

*9-12 Women in World War II*

---

# *Was women's contribution to WWII anything new?*



Miller, J. Howard. "Rosie the Riveter." Westinghouse for the War Production Co-Ordinating Committee. NARA Still Picture Branch(NWDNS-179-WP-1563. Retrieved from [https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/its\\_a\\_womans\\_war\\_too/images\\_html/we\\_can\\_do\\_it.html](https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/its_a_womans_war_too/images_html/we_can_do_it.html).

## **Supporting Questions**

1. How did government propaganda in WWII portray women's involvement?
2. Did WWII really mobilize American women to labor for the first time?
3. Did WWII really mobilize American women into uniform for the first time?

**Grade level Inquiry Title**

<b>Compelling Question?</b>	
<b>Content Angle and Standards</b>	<p><b>D2.His.1.9-12.</b> Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.</p> <p><b>D2.His.2.9-12.</b> Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.</p> <p><b>D2.His.11.9-12.</b> Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.</p> <p><b>D3.1.9-12.</b> Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.</p> <p><b>D3.3.9-12.</b> Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantially from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.</p> <p><b>D3.4.9-12.</b> Refine claims and counterclaims attending to precision, significance, and knowledge conveyed through the claim while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.</p> <p><b>D4.1.9-12.</b> Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.</p> <p><b>D4.2.9-12.</b> Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical).</p>
<b>Staging the Compelling Question</b>	

<b>Supporting Question 1</b>
How did government propaganda in WWII portray women's involvement?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>
Students will examine and analyze Sources A and B considering what they reveal about women living in this period.
<b>Featured Sources</b>

<b>Supporting Question 2</b>
Did WWII really mobilize American women into labor for the first time?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>
Students will compare and contrast the sources, discussing which they find more reliable in order to answer Supporting Question 1.
<b>Featured Sources</b>

<b>Supporting Question 3</b>
Did WWII really mobilize American women into uniform for the first time?
<b>Formative Performance Task</b>
Students will compare and contrast the sources, discussing which they find more reliable in order to answer Supporting Question 1.
<b>Featured Sources</b>

<p><b>Source A: Rosie the Riveter</b> <b>Source B: For Every Fighter a Woman Worker</b> <b>Source C: For your country's sake today-- for your sake tomorrow</b></p>	<p><b>Source A: The Role of Women in WWII</b> <b>Source B: Black Rosies</b> <b>Source C: Lessons from Labor Feminists</b></p>	<p><b>Source A: American Women in World War II: On the Home Front and Beyond</b> <b>Source B: Lady Hell Cats</b> <b>Source C: Female WWII Pilots: The Original Fly Girls</b></p>
---	---	--

<p><b>Summative Performance Task</b></p>	<p><b>ARGUMENT:</b> [<i>Was women's contribution to WWII anything new?</i>] Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that evaluates the need to study, remember, and/or celebrate this expedition using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources while acknowledging competing views.</p> <p><b>EXTENSION.</b> After the above lessons, consider one of the following extensions to the learning.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Discussion:</b> Consider facilitating a discussion of the analysis questions. Ask students to share their response with someone, or if they already worked in a group, ask them to nominate someone to represent their group to the class as a whole. Capitalize on differences between group responses. Why did one group answer differently than another? What impacted them or stood out more?</li> <li><b>Four Corner Debate:</b> Consider a "four-corner debate." In the corners of the room tack up a piece of paper with four differing and possible answers to the inquiry question. After students complete the lesson packet, pose the question to the room at large and ask students to move to the corner of the room (or in between locations) that represent their answer. Then, ask students to explain their choice. As students discuss they are allowed to move closer or further from ideas. This is a great strategy for kinesthetic learning.</li> <li><b>Socratic Seminar:</b> Consider doing a "Socratic seminar" to extend the learning and get students to question what they still don't know or understand. Start with the inquiry's question. Students should be encouraged to answer one another's question directly, but also to answer the question with another question. This continues the conversation and gets at more rich ideas. The teacher should try to say as little as possible and let the students lead the dialog. One strategy for this is to seat students in a circle. Give each of them a cup and 2-3 tokens. When a student makes a substantive contribution to the discussion the teacher will walk over and place a token in the cup signaling that they have contributed. Students will become aware of who has spoken and who has not, and leave space for one another.</li> <li><b>Structured Academic Controversy:</b> Consider turning the lesson into a "structured academic controversy." Take the overarching question and turn it into a "debate." Students can choose or be assigned a side in the debate and use the documents provided to argue their "answer" to the overarching question. They can argue over interpretations and credibility of some documents.</li> <li><b>Reacting to the Past:</b> Consider doing some role play with your class. Reacting to the Past is an active learning pedagogy of role-playing games designed by Barnard University. In Reacting to the Past games, students are assigned character roles with specific goals and must communicate, collaborate, and compete effectively to advance their objectives. Reacting promotes engagement with big ideas, and improves intellectual and academic skills. Provide students with a set of rules about staying in character and what types of things they must know about their character. Students should be provided with a packet of role sheets with instructions on their individual goals and strategies for game play. Students can use sources and information from these activities, and can search for more details online about their individual character. Reacting roles and games do not have a fixed script or outcome. While students are obliged to adhere to the philosophical and intellectual beliefs of the historical figures they have been assigned to play, they must devise their own means of expressing those ideas persuasively in papers, speeches, or other public presentations.</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Taking Informed Action</b></p>

