An Oral History*, study guide. Questions can be modified to fit curriculum needs.

### **Procedures:**

Warm Up – Answer the following questions on a sheet of paper:

1. What do you think is meant by traditional and non-traditional work involving women?
2. What type of jobs do you think women had in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century?
3. Are certain types of work considered masculine or only suitable for men?
4. Are there types of work that are considered women's work? If so, list the different characteristics and duties of the two.
5. Are there jobs men can't do? Are there jobs women can't do?
6. Do you think men and women receive equal pay for the same jobs? Why or why not?
7. What does this say about the value our society places on men's and women's contributions and labor?
8. Why would a woman in a "man's job" feel she had to be "a little better" than men?
9. What are some of the reasons women might want to do non-traditional work?

10. What is done at Benson to encourage women to think about non-traditional careers, or jobs, hobbies, sports, etc?
11. Do you think Benson steers men and women in different directions for majors? Why or why not?
12. What influences in your life helped you choose a major at Benson?
13. Are the women you know expected to do most of the housework, whether they have an outside job or not? If duties are shared, is someone more responsible to make sure duties are carried out, or to assign them? How is it in your home?

After students have answered the questions have them turn to the person sitting next to them and discuss their answers. Next have a class discussion about their answers.

Show the video *Good Work, Sister! Women Shipyard workers of World War II: An Oral History*. The video is approximately 20 minutes.

You may want to create questions for the students to answer during the video. I will use the following questions after the video:

1. Why did the women go to work in the shipyards?
2. How did the women feel about working industrial type jobs? Give examples.
3. What types of jobs did women do in the Vancouver and Portland area?
4. Where were the women recruited from to work in the shipyards?
5. What were the difficulties the women faced working the non-traditional jobs?
6. How did the shipyards make domestic tasks easier for women? Should industry do the same today? Why don't they?
7. Who took care of the children while the women worked?
8. What happened to the women when World War II was over?
9. Do you think the women wanted to return to being housewives after the war? Why or why not?
10. Do you think the war emergency dissolved discrimination against women and pulled all Americans together to win the war?

**Assessment Tools:**

Through class warm up, video questions, and class discussion students should demonstrate an understanding of the role of women on the homefront and the difficulties they faced working non-traditional jobs.

## LESSON TWO: Use of Primary Resources

### Lesson Objectives:

During WWII, when women were needed as industrial workers, the media (newspapers, magazines, posters, songs, etc.) began portraying women as strong, capable and patriotic, and glamorized industrial work, thus encouraging women to take these jobs.

Students will view a variety of propaganda posters used during World War II about women and the war effort. Students will analyze what the intended message of the propaganda and whether or not they think it was effective.

**Outcomes/Goals:** Students will understand the role of the media in influencing women to join the war effort at home.

**Time Needed:** 2 days

### Materials/Resources Needed:

Download PowerPoint presentation with a variety of WWII posters with women or go to WWII posters: <http://afsf.lackland.af.mil/images/WWII> and choose your own.

### Procedures:

Warm up Activity:

(Note: Check to see if students remember what propaganda is from previous lessons.)

Display the image of Rosie the Riveter and have the students answer the following questions (either on a sheet of paper or an in class discussion):

1. What symbols (if any) are used in the poster?
2. If a symbol is used, is it clear (easy to interpret), memorable, or dramatic?
3. Are the messages in the poster primarily visual, verbal, or both?
4. Who do you think is the intended audience for the poster?
5. What does the government hope the audience will do?
6. Do you think this is an effective poster? Why or why not?

Once the students have a basic understanding of what to look for on the posters show them examples of different propaganda posters involving women during WWII both recruiting for war-related labor (e.g. nursing) and industrial labor on the home front (e.g. shipbuilding). When finished, have them answer the following questions on a sheet of paper:

1. Do you think media influenced women after the war? How? (Think about homemaking and raising a family)
2. During the war how did the posters influence how women felt about themselves? Are such images a powerful force?

3. Does the media influence the perception of women today? How? (Think about movies, magazines, etc.)
4. Do you think propaganda is good or bad? Explain.

**Homework:** Pass out a copy of how to be a good wife from 1960's economic book (attached). Have the students write down questions and comments they have about the piece (or have them prepare an essay). What does it tell them about expectations for women? Are the expectations the same today? What does the piece tell you about the time period?

**Assessment Tools:**

Students will be evaluated on the completeness of the poster and discussion questions.

## LESSON THREE: GIS/Spatial Component

*This lesson integrates GIS/spatial data component into the unit. This lesson can be modified to fit the needs of your students.*

### Lesson Objectives:

Students will look at historic census data for Portland from the 1940s to 2000s (except 1980) on women in the labor force. Students will view the spatial data and discuss why the number of women in the work force has changed over time. Students will be able to compare the number of women to men in the work force for the same time periods and answer leading questions about the data. Students will make maps of the Portland area show a change over time with women in the work force.

