

TITLE WOMEN AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

GRADES 9-12

SUBJECT AREAS

History
English

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this lesson is to acquaint students with historic and current-day factors that have an impact on their economic status. Students will reconfigure the Help Wanted section of their local newspaper to reflect the “male” and “female” jobs that were the order of the day before the Civil Rights Amendment was passed; conduct an oral history interview to learn about how women’s lives have been shaped by the times in which they have lived; write an editorial addressing the issues of the current-day wage gap; and consider what can be done about economic inequities on a personal, national and international level.

MEDIA COMPONENTS

- **People’s Century: Half the People** videotape. In order to most effectively use this lesson, the videotape should be previewed by the teacher, then shown to the class. The film may be viewed in its entirety, or specific segments may be chosen to complement the specific themes addressed in this lesson.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate how this sex-role stereotyping has impacted women’s jobs.
2. To consider how women’s lives have been shaped by the times in which they lived.
3. To gather information and recommend ideas dealing with an issue on a personal, national, and international level.

STANDARDS

LANGUAGE ARTS: GRADE 9

READING

- Analyze reading.

WRITTEN & ORAL COMMUNICATION

- Identify and correctly use the mechanics of punctuation, spelling, sentence construction and grammar to produce legible, appropriate manuscripts.

LANGUAGE ARTS: GRADE 11

READING

- Analyze the features and rhetorical devices of different types of public documents.
- Analyze an authors beliefs about a subject.
- Critique the validity of arguments in public documents.

WRITTEN & ORAL CONVENTIONS

- Demonstrate control of spelling, grammar, diction, and paragraph and sentence structure and an understanding of English usage.

WRITING

- Demonstrate an understanding of the elements of discourse in narrative, expository, persuasive, or descriptive writing assignments.

HISTORY: GRADE 12

SOCIAL SCIENCE

- Evaluate, take and defend positions on the fundamental values and principles of civil society.

PREP FOR TEACHERS

1. Preview the videotape **Half the People**.
2. Decide how you will break the class into groups for the introductory activity. Procure a newspaper's Help Wanted section for each group.
3. Bookmark the following sites:

<http://womensissues.about.com/newsissues/womensissues/library/weekly/aa011801a.htm>

<http://womensissues.about.com/library/weekly/aa011801a.htm>

<http://now.org/issues/economic/cea/ireland.html>

<http://www.academic.org/work.html>

http://www.academic.org/at_home.html

<http://www.thirdwavefoundation.org/>

<http://63.111.42.146/home/youngFeminists.asp>

http://www.academic.org/at_home.html

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY: SETTING THE STAGE

Before the Civil Rights Amendment was passed, newspapers' Help Wanted ads were divided into male and female sections. In this lesson students take the help wanted section from a local newspaper and separate the ads into "male" jobs and "female" jobs.

1. Divide students into groups of odd numbers (three or five per group).
2. Give each group the Help Wanted section.
3. Tell students that they are to divide the jobs into "male" and "female" jobs as was done before the Civil Rights Amendment was passed.
4. Have each group discuss whether to place the ad under female or male, based on society's gender assumptions. As there will most likely be a number of disagreements as to where to place the ads, voting is a fair way (hence the odd number of students in each group) to settle disagreements.
5. After the students have finished separating the ads, ask them to glue the male ads on one piece of paper and the female ads on another.
6. Ask students to answer the following questions:
 - Had you known that Help Wanted ads used to be categorized under male and female jobs?
 - How did it feel to divide jobs along gender lines?
 - How would you react if today's newspapers still categorized their Help Wanted ads this way?
 - Think about the jobs glued on each piece of paper. Do you know people who have any jobs like these? If you do, are they male or female?
 - Do you think females are still clustered into traditional female jobs? Explain.
 - Look at the wage that each job pays. Compare the wages on the "male help wanted" poster to the wages on the "female help wanted" poster. Are there any noticeable differences?