C3 TEACHERS  
The Remedial Herstory Project  
The New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies



	<p><b>ASSESS</b> Students should consider <i>what should be done</i> today to correct either the portrayal of women from this period in history or the issues at play?</p> <p><b>ACT</b> Students could take informed action in one of the following ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Find an article or book about history that misrepresents women and gender in history and write to the author or editor.</li><li>2. Write a letter to the Secretary of Education for your state about the teaching of women and gender history.</li><li>3. Investigate women and gender rights issues that persist and engage with the movement by attending a protest, signing a petition, or donating to the cause.</li><li>4. Make a PSA video, blog, or social media post with the intent to persuade the audience to better understand women from history or a persistent gender rights from this inquiry.</li></ol>
--	--

*\*Featured sources are suggested and links are provided. It may be that these links are broken and we apologize in advance for the inconvenience.*

## Overview

### Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of women's role during WWII in all its complexity with consideration of race and class to explore the accuracy of some of the claims about women's revolutionary role in this period.

This inquiry highlights the following additional thematic standards from NCSS:

- **POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.
- **TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.
- **CULTURE:** Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

This inquiry also highlights the following additional thematic standards from the Common Core:

- **Key Ideas and Details 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.
- **Key Ideas and Details 3.** Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- **Key Ideas and Details 7.** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- **Key Ideas and Details 8.** Evaluate the hypotheses, data, analysis, and conclusions in a science or technical text, verifying the data when possible and corroborating or challenging conclusions with other sources of information.
- **Key Ideas and Details 9.** Synthesize information from a range of sources (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) into a coherent understanding of a process, phenomenon, or concept, resolving conflicting information when possible.
- **Text Types and Purposes 8.** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

It is important to note that this inquiry requires prerequisite knowledge of some key terms, which are defined and

provided to students in the inquiries where relevant.

In addressing the compelling question, “Was women’s contribution to WWII anything new?” students will need to weigh conflicting evidence from each of the Supporting Questions throughout the Inquiry. In the first period, students will examine primary source depictions of women at work and in service during WWII. Next, students will explore evidence of women of different classes and races that have been left out of traditional accounts of the homefront mobilization. Finally, students will examine evidence that women have served in varying forms prior to WWII.

Note: This inquiry is expected to take 4 class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (e.g., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, featured sources, writing). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiry to meet the needs and interests of their students. This inquiry lends itself to differentiation and modeling of historical thinking skills while assisting students in reading the variety of sources.

### Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question students will do three performance tasks building to a Summative Performance Task that draws on student learning throughout the full inquiry. Throughout the inquiry, students are asked to do increasingly more challenging assignments and consider contrasting sources. This will help students develop their cognitive capacity to grapple with contradictory information and rise to the challenge of the Summative Performance Task. First students are asked to analyze primary source cartoons (using and interpreting evidence). In the second task, students will compare and contrast two sources about women’s factory work during the war, while in the third they will do a similar task for women’s service work during the war period. Finally, in the Summative Performance Task and the Extension, students need to pull together all of their varying perspectives and develop an argument using evidence and arguments gathered about the sources to defend a position.

## Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question, students may or may not know about women's contributions to the war effort. If they know much, they likely know about Rosie the Riveter, the fictitious woman who seems to represent those who served. Yet it's important we ask students to question this image. Is it accurate? Were women like Rosie the one's working and fighting for America? Was Rosie new, or just her generation's version of the same role women had played for decades?