### Outcomes/Goals:

Students will be able to use data to draw conclusions about economic factors that influenced women joining the work force or leaving the work force. Students will be able to identify which neighborhood the working class lived and how that compares to today's neighborhoods.

**Time Needed:** 1-2 days

### Materials/Resources Needed:

- Download PowerPoint presentation on GIS census data
- Blank map of Portland
- Color pencils

### Procedures:

Place the students in groups of 4 or 5 to view the slideshow and answer leading questions about the change in the labor force from 1940 to 2000. This could also be a partner activity.

Pass out a blank map to each student to follow along with the presentation and have them color their maps to represent change in their own (or selected) neighborhoods over the decades as they answer the questions. You may want them to identify major landmarks in Portland to help them identify different areas on the maps. I will have the students locate on their blank map where Benson High School is located. I will also have students draw in where their neighborhood is located.

**NOTE: The boundaries on the maps (in light gray) indicate census tracts (NOT NEIGHBORHOODS). Students should use the major freeways and/or another paper map of Portland to locate their neighborhoods and high school on their own blank map.**

As we view the 1940's labor information have students answer questions about the information they see and what they think it means. They may discuss and answer the questions as a group.

### Questions:

1. Which area(s) in Portland have the greatest proportion of men in the labor force?

2. Which area(s) in Portland have the greatest proportion of women in the labor force?  
Which area(s) have the least?
3. Why do you think some areas have more women in the labor force than others?
4. What was happening that might cause women to join the work force in the 1940s?
5. Do you think there will be more or less women working in the next slide (1950)? Why?

After the students discuss and answer the questions have them share their answers as a class. Have the students indicate on their map where the class has determined the largest proportion of women workers is located (in 1940) and have them indicate the proportion of men to women labor for their neighborhood (or selected area).

View the 1950s labor information and have the students answer questions about the slide as a group. You can toggle between the 1940 and 1950 slide to answer some of the comparative questions.

Questions:

1. Which area(s) in Portland have the greatest proportion of men in the labor force?
2. Which area(s) in Portland have the greatest proportion of women in the labor force?  
Which area(s) have the least?
3. Why do you think some areas have more women in the labor force than others?
4. Is there a significant change from the 1940s to 1950s in any area? Where? Why do you think there was a change?
5. Historically, were there any events happening that might have affected women in the labor force?

After the students discuss and answer the questions have them share their answers as a class. Have the students indicate on their map where the class has determined the largest proportion of women workers is located (in 1950) and have them indicate the proportion of men to women labor for their neighborhood (or selected area).

View the slides for 1960, 1970 and 1990 labor information (1980 is missing as comparative data was not available for this year) and have the students answer questions about each slide as a group. Note that the area covered is larger in 1960 (more data was available for the Portland region at this time). You can toggle between the slides to answer the comparative questions.

Questions:

1. Which area(s) in Portland have the greatest proportion of men in the labor force?
2. Which area(s) in Portland have the greatest proportion of women in the labor force?  
Which area(s) have the least?
3. Why do you think some areas have more women in the labor force than others?
4. Is there a significant change over the decades in any area? Where? Why do you think there was a change?
5. Historically, were there any events happening that might have affected women in the labor force?

After the students discuss and answer the questions have them share their answers as a class. Have the students indicate on their map where the class has determined the largest proportion of women workers is located (in 1960, 1970 and 1990) and have them indicate the proportion of men to women labor for their neighborhood (or selected area).

View the 2000s labor information and have the students answer questions about the slide as a group.

Questions:

1. Which area(s) in Portland have the greatest proportion of men in the labor force?
2. Which area(s) in Portland have the greatest proportion of women in the labor force? Which area(s) have the least?
3. Which areas have an equal number of men and women in the labor force?
4. Write a paragraph explaining the trend in labor from 1940-2000.
5. Why do you think women are working today?
6. Do both of your parents work?
7. Explain the trend in the work force for your neighborhood from the 1940s-2000s.
8. Make a prediction: What do you think the labor map will look like in 2020? Why?

**NOTE: Graphics (jpegs) are also provided of each of the powerpoint slides showing women/men labor proportions if you want to print them out for reference or to assist students in completing the essay.**

