



**Lesson Title:**

Women in World War II – The WASPs and Night Witches

**Subjects**

U. S. History, World History

**Suggested time**

One 50-minute class period

**Grade Level**

7-12

**Essential Question**

What impact did women have on World War II?

**Objective**

To understand the roles women played in World War II.

**Overview**

This lesson provides an overview of how two key Allies (the United States and the Soviet Union) utilized women in a military role during World War II. The students will individually complete a compare/contrast writing assignment.

**Materials**

- *Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation* videos
  - [“Women Airforce Service Pilots”](#)
  - [“Night Witches”](#)
- [Lesson](#)
- [Individual Activity](#)
- [Rubric](#)
- [Standards](#)
- [NCSS C3 Framework](#)

**Warm-Up Activity:**

As a quick review of the European Theatre, ask students -

Who is the leader of -

- Italy? (*Benito Mussolini*)
- Germany? (*Adolph Hitler*)
- The Soviet Union? (*Joseph Stalin*)
- France? (*Charles de Gaulle*)
- Great Britain? (*Winston Churchill*)
- The United States (*Franklin D. Roosevelt/Harry S Truman*)

Key Events –

- Non-Aggression Pact – What is it? How did it benefit Hitler? Stalin?
- When did Germany invade Poland? (*September 1, 1931*)
- Which country won the first battle against Nazi Germany? (*Great Britain*)

## Exploring the Videos

### The Eyewitnesses Tell the Story:

By interviewing people who have experienced courageous events, the *Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation* series keeps history alive for current generations to explore. Oral history lets the audience hear history directly from those that experienced it and can bring the past to life with powerful information that print resources may miss. The technologies and solutions presented are information few today have and are contextualized by experts that continue to work with and preserve this classic technology.

### [“Women Airforce Service Pilots”](#)

#### **About the Video:**

This video is one of 20 short videos in the series *Chronicles of Courage: Stories of Wartime and Innovation*. “Women Airforce Service Pilots” tells the story of how the roles of women in the United States changed during World War II, including becoming pilots to help assist the military.

#### **Video Voices:**

##### **Dawn Rochow Balden Seymour**

Seymour flew planes as a Woman Airforce Service Pilot (WASP) during World War II. Between March 1943 and December 1944, she flew B-17s on training missions in Florida and New Mexico. She has been an advocate to have the WASPs remembered and recognized for their service to the United States.

### **Bernice “Bee” Falk Haydu**

Haydu not only served as a WASP, but was president of the WASP organization in the 1970s and fought for them to be recognized as veterans. She continues to speak at military events and Boys and Girls Clubs events throughout the country.

#### Language Support

To aid those with limited English proficiency or others who need help focusing on the video, make available the transcript for the video. Click the transcript tab on the side of the video window, then copy and paste into a document for student reference.

### [“Night Witches”](#)

#### **About the Video:**

“Night Witches” tells the story of how Joseph Stalin, desperate for resources, authorizes the first female bomber regiments and the challenges those women faced in combat.

#### **Video Voices:**

##### **Irina Rakobolskaya**

Rakobolskaya volunteered to be a part of the navigator group of the first female bomber regiments in the Soviet Union and became the Chief of Staff for the all-female 588<sup>th</sup> Night Bomber Regiment. After the war, she received a degree in physics and became a renowned scientist, but kept the memory of the “Night Witches” alive through lectures and various events.

##### **Dr. Rebecca Grant**

Dr. Grant is a Military Aviation Expert, founder and President of IRIS Independent Resource, the Director of the Washington Security Forum, and a contributor to Air Force Magazine and The Military Channel.

#### Language Support

To aid those with limited English proficiency or others who need help focusing on the video, make available the transcript for the video. Click the transcript tab on the side of the video window, then copy and paste into a document for student reference.

### **Lesson**

Teacher to say –

“Today, we are going to see how the role of women changed in the United States and the Soviet Union during World War II.”

Watch the video [“Women Airforce Service Pilots”](#)

Teacher to ask-

- Did you notice their ages? Thinking of who you might know at that age now, can you imagine them (or yourself in just a few years) flying an airplane?
- Why would the WASPs be considered non-military status?
- What was considered their riskiest role?
- What specific knowledge besides flying the airplanes did the WASPs need to understand?
- Why was the WASP program disbanded?
- When did the WASPs get recognition for their service?
- Explain how their role was crucial to the war effort.