Consider doing a moving test of prior knowledge where students move about the room to different brainstorm boards, or sheets of paper, on which stimulating keywords are written such as: Rosie the Riveter, WACS, WAVES, etc. Students will write down what they know about these different terms and build on what their peers may have written.

Teachers may also consider doing a broad introduction to understand the shift that occurred during WWII by having student's brainstorm what was traditionally considered men's and women's work. Students could move between three brainstorm boards: women's work, men's work, neutral work. Students jot down jobs that have had traditional gender labels.

The objective of these two exercises are to help students recognize the traditional labels attached to work and to see how war shifts these dynamics and creates social upheaval and revolutionary shifts, and to introduce students to common misperception that women in WWII did something revolutionary, when in fact women in all wars have served in nontraditional roles and taken on extraordinary burdens for the sake of their nation. Students will also see how race and class in women's history are often overlooked and the middle class, white women's narrative tends to dominate the historic record.

**Supporting Question 1: How did government propaganda in WWII portray women’s involvement?**

The first supporting question—how did government propaganda portray women’s involvement?-- gives students some insights into the mythology and perhaps reality of women’s role in WWII. Students will examine three iconic posters depicting women from the period.

The formative task requires students to examine primary source cartoons and analyze them for their deeper meanings and intentions. Students will use the following organizer to support their learning and fill it in for each source.

**Image Analysis**

People in Image	Race and Class	Objects in Image	Activities in Image	What does this image suggest about women in the war period?	Remaining Questions

Teachers may implement this task with the following procedures:

- Have students read and examine the sources alone or with a partner.
- As they explore each source, students should record their observations in the organizer.
- After examining with depth all three images, students respond to the questions for analysis:

*Questions for Analysis:*

1. *How would you describe the women in these images? Consider their race, class, wealth, style, and demeanor.*
2. *How did government propaganda in WWII portray women’s involvement?*

The scaffolds and other materials may be used to support students as they work with sources include the organizer above, a partner who may observe different details from them, and any devices that may help them understand or research words in the images they do not know. As this activity is exploratory, students need only to record their honest thoughts as they examine these images.

The following sources were selected to reflect some of the inaccurate stereotypes of the Rosie's. Images are worth more than a thousand words, but sometimes the visuals that we have do not accurately surmise the period. In these images students will see white, mostly middle class, women, who are done up with lipstick and nail polish.

Yet the women who did this work were diverse in race and ethnicity, mostly working class, and it likely wasn't glamorous work.

- **Featured Source A is Rosie the Riveter**



Miller, J. Howard. "Rosie the Riveter." Westinghouse for the War Production Co-Ordinating Committee. NARA Still Picture Branch(NWDNS-179-WP-1563. Retrieved from [https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/its\\_a\\_womans\\_war\\_too/images\\_html/we\\_can\\_do\\_it.html](https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/its_a_womans_war_too/images_html/we_can_do_it.html).

- **Featured Source B is For Every Fighter a Woman Worker**

The Remedial Herstory Project  
The New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies



Baker, Ernest Hamlin, Artist. For every fighter a woman worker Y.W.C.A.: Back our second line of defense / / Ernest Hamlin Baker. , 1918. [N.Y.: The United States Printing & Lith. Co] Photograph.  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/98507935/>.

- **Featured Source C is For your country's sake today-- for your sake tomorrow**

The Remedial Herstory Project  
The New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies



For your country's sake today - for your own sake tomorrow go to the nearest recruiting station of the armed service of your choice., 1944, Poster collection, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/35433/for-your-countrys-sake-today--for-your-own-sake-tomorrow-g>.

## Supporting Question 2 : Did World War II really mobilize American women to labor for the first time?

The second supporting question— Did World War II really mobilize American women to labor for the first time?-- really drives at the myth of Rosie the Riveter, in reality a lower class working woman who leapt at the chance for men’s wages and job stability during the war. To examine this question, students compare the common narrative of women’s role with a scholarly article about women in the larger labor movement.

The formative task asks students to read an overview of women’s role from the WWII Museum and compare that with a scholarly piece about the women’s labor movement that started before the war and has not ended. These sources differ in their intended audience and likely by the qualifications of the person who wrote it. This is an important contrast for students to pick up on.

