

Celebrating Women's History Month

Teaching Guide/Student Worksheets

This instructional guide supports the use of the profiles for Celebrating Women's History Month. It offers vocabulary words from the text and several short answer questions based on the content of each profile. In some cases, references to related websites are included with additional materials about the person or their pursuits. Lastly, the guide includes two or three activities per profile called "Newspaper Tie-ins." These activities suggest how to bring the lessons of these historical figures into the present, to make their lives relevant and apply the lessons to today's news. These graphic organizers were created for students in grades 4-8 and can be narrowed or expanded to accommodate the needs of each instructor's class. Feel free to modify these activities or create your own.

*Written by Mary Hadigan Miller, Educational Services Director
for the New York News Publishers Association –
News Media Literacy/Newspaper In Education Program
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Florida Standards

The Florida Department of Education defines that the Florida Standards provide a robust set of goals for every grade. Emphasizing analytical thinking rather than rote memorization, the Florida Standards will prepare our students for success in college, career and life. The Florida Standards will reflect the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.

Building on the foundation of success that has made Florida a national model, The Florida Standards provide a clear set of goals for every student, parent, and teacher.

For more information on Florida Standards, go to the CPALMS website. CPALMS is the State of Florida's official source for standards information and course descriptions: <http://www.cpalms.org>.

The reading material and activities in this packet applies to the following Florida Standards for grades four through twelve.

Social Studies: SS.412.A.1.1; SS.412.A.1.2; SS.5.A.6.2; SS.5.C.2.4; SS.5.C.2.5; SS.7.C.2.10; SS.8.A.1.3; SS.912.A.1.6; SS.912.A.1.7 **Language Arts:** LAFS.412.RI.1.1; LAFS.412.RI.1.2; LAFS.412.RI.1.3; LAFS.412.RI.2.4; LAFS.412.RI.2.5; LAFS.412.RI.2.6; LAFS.412.RI.3.7; LAFS.412.SL.1.1; LAFS.412.SL.1.2; LAFS.412.SL.1.3; LAFS.412.SL.2.4; LAFS.412.SL.2.5; LAFS.412.SL.2.6; LAFS.412.W.1.1; LAFS.412.W.1.2; LAFS.412.W.1.3; LAFS.412.W.2.4; LAFS.412.W.2.5; LAFS.412.W.2.6; LAFS.412.W.3.7; LAFS.412.W.3.8

Newspaper in Education

The Newspaper in Education (NIE) program is a cooperative effort between schools and local newspapers to promote the use of newspapers in print and electronic form as educational resources. Our educational resources fall into the category of informational text.

Informational text is a type of nonfiction text. The primary purpose of informational text is to convey information about the natural or social world. Florida NIE programs provide schools with class sets of informational text in the form of the daily newspaper and original curriculum. NIE teaching materials cover a variety of subjects and are consistent with Florida's education standards.

Florida Press Educational Services, Inc. (FPES) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization of newspaper professionals that promotes literacy, particularly for young people. FPES members consist of daily and weekly newspapers throughout the state of Florida. Through its member newspapers, FPES serves educators, students and families in all 67 Florida counties. For more information about FPES, visit fpesnie.org, or email ktower@flpress.com or jpushkin@tampabay.com. Follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/nie_fpes](https://twitter.com/nie_fpes).

Name _____

Harriet Tubman

Vocabulary – write a brief definition for the following words and phrases:

siblings _____

Underground Railroad _____

activists _____

fugitive slaves _____

Read the Famous New Yorker profile of Harriet Tubman. Then answer the following questions.

1. What other names did Harriet Tubman go by during her lifetime? _____

2. True or false, Harriet Tubman ran away from her master with her brothers in 1849 and was never a slave again. _____
3. Why was it dangerous for Harriet Tubman to help slaves gain freedom? _____

4. Name at least two ways Harriet served the Union Army during the Civil War. _____

5. What did Tubman donate land for? _____

Related Websites:

www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1535.html - Tubman's profile on PBS series, "Africans in America"

www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/tubman/ - Library of Congress – web guide – Harriet Tubman

<http://www.biography.com/people/harriet-tubman-9511430/videos/harriet-tubman-union-spy-15036995841> - video bio at Biography.com

<http://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/27129?size=original> – "Practical Illustration of the Fugitive Slave Law," cartoon, 1851

