

Learning Activities for Virginia Women in History 2006

By Rita G. Koman

Kindergarten—Grade 3; K-1, K-3, K-4, 1-1, 1-4, 2-4, 2-5, 2-10, 2-11, 3-6, 3-11

1. Create a timeline placing all eight women on it according to their birth dates. Discuss change over three centuries.
2. On a large Virginia map, locate the sites associated with each woman. Have students point out major geographic details near each site and its proximity to the site's location.
3. Find the site of the Rappahannock tribe in the Northern Neck of Virginia on a map. Discuss the changes that may have occurred to limit the tribe's geographical space today.
4. Two of the women—Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune and Katherine Harwood Waller Barrett—were born on plantations. Discuss how their lives were different from those of the Rappahannock Indians. What changes occurred because of the Civil War?
5. Two of the women—Grace Brewster Murray Hopper and Benita Fitzgerald Mosley—are pioneers in computers and telecommunications. Discuss with the students how the work that Hopper and Moseley accomplished in the computing and telecommunications fields have had an impact on their own lives.

Grades 4 and 5: VS-1, VS-2, VS-9

1. Compare and contrast the lifestyles of Virginia children growing up as Rappahannock Indians and as plantation dwellers. What changes were forced on both lifestyles by the Civil War?
2. Nineteenth-century women were restricted in what they could do. Discuss how Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune, Katherine Harwood Waller Barrett, and John-Geline MacDonald Bowman worked to gently ease women into the mainstream of society.
3. Two women—Sister Marie Majella Berg and Mary Tyler Freeman Check McClenahan—became involved in community endeavors to improve life for women and children. Discuss the difficulties they faced in the male-dominated culture of Virginia.
4. Science and math tend to be areas from which girls shrink. Pretend you are Grace Brewster Murray Hopper or Benita Fitzgerald Mosley. Write a short speech or story explaining why girls should become involved in these fields.
5. Choose one of the eight women and write an essay explaining why her accomplishments made a difference for Virginia women.

Grades 6-9: US1.1, US1.2, US11.1, US11.2, US11.3

1. Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune and Katherine Harwood Waller Barrett experienced major lifestyle changes as a result of the Civil War. Compare and contrast how each chose to improve life for women in the late nineteenth century.
2. Three women—John-Geline MacDonald Bowman, Grace Brewster Murray Hopper, and Benita Fitzgerald Mosley—changed the world of business. Choose one of these women to role-play giving a speech to the Chamber of Commerce about what she tried to accomplish in her work.
3. Sister Marie Majella Berg gave up a worldly life to devote herself to education while Mary Tyler Freeman Check McClenahan used her position of influence within the community to make a difference through multiple civic activities in Richmond. Compare and contrast their contributions through debate with classmates.
4. G. Anne Nelson Richardson continues to campaign for federal recognition of her Rappahannock tribe. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper explaining why such recognition should be granted.
5. In the 1960s when Benita Fitzgerald Mosley was growing up, civil rights and desegregation of schools were hot topics in Virginia. Discuss whether you think affirmative action may have helped her as an athlete and a businesswoman.

Grades 10–12: VUS.1, VUS.8, VUS.14, GOVT.1, GOVT.9, GOVT.14, GOVT. 17.

1. Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune used her pen to encourage women to make homemaking an honorable profession while John-Geline MacDonald Bowman gave advice encouraging women to advance in the business world. Write an essay in which you compare and contrast these two approaches for the advancement of women in society.
2. Concern for children led Katherine Harwood Waller Barrett and Mary Tyler Freeman Cheek McClenahan into work ignored by most people. Unwed mothers and poor children are still not popular causes in society today. Investigate what your community does for unfortunate individuals. Who might be the prime movers to care for them? Could more be done? Report your findings in class.
3. Education empowers women! Compare and contrast how Grace Brewster Murray Hopper and Sister Marie Majella Berg used education to their advantage. Both brought their expertise to Virginia. Which do you think had the bigger impact on the state? Both flourished as students in schools for women, yet Sister Berg turned Marymount into a co-educational university. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages for women of both forms of higher education.
4. Only within the last few decades have Native Americans been considered U.S. citizens by nature of their American birth. Study the changing U.S. policies since the 1887 Dawes Act was passed and then analyze the significance of G. Anne Nelson Richardson's determination to obtain federal recognition of the documented tribes of Virginia. Why could recognition be a problem? Discuss.
5. Benita Fitzgerald Mosley was able to attend desegregated schools that encouraged her academically and athletically. Research the years between 1954 and 1974 regarding Virginia's stand on integration, keeping in mind its staunch massive resistance position. What made the state's leadership acquiesce to allow changes to occur? Discuss.
6. Analyze the idea of "southern" womanhood exhibited by nineteenth-century Virginians as opposed to the status of Virginia women today. Which of these eight women may have contributed the most to this change?

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