Teachers may implement this task with the following procedures:

- Have students read and examine Source A and Source B alone or with a partner.
- As they read, ask students to annotate for key ideas and “claims” made about Rosies during the war.
- Students can record the claims they identify in the organizer provided noting evidence that shows women were mobilized for the first time and evidence they were already active in the labor movement.
- Students respond to some guiding questions to help them examine the sources with more depth.
- Students respond to the overarching question.

The scaffolds and other materials may be used to support students as they work with sources include working with a peer and reading with them to support one another for understanding. The organizer is also a great tool to help students hone in on key ideas.

The following sources were selected to show students that women did play a major role in WWII, but it was not the shift it is made out to be in traditional texts and the experiences of women differed greatly by class and race.

Evidence women worked for the “first time”	Evidence women had been working before the war

- **Featured Source A: The Role of Women in WWII**

American women were instrumental in the war effort during World War II. With ever-growing orders for war materials combined with so many men overseas fighting the war, women were called upon to work in ways previously reserved only for men. While the most famous image of female patriotism during World War II is Rosie

the Riveter, women were involved in other aspects of the war effort outside of factories. More than six million women took wartime jobs in factories, three million volunteered with the Red Cross, and over 200,000 served in the military. Women's auxiliary branches were created for every branch of the military, including the Women's Army Corps (WAC), Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), and Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). Women were restricted from combat zones; however, many became nurses to help the men injured in combat.

When the war ended, a majority of women wanted to keep their jobs and their new-found economic and social independence, but nearly all were laid off, as orders for war materials decreased and millions of men returned home from military service seeking jobs. Did women's WWII experiences help spur the Women's Rights movement of the 1960s? Most historians say "not really"; it was the Civil Rights movement that helped to spur the drive for equality for women. The years immediately following World War II actually saw a resurgence of women taking on more traditional roles as wives and mothers.

The National WWII Museum Editors. "Research Starters: Women in World War II." The National WWII Museum. N.D.

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-women-world-war-ii>.

*Questions for Consideration:*

- *Who wrote this source?*
- *How reliable is this source? What is the significance of being a museum?*
- *Does anything surprise you about this source?*
  
- **Featured Source B: Black Rosies**

Rosie the Riveter—the steely-eyed World War II heroine with her red bandanna, blue coveralls and flexed bicep—stands as one of America's most indelible military images. Positioned under the maxim "We Can Do It," the "Rosie" image has come to broadly represent the steadfast American working woman, and more specifically, the millions of female laborers who kept the factories and offices of the U.S. defense industries humming.

What the iconic Rosie image doesn't convey is the diversity of that work force—specifically the more than half-million "Black Rosies" who worked alongside their white counterparts in the war effort. Coming from throughout the United States, these "Black Rosies" worked tirelessly—in shipyards and factories, along railroads, inside administrative offices and elsewhere—to fight both the foreign enemy of authoritarianism abroad and the familiar enemy of racism at home. For decades, they received little historical recognition or acknowledgement.



*Welders prepare to work on SS George Washington Carver in Richmond, California, 1943. E. F. Joseph/Anthony Potter Collection/Getty Images*

Like the Great War before it, World War II had required participating nations' entire populations to contribute to the war effort. Once the U.S. entered the conflict in 1941 and millions of American men were enlisted into the military, the government had to rely on American women to fill domestic war-related roles. At the peak of the wartime industrial production, some 2 million women worked in war-related industries.

For African American women, becoming a Rosie was not only an opportunity to aid in the war effort, but also a chance for economic empowerment. Already on the move as part of the Great Migration, they sought to leave behind dead-end, often demeaning work as domestics and sharecroppers.

"Black people were leaving the south anyway and fanning out across the country," says Gregory S. Cooke, director of *Invisible Warriors*, a documentary on the Black Rosies. "The war gave the women a more pointed motivation for leaving and an opportunity to make money in ways Black women had never dreamed before."

At first, finding war-related work proved difficult for many prospective Black Rosies, as many employers—almost always white men—refused to hire Black women.

"The war represented this incredible opportunity, but Black women really had to rally and fight for the opportunity to even be considered," says Dr. Maureen Honey, author of *Bitter Fruit: African American Women in World War II* and emeritus professor of women's and gender studies at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. "Many employers held out, attempting to only hire white women or white men, until they were forced to do otherwise."