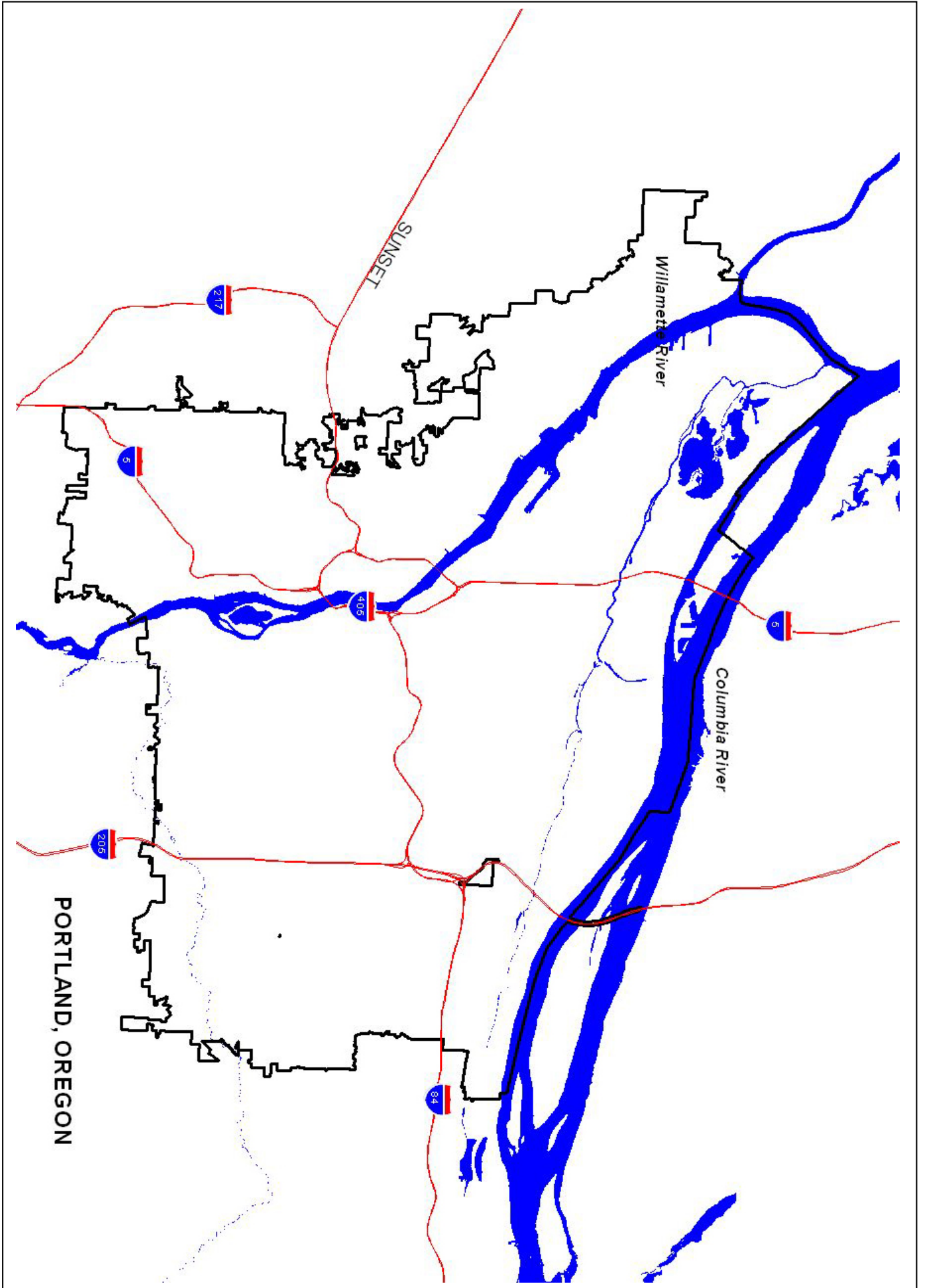
**Assessment Tools:**

Students will be assessed by the discussion and from the questions and maps they turn in and their comparative essay.

## HOW TO BE A GOOD WIFE

1. Have dinner ready: Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal - on time. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him, and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospects of a good meal are part of the warm welcome needed.
2. Prepare yourself: Take 15 minutes to rest so you will be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your makeup, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh looking. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people. Be a little gay and a little more interesting. His boring day may need a lift.
3. Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives, gathering up school books, toys, paper, etc. Then run a dust cloth over the tables. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift, too.
4. Prepare the children: Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces if they are small, comb their hair, and if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part.
5. Minimize the noise: At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of washer, dryer, dishwasher or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet. Be happy to see him. Greet him with a warm smile and be glad to see him.
6. Some Don'ts: Don't greet him with problems or complaints. Don't complain if he's late for dinner. Count this as minor compared with what he might have gone through that day.
7. Make him comfortable: Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or suggest he lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him. Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soft, soothing and pleasant voice. Allow him to relax and unwind.
8. Listen to him: You may have a dozen things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first.
9. Make the evening his: Never complain if he does not take you out to dinner or to other places of entertainment; instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure, his need to be home and relax.
10. The goal: Try to make your home a place of peace and order where your husband can relax.

(The source for this list claims to be from a 1950s home economics textbook teaching high school girls how to prepare for married life. The source for this exact list has not been found. However, it is believed to be a compilation of the prevailing views of the woman's role as wife and mother during this period. Similar ideas are reflected in many other sources – such as “Fascinating Womanhood” in 1963. See <http://www.snopes.com/language/document/goodwife.htm> for further narrative.)



PORTLAND, OREGON

Willamette River

Columbia River

SUNSET

217

5

405

5

205

84