- Do you think the roles of women in the workforce will continue to change? How?
- Do you think women today are still feeling the effects from this division of jobs based on gender? Explain.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY ONE: ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

The purpose of this activity is to give students an understanding of how women's lives were shaped by the times in which they lived.

1. Divide the class into small research groups. Have each student interview several women of varied ages.
2. The following is a list of interview questions:
 - In what year were you born? (The answers to the questions will be compiled based on date of birth.)
 - What do you think women's roles and women's rights in society should be?
 - What is your occupation?
 - What was your mother's and grandmother's occupation?
 - What do you think of the Women's Movement? How did it affect your life?
 - When you were growing up were your assigned chores different than those of any males in your family?

The answers to the following two questions also are to be used in the next activity.

For women who were/are stay-at-home moms:

- Discuss the reasons you decided to be a stay-at-home mom after your children were born. Did you discuss the option of your partner staying home instead of you? Do you think that society's expectations about women's roles had an impact on your decision? How?

For mothers who work full time:

- Generally speaking, is it you or your husband who leaves work to pick your children up from school or child care? Takes your children to doctor appointments? Stays home with them when they are sick? Explain why.

3. Have each group create one chart that contains the answers from all of the women that the group members interviewed. Chart the answers by the decade in which the interviewee was born.

4. Have each student answer the following questions:

- What was the most surprising thing that you learned from your interviews?
- What was the most interesting thing that you learned?
- Did any of the information make you angry? Describe.

- Compare the answers to the same questions given by women from different decades. What do you notice? Explain.
- Write a summary about how you think women's lives have changed based on the answers to your questions.
- Did you notice that certain things haven't changed very much? Explain.

ACTIVITY TWO: THE WAGE-GAP

1. Write the following statement on the board:

"Today, White women are paid 74 cents for every dollar White men are paid; the difference is even greater for women of color – African-American women are paid 63 cents and Latina women 55 cents for every dollar white men are paid."

2. Involve the class in a discussion about some possible reasons for these statistics.

3. Have students read the article "Wage-Gap Myth." (You may also choose to copy the article and pass it out to students.)

This URL is the article's current location. as of January 2001.

<http://womensissues.about.com/newsissues/womensissues/library/weekly/aao118o1a.htm>

This URL is where the article will be permanently housed after it is replaced by another article on the main page.

<http://womensissues.about.com/library/weekly/aao118o1a.htm>

4. Read the following quote from the article:

"It's true that women take time out of the workforce to raise children more often than men do. This is partly due to expectations that they will do so, and partly due to the fact that they are likely to be the lower-wage earner in a two-career family."

Refer the students back to their interview question about stay-at-home moms, and have them answer the following:

- Did the women in your research study decide to stay at home because of societal expectations, because they were the lower-wage earner in the family or for other reasons? (If the latter, explain what the other reasons were.)

5. Share the following excerpt from the article:

"The 'time out' factor is the main reason women have lower lifetime earnings than men, meaning lower pension and Social Security benefits. It is also the main reason more elderly women live in poverty. In 1997, the poverty rate of elderly women was nearly double the poverty rate of elderly men: 13.1 percent for women, 7.0 percent for men. Isn't that a nice 'thank you' to our moms for staying home with us?"

Ask the students the following:

- Do you think this is fair? What could be done about this?

6. Read the following to the class:

Many of the things stay-at-home moms learn and do would be considered valid "work experience" on any resume - if they were being paid for them.

Discuss the following questions:

- Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Brainstorm ideas to that would help resolve this issue.

7. Read this excerpt to the class:

“Even if women do continue working full-time after having children, they don’t work as many hours as men working full-time. They take time off to take the kids to the doctor, pick them up from school, don’t work as many nights and weekends ... how can you expect employers to pay them the same?”

Ask the students the following:

- Were the women that you interviewed more likely to take time off work to attend to their child’s needs than the fathers were?
- What do you think could be done about this problem?