That coercion came in the summer of 1941 when activists Mary McLeod Bethune and A. Phillip Randolph brought the widespread hiring discrimination to President Franklin Roosevelt, prompting the Commander-in-Chief to sign Executive Order 8802 banning racial discrimination in the defense industry. The order boosted Black women's entry into the war effort; of the 1 million African Americans who entered paid service for the first time following 8802's signing, 600,000 were women.

Randle, Aaron. "Black Rosies': The Forgotten African American Heroines of the WWII Homefront." History.com. Last modified February 8, 2021.

<https://www.history.com/news/black-rosie-the-riveters-wwii-homefront-great-migration>.

*Questions for Consideration:*

1. *Who is the source?*
2. *Are they reliable? Why or why not?*

- **Featured Source C: Lessons from Labor Feminists**

By the end of the 1940s, it became a financial necessity for most workingclass women to engage in paid labor. The same reality came to middleclass women a generation later. Typically, working class women entered the workforce earlier and spent more time in the workforce. World War II had an important impact on these working-class women. Rosie the Riveter was not the middle-class housewife, she was the low-wage woman worker moving from traditional women's work to higher-paying men's work. These women were not able to keep these higher-paying, more stable jobs when the men returned from the war, and they were not returning to the life of a housewife, either... Rather, most returned to, "the blue and pink collar ghetto of women's work" and still others slipped into stretches of unemployment.

While the women were not able to keep the higher-paying, more respected men's jobs, they still were deeply impacted by the experience. According to first-time war-worker Carmen Chavez, the women of her neighborhood were forever changed by the experience, "We had a taste of independence we hadn't known before the war. We developed a feeling of self-confidence and a sense of worth. Now, women knew they were able to perform men's work just as well as men and the work was not much harder than women's work. So why did employers evaluate and compensate them so differently" These Rosies also developed a taste for the high wages, respect, and unionization that accompanied the men's jobs. In the 1940's there was a surge in unionization among women in particular: Less than a million women belonged to trade unions at the end of the 1934s. By the early 1954's, that number jumped to three million, and another two-million women flocked into auxiliaries.

Burke, Marion. "Lessons from Labor Feminists: Using Collective Action to Improve Conditions for Women Lawyers." American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law. Vol 26:1:1. 2018.

<https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1704&context=jgspl>.

*Questions for Consideration:*

1. *Who wrote this source?*
2. *How reliable is this source compared to the previous source? What is the significance of being published in a journal?*
3. *How did this source contrast with the previous source?*

*Question for Analysis: Did WWII really mobilize American women into labor for the first time?*

C3 TEACHERS  
The Remedial Herstory Project  
The New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies



## Supporting Question 3: Did WWII really mobilize American women into uniform for the first time?

The third supporting question—Did WWII really mobilize American women into uniform for the first time?-- digs at misperceptions of women’s service from prior wars and really examines what new roles women were playing in this era.

Similar to the previous supporting question, the formative task asks students to read an overview of women’s involvement in uniform from the WWII Museum and compare that with a piece about women’s involvement in wars preceding WWII. These sources differ in their focus and provide an important contrast.

Teachers may implement this task with the following procedures:

- Have students read and examine Source A and Source B alone or with a partner.
- As they read, ask students to annotate for key ideas and “claims” made about women during the war.
- Students can record the claims they identify in the organizer provided noting evidence that shows women were mobilized for the first time and evidence women had previously served.
- Students respond to some guiding questions to help them examine the sources with more depth.
- Students respond to the overarching question.

The scaffolds and other materials may be used to support students as they work with sources include working with a peer and reading with them to support one another for understanding. The organizer is also a great tool to help students hone in on key ideas.

The following sources were selected to show students that women did play a major role in WWII, but it was not the shift it is made out to be in traditional texts and the experiences of women differed greatly by class and race.