Teacher to say -

“In addition to explaining the significance of the WASPs during World War II, the story also mentioned other roles women filled at this time.”

Teacher to project the picture of [Rosie the Riveter](#).



Teacher to say –

“This is a famous picture from World War II.”

Ask students the following -

“How many of you have seen this poster before?” (Observe and announce how many students acknowledge seeing it.)

Teacher to say –

“Let’s take a minute to analyze it.”

Use the questions on this [poster analysis worksheet](#) from the National Archives as a class discussion:

Teacher to Say –

“Now, let’s analyze [two additional posters depicting women.](#)”





Use the questions on this [poster analysis worksheet](#) from the National Archives as a class discussion:

Ask the students -

- What are the main colors used in the poster?
- What symbols (if any) are use in the poster?
- If a symbol is used, is it
  - clear (easy to interpret)?
  - memorable?
  - dramatic?
- Are the messages in the poster primarily visual, verbal, or both?
- What does the government hope the audience will do?
- What government purpose(s) is served by the poster?
- The most effective posters use symbols that are unusual, simple, and direct. Is this an effective poster?

Teacher to say –

“Now, we are going to see how women were utilized in the Soviet Union during World War II.”

Watch the video [“Night Witches”](#)

Teacher to ask -

- What surprised you the most from the story?
- What challenges did the Night Witches face?
- What qualifications did the 588<sup>th</sup> Bomber Regiment have to enter battle?
- Given the fact that women had not served in combat before, why do you think these women signed up when given the opportunity?
- How does this compare to what the United States was offering women?
- The women flew several missions in the same night in dangerous conditions. What characteristics do think some of them possessed?
- The Soviet Union was the first to allow women to fly in combat. Although, not mentioned in this story, when does the United States first allow women to fly in combat?

### **Individual Activity**

Teacher to say –

“Write a short essay (250 – 300 words) using the 5 C’s of Historical Thinking:”

- **Context** - Establish the setting of the war and why there was a need for women to move into male roles during the war.
- **Complexity** - Explain some obstacles women may have faced when training for the military.
- **Continuity** (*Change over Time*) – Describe how the roles of women have changed since World War II.
- **Causation** – Determine what caused women to take on non-traditional roles at the time.
- **Contingency** – Describe what roles you think women would have now if World War II never happened.

Writing Prompt: Explain the significance of women’s roles during World War II and how women’s roles changed since World War II to the present time. Some questions to consider when writing your assignment include:

- The bias toward women being able to fly air planes in the 1940’s compared to what biases women are faced with in today’s society.
- Was this bias warranted? Why or why not?
- What type of discrimination took place against women? Why?
- Are there ways in which women are discriminated against in the United States today? Be sure to elaborate.

**Rubric**

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Organization	Well-planned and well-thought out. Includes title, introduction, statement of main idea, transitions and conclusion.	Good overall organization, includes the main organizational tools.	There is a sense of organization, although some of the organizational tools are used weakly or missing	No sense of organization
Content	Exceptionally well-presented and argued; ideas are detailed, well-developed, supported with specific evidence & facts, as well as examples and specific details.	Well-presented and argued; ideas are detailed, developed and supported with evidence and details, mostly specific.	Content is sound and solid; ideas are present but not particularly developed or supported; some evidence, but usually of a generalized nature.	Content is not sound
Style (Sentence Structure)	Sentences are clear and varied in pattern, from simple to complex, with excellent use of punctuation.	Sentences are clear but may lack variation; a few may be awkward and there may be a few punctuation errors.	Sentences are generally clear but may have awkward structure or unclear content; punctuation errors.	Sentences are not clear.

**Standards**

11.8b United States entry into World War II had a significant impact on American society.

Students will examine United States mobilization efforts and wartime production and their effects on unemployment rates.

Students will examine the contributions of women, African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Mexican workers, and Mexican Americans to the war effort, as well as the discrimination that they experienced in the military and workforce.

## **Build Social Studies Literacy through Reading and Writing Common Core State Standard for ELA & Literacy in Social Studies Grades 9-10**

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/9-10/>

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5

Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7

Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8

Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

## Build Social Studies Literacy through Reading and Writing Common Core State Standard for ELA & Literacy in Social Studies Grades 11-12

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/11-12/>

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.10

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

**NCSS C3 Framework**

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools

Dimension 3: Argument Writing

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action