8. Ask the class to envision the following scenario: A letter to the editor appeared in today’s newspaper. The letter says that the “wage gap” is a myth. The writer says that women don’t get paid as much as men because they don’t deserve to be paid as much as men. He goes on to say that most women aren’t as experienced as men, haven’t worked at their jobs as long as men have; therefore don’t deserve to make as much money as men.

Ask the students to use the information they have learned from reading this article and write a letter responding to the editor entitled, “The Wage-Gap **is** Not a Myth.”

ACTIVITY THREE: THE THIRD WAVE

Your students will soon be out in the workforce, and unless a miracle occurs, the females will be earning less money than males. This lesson looks at what students can do about this problem on a personal, national and international level. (Students may work individually or in small groups for this project.)

1. Write the following message on the board and discuss it with your class: You will soon be out in the workforce. Do you think it is fair that females of your generation will most likely still be earning less money than males?
2. How will a women’s equality amendment help women economically? Read Patricia Ireland’s “Women’s Less Than Full Equality Under the U.S. Constitution” section of the NOW Web site. (Another option would be to print the information from the site and make copies.)

<http://now.org/issues/economic/cea/ireland.html>

Ask students to do the following after reading the information:

- Record three interesting historical facts from the web site.
- How will the passing of a women’s equality amendment help women economically?
- Read the following statement from the website: “We look to the young women and men who are addressing issues of equality and justice in high schools across the country. We are confident that this ‘third wave’ will soon be ready to accept the baton.”
- Ask students what they know about the “third wave” and have each student or group generate a list of things their generation can do in the fight for equal rights.

Share and discuss the results recording the responses on the board or on chart paper.

3. Have students read “The Facts About Women and Work” <http://www.academic.org/work.html>. Then ask the students to write a letter to a young girl, giving her advice on how she could best be preparing herself to enter the workforce of the future. Ask the students to explain the reasons behind the advice they are giving.

4. Send students to “What Parents Can Do at Home” at http://www.academic.org/at_home.html. (Another option would be to print the information and make copies for students):

Ask students to write down at least 10 items that speak to them on a personal level as they read the information.

As a class, discuss what students think of the suggestions on the site. Ask them which of the listed suggestions are employed in their own homes.

Have the students pick five different topics or points from the site and write about them as they relate to their personal lives.

5. Heifer Project International helps impoverished women worldwide. Through a gift of livestock, women gain new confidence, because they own property, and they become leaders in their community. Send students to the Heifer Project International Web site to learn more about this project.
<http://catalog.heifer.org/index.cfm>.

Assign or allow students to choose one animal to research. Have students answer the following questions:

- What animal did you pick?
- In what kinds of areas is this animal placed?
- How does this animal benefit the area in which it is placed? Why?
- How does this animal impact the economic life of the owner?
- Write a brief synopsis of the personal story of the owner of this animal.

Share the results with the class.

CROSS-CURRICULAR EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY ONE: SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Young women are exposed daily to negative images of girls and women in advertising, derogatory song lyrics, violence and sexual harassment at work and in school. They have unequal access to opportunities, and let's not forget that many women still only earn 74 cents for every dollar earned by men, for many the ratio is even worse! Students may choose to form groups to share information and resources about the issues that affect them.

Students may find the following sites helpful in creating these groups:

<http://www.thirdwavefoundation.org/>
<http://63.111.42.146/home/youngFeminists.asp>

ACTIVITY TWO: ROLE MODELS

1. Divide class into small groups. Have students log on to web site below, and choose a career field to research.

2. Have students share with the large group what they found in their research.

3. Read the statement at the bottom of the Web site about the career fields they intentionally left out. (e.g., teachers, because they consider them common role models). What do students think of their reasons for leaving out these careers? Do they agree or disagree with leaving these careers out?

<http://www.womenswork.org/girls/careers.html>