Evidence women served for the “first time” in WWII	Evidence women had been serving before the WWII

- **Featured Source A is American Women in World War II: On the Home Front and Beyond**

Nearly 350,000 American women served in uniform, both at home and abroad, volunteering for the newly formed Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs, later renamed the Women’s Army Corps), the Navy Women’s Reserve (WAVES), the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve, the Coast Guard Women’s Reserve (SPARS), the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPS), the Army Nurses Corps, and the Navy Nurse Corps. General Eisenhower felt that he could

not win the war without the aid of the women in uniform. “The contribution of the women of America, whether on the farm or in the factory or in uniform, to D-Day was a sine qua non of the invasion effort.” (Ambrose, D-Day, 489)

Women in uniform took office and clerical jobs in the armed forces in order to free men to fight. They also drove trucks, repaired airplanes, worked as laboratory technicians, rigged parachutes, served as radio operators, analyzed photographs, flew military aircraft across the country, test-flew newly repaired planes, and even trained anti-aircraft artillery gunners by acting as flying targets. Some women served near the front lines in the Army Nurse Corps, where 16 were killed as a result of direct enemy fire. Sixty-eight American service women were captured as POWs in the Philippines. More than 1,600 nurses were decorated for bravery under fire and meritorious service, and 565 WACs in the Pacific Theater won combat decorations. Nurses were in Normandy on D-plus-four.

At the war’s end, even though a majority of women surveyed reported wanted to keep their jobs, many were forced out by men returning home and by the downturn in demand for war materials. Women veterans encountered roadblocks when they tried to take advantage of benefit programs for veterans, like the G.I. Bill. The nation that needed their help in a time of crisis, it seems, was not yet ready for the greater social equality that would slowly come in the decades to follow.

National WWII Museum Editors. “American Women in World War II: On the Home Front and Beyond.” National WWII Museum. N.D.  
<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/women-wwii>.

*Questions for Consideration:*

1. *Who wrote this source?*
2. *How reliable is this source? Why?*

- **Featured Source B is Lady Hell Cats**

Prior to World War I, if a woman wanted to join the military, she would have to join as a nurse or disguise her sex. Some historians estimate that hundreds of women served in the Civil War dressed as men. World War I was the turning point for women wishing to enter the military. At the beginning of the war, there were around 650,000 men serving in the military. By the end of World War I, almost 5 million people, both men and women, served in the military in some capacity.

The Navy was the first branch to allow women to serve after it was discovered that there was no reference to gender in the enlistment codes, only the word “persons.” On March 17, 1917, Loretta Perfectus Walsh became the first woman to join the navy and the first woman to officially join the military as anything other than a nurse. By the end of the war, about 12,500 women had served in the Navy. The Army, however, had strict gender guidelines and women could only serve in clerical or nursing capacities but were not official military. The Marines soon realized that allowing women to serve in clerical roles would free up able bodied men who were desperately needed on the front lines.

In 1918, the Marine Corps began investigating how the integration of women would take place. Early investigations found that about 40% of male office positions could be filled by women. This was not a one-to-one replacement, however. It was decided that for every two men, three women would be needed. It was assumed that women did not have the ability or fortitude to complete the same amount of work in the same amount of time as the men.

This was quickly proven wrong.

On August 12, 1918, the Marines announced the creation of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve and that they were looking for physically and mentally strong women with a background in stenography. The following day, thousands of women lined up in an attempt to join the elite Corps. The first woman to enlist was Opha Johnson, age 40. Johnson was already working at Headquarters Marine Corps as a civilian so the transition to military personnel was simple. By the end the war, Johnson was the most senior enlisted woman in the Marines with a rank of sergeant.

The Marines were very stringent in their selection process. The women were often referred to as the "100% Girls" because they had to be perfect in every respect. In addition to three letters of recommendation, an interview, and a medical exam, the women were also tested on stenography and clerical skills. The tests were so rigorous that out of the thousands of applicants, only 305 women were chosen to become Marine Reservists (F).

"Applicants were interviewed by one officer and finally given a stenographic test. Colonel McLemore conducted the shorthand test and dictated so fast, that one after another left the room. Those who remained were taken, one-by-one, into Colonel McLemore's office and told to read back their notes... If the Colonel was satisfied with our reading, we were required to type our notes and timed for speed and accuracy. More and more applicants dropped by the wayside, until only five of us were left." – Private First-Class Florence Gertler, secretary to Assistant Adjutant and Inspector, Captain France C. Cushing

Despite the demanding entrance exams, every woman accepted into the Marine Corps was given the same pay as men of equal rank. This was at a time when few women worked outside the home, and none could vote. Throughout their service many nicknames followed them. In addition to the "100% Girls" they were also called "Skirt Marines," "Marinettes," and "Lady Hell Cats," but they were always treated with respect for the sake of their uniform.

