

WOMEN USING THEIR GUNS: Women During WWI

by Tina Gersdorf - Whobrey

Summer Fellowship 2007

LESSON FIVE - Life at the Training Farm

Abstract

A Training Farm, in Libertyville, IL, was donated as space for women to become educated in agricultural work. Women were needed from the city to go into the country to help wives of soldiers tend to their farms, but they first needed to be educated. Students will read a newspaper article that provides examples of how women felt about the farm and what they did. They will look at photographs, a map of the farm, and a daily schedule. Students will use their exposure to the Training Farm to write a diary entry and letter home about life on the farm from the perspective of the character they invented in the previous letter.

Essential Questions

- What was done to solve problems of millions of men leaving the country during WWI?
- How were women trained to take over the responsibilities of men?
- How did women react to these new opportunities?

Duration

1 class period

Assessments

- Participation during PowerPoint
- Written Document Analysis worksheet
- Farm Diary entry
- Farm Letter

Materials

- [Training Farm PowerPoint](#)
- ["Farm Life Article"](#)
- [Written Document Analysis Worksheet](#)
- ["Farm Diary" worksheet](#) (if desired)
- ["Farm Letter" worksheet](#) (if desired)

Setting the Purpose

- Ask the students
 - "How would you feel if you had the opportunity - right now - to work creating video games, designing next fall's new fashion of skirts, being an assistant to the principal and giving suggestions for how the school would run smoother, or just work anywhere to make their own money.
 - If students are already at working age, create questions about opportunities they do not yet have.

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- Explain to the students that many women felt very excited to have opportunities to work in areas they never imagined they would be allowed. Sure, the work was very hard in many cases, but they had an opportunity of a lifetime.

Procedure

1. Pass out the ["Farm Life Article"](#) and put up Slide #1 of the [Training Farm PowerPoint](#). (The PowerPoint may be cut out of this lesson if accessibility is difficult. Most is provided for visuals and can be printed out and passed around for students to see the images.)
2. Read the article with the students. The paragraphs are numbered for reference points. You can read aloud, students can volunteer, or students can read in pairs/groups (based on your class needs).
3. Discuss with the students how they think most of the girls were feeling about working on the farm.
4. Hand out the [Written Document Analysis Worksheet](#). Give students about 5-7 minutes to complete this individually. Students should hand this in for points when they have finished.
5. Go through the rest of the PowerPoint, describing the images and asking the students critical thinking questions (for example: what can you infer about this time period based on this photo?). See notes within the PowerPoint for other suggestions.
6. Students write a one-page diary entry.
 - a. They will put themselves in the mind frame of the character they invented for the registration cards (use that name, background, etc.).
 - b. They will imagine that they have just finished their first week at the farm.
 - c. The entry should include information about the people they are with, the schedule they have, the work they do, how life is different, and how some parts are good and others are not so pleasant.
 - d. Students can use their own paper or use ["Farm Diary" worksheet](#) if desired.
7. Students should write a letter home describing their experience.
 - a. In this writing activity, they should imagine they have been at the farm for two months.
 - b. Have their feelings and opinions changed or remained roughly the same as they were after a week.
 - c. Again, students may use their own paper or ["Farm Letter" worksheet](#).
8. Writing activities may become homework or be extended into an extra day. The diary entry and letter should become part of their portfolio.

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Annotated list of materials and resources

- “Farm Life” Article
- The Literary Digest for October 25, 1919. “Farm Life as Lived and Extrolled by Girl Workers”. Pg. 68. {Illinois State Archives}
- Training Farm PowerPoint
 - Newspaper clipping: Photographs – “Farmerettes ‘Farm’ in Grant Park”. 1918. {Illinois State Archives}
 - Newspaper clipping: Photographs – “Latest in Graduations Gowns-Khaki Overalls” and “Gov. Lowden Milks a Cow”. 1918. {Illinois State Archives}
 - Property map: Illinois Training Farm, 1918. {Illinois State Archives}
 - List of Departments of Work at Training Farm and Daily Schedule {Illinois State Archives}
- National Archives website: “Teaching with Documents”
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/>