The women faced many obstacles as Marines, not the least of which was their uniform. The uniform was hastily designed but slow in arriving. Female Marines in more rural parts of the country received no uniform at all and, instead, resorted to making their own. A dress uniform was never designed for the female Marines. In fact, there was no official dress uniform for women until 1950, over 30 years after the first women were inducted into the corps.

Finding a place to live also posed a challenge to these new Marines. There was no space on bases in northern Virginia or Washington, DC where most of the women were stationed. While the women were provided with a housing stipend, there was a housing shortage and many of the women were left to find places on their own. Spaces they could find normally consisted of a small, expensive bedroom without a private bathroom or access to a kitchen. Often these rooms were far away from fellow women Marines who provided friendship and comfort during many of the women's first time away from home. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, wife of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., heard about the struggle the women were having and found about 70 women lodging in newly built dormitories at Georgetown Preparatory School complete with a cook who provided meals. This provided food was essential for many Marines. With rationing and food shortages during the war, many women had a difficult time finding open restaurants and places to eat throughout the day.

Following the armistice on November 11, 1918, an order was put out to immediately begin discharging the female Marines from active duty service. Some stayed on as reservists to finish out the four years they initially signed up for. Others received their honorable discharge and returned to their pre-war lives. The Marines no longer actively recruited women after the end of World War I. In February 1943, during the height of World War II, the Marine Corps Women Reserve was reestablished. Two women who had served as enlisted Marines during World War I, rejoined the Marines during World War II, this time as officers. Through the years, tens of thousands of women have served in the Marines. Just this year, the first female Marines joined infantry combat units to fight on the

front lines. While every Marine has a different experience, and a different reason for joining, all female Marines can look back with pride on the women who bravely volunteered for this elite corps during war time. Although they never left the country and few held a gun, these women who served almost 100 years ago forged a path into the military that women had previously only dreamed of.

National Women's History Museum Editors. "Lady Hell Cats." National Women's History Museum. Last modified August 10, 2017. <https://www.womenshistory.org/articles/lady-hell-cats-women-marines-world-war-i>.

#### Questions for Consideration

1. Who wrote this source?
2. How reliable is this source? Why?

- **Featured Source C: Female WWII Pilots: The Original Fly Girls**



WASP (from left) Frances Green, Margaret Kirchner, Ann Waldner and Blanche Osborn leave their B-17, called *Pistol Packin' Mama*, during ferry training at Lockbourne Army Air Force base in Ohio. They're carrying their parachutes. National Archives.

In 1942, the United States was faced with a severe shortage of pilots, and leaders gambled on an experimental program to help fill the void: Train women to fly military aircraft so male pilots could be released for combat duty overseas.

The group of female pilots was called the Women Airforce Service Pilots — WASP for short. In 1944, during the graduation ceremony for the last WASP training class, the commanding general of the U.S. Army Air Forces, Henry "Hap" Arnold, said that when the program started, he wasn't sure "whether a slip of a girl could fight the controls of a B-17 in heavy weather."

"Now in 1944, it is on the record that women can fly as well as men," Arnold said. A few more than 1,100 young women, all civilian volunteers, flew almost every type of military aircraft — including the B-26 and B-29 bombers — as part of the WASP program. They ferried new planes long distances from factories to military bases and departure points across the country. They tested newly overhauled planes. And they towed targets to give ground and air gunners training shooting — with live ammunition. The WASP expected to become part of the military

during their service. Instead, the program was canceled after just two years.

They weren't granted military status until the 1970s. And now, 65 years after their service, they will receive the highest civilian honor given by the U.S. Congress.

Stamberg, Susan. "Female WWII Pilots: The Original Fly Girls." NPR. Last modified March 9, 2010.

<https://www.npr.org/2010/03/09/123773525/female-wwii-pilots-the-original-fly-girls>.

*Questions for Consideration:*

1. *Who wrote this source?*
2. *How reliable is this source? Why?*

*Question for Analysis: Did WWII really mobilize American women into service for the first time? If so, in what way? If not, what was new and what was not? Why do you think the iconic propaganda did not feature women in the armed forces?*

## Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined primary and secondary sources about women who worked in factories and in uniform during WWII. They have uncovered untruths as well as some key accuracies from these documents. They also now know that women were diverse and largely working class.

Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understanding and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students will write an argument about women’s true role during WWII and whether it was in fact a new phenomenon.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- Women who served during the war not only served as civilians in factories but also in all branches of the armed forces, which was in some ways new as women who served in prior wars either did it in disguise or recently only as Marines.
- Women who served were diverse, not just white, but more middle class women did participate than in prior wars.
- Women who served were mostly working class and shifted from “women’s work” to “men’s work” where they earned more stable and sizable pay, which was not really new as women have always stabilized the economy and served in new roles during war time.

To support students in their writing they can use this provided organizer for a body paragraph. The organizer refers to the HAPPY acronym: Historical Context, Audience, Point of View, Purpose and why is this significant?

First Argument	
Write a topic sentence that summarizes the paragraph and tells how this proves the thesis	<i>(Repeat the first part of your thesis)</i>
Provide background information here. <b>Cite anyone you paraphrase or quote!</b>	<i>When...</i>
What textual evidence proves this? Describe 1 or 2 HAPP elements about the source of your evidence.	

The Remedial Herstory Project  
The New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies

<p>What textual evidence proves this? Insert a short quote here.</p>	
<p>What makes this quote credible, valid, or helpful in providing insights to this issue?</p>	<p><i>The quote revealed...</i></p>
<p>Who disagrees or disputes a piece of your argument?  Describe 1 or 2 HAPP elements about the source of your evidence.</p>	<p><i>Others claimed that...</i></p>
<p>What textual evidence do you have? Insert a short quote here.</p>	
<p>What makes this quote seem untrue, inaccurate, or only partly true?</p>	<p><i>While it may be true that _____, it was clear that...</i></p>

To extend their arguments, once students have written or formed an argument, consider doing one of the following extension activities:

1. **Discussion:** Consider facilitating a discussion of the analysis questions. Ask students to share their response with someone, or if they already worked in a group, ask them to nominate someone to represent their group to the class as a whole. Capitalize on differences between group responses. Why did one group answer differently than another? What impacted them or stood out more?
2. **Four Corner Debate:** Consider a "four-corner debate." In the corners of the room tack up a piece of paper with four differing and possible answers to the inquiry question. After students complete the lesson packet, pose the question to the room at large and ask students to move to the corner of the room (or in between locations) that represent their answer. Then, ask students to explain their choice. As students discuss they are allowed to move closer or further from ideas. This is a great strategy for kinesthetic learning.
3. **Socratic Seminar:** Consider doing a "Socratic seminar" to extend the learning and get students to question what they still don't know or understand. Start with the inquiry's question. Students should be encouraged to answer one another's question directly, but also to answer the question with another question. This continues the conversation and gets at more rich ideas. The teacher should try to say as little as possible and let the students lead the dialog. One strategy for this is to seat students in a circle. Give each of them a cup and 2-3 tokens. When a student makes a substantive contribution to the discussion the teacher will walk over and place a token in the cup signaling that they have contributed. Students will become aware of who has spoken and who has not, and leave space for one another.
4. **Structured Academic Controversy:** Consider turning the lesson into a "structured academic controversy." Take the overarching question and turn it into a "debate." Students can choose or be assigned a side in the debate and use the documents provided to argue their "answer" to the overarching question. They can argue over interpretations and credibility of some documents.

## The Remedial Herstory Project

## The New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies

5. **Reacting to the Past:** Consider doing some role play with your class. Reacting to the Past is an active learning pedagogy of role-playing games designed by Barnard University. In Reacting to the Past games, students are assigned character roles with specific goals and must communicate, collaborate, and compete effectively to advance their objectives. Reacting promotes engagement with big ideas, and improves intellectual and academic skills. Provide students with a set of rules about staying in character and what types of things they must know about their character. Students should be provided with a packet of role sheets with instructions on their individual goals and strategies for game play. Students can use sources and information from these activities, and can search for more details online about their individual character. Reacting roles and games do not have a fixed script or outcome. While students are obliged to adhere to the philosophical and intellectual beliefs of the historical figures they have been assigned to play, they must devise their own means of expressing those ideas persuasively in papers, speeches, or other public presentations.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by doing one of the following suggested action activities:

1. Find an article or book about history that misrepresents women and gender in history and write to the author or editor.
2. Write a letter to the Secretary of Education for your state about the teaching of women and gender history.
3. Investigate women and gender rights issues that persist and engage with the movement by attending a protest, signing a petition, or donating to the cause.
4. Make a PSA video, blog, or social media post with the intent to persuade the audience to better understand women from history or a persistent gender rights from this inquiry.