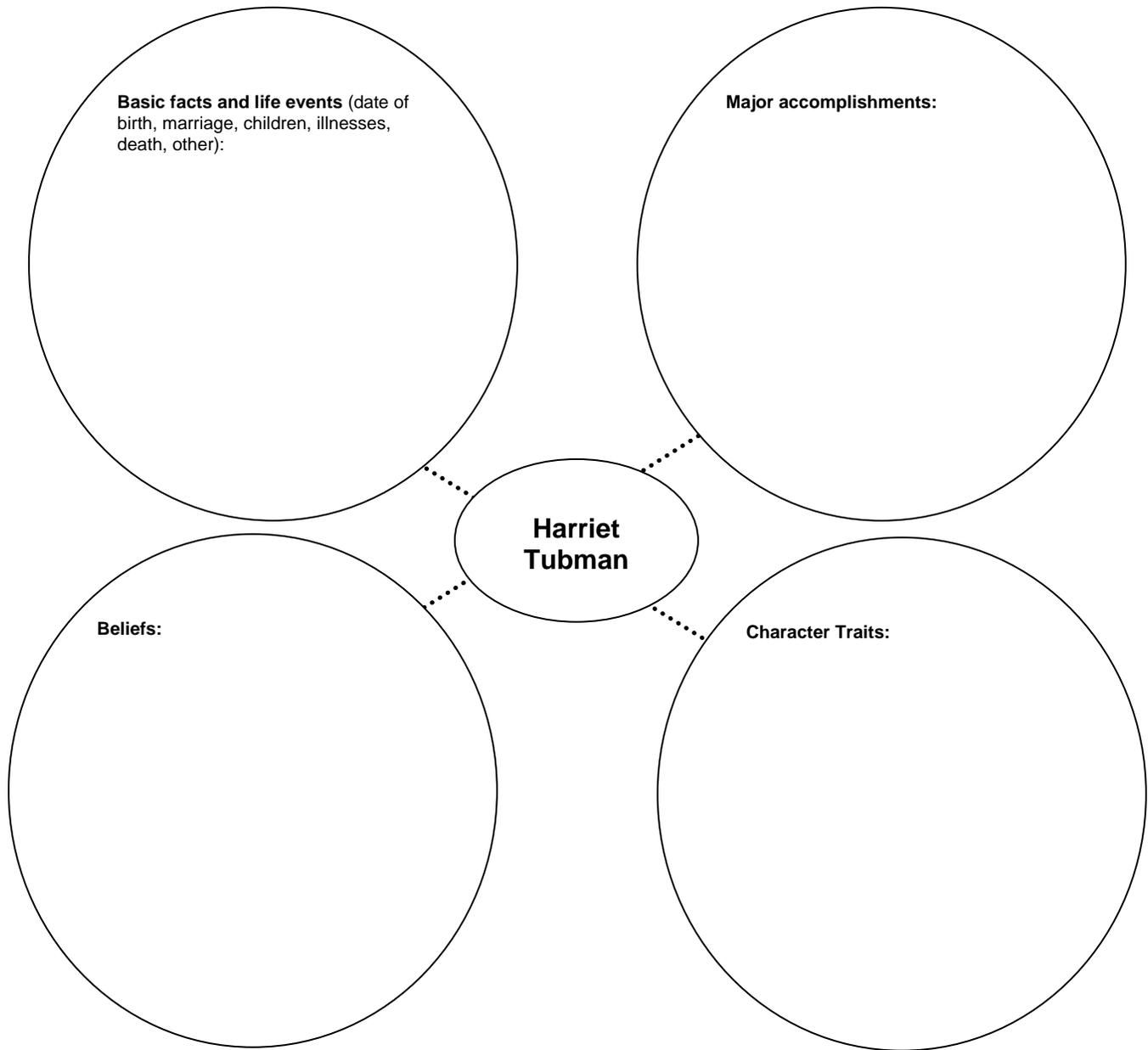
<http://tinyurl.com/4y55dlt> - NYS Parks Underground Railroad Heritage Trail (multiple links to other resources)

Newspaper Tie-ins:

- Search recent editions of the newspaper for editorial cartoons. Collect several dealing with social injustices. Draw your own editorial cartoon on a social injustice you feel strongly about. Be prepared to share your cartoon with the class and to discuss any symbolism, irony and/or personification used. For help with understanding editorial cartoons visit the Library of Congress website at <http://tinyurl.com/loc-cartoons>.
- During the Civil War, Harriet Tubman worked to support the efforts of the Union Army. Look through your local newspaper for ways civilians support or honor our military men and women today.

Name _____

Directions: As you read the profile about Harriet Tubman, fill in as much of the chart below as you can. If there is more time available, explore other resources to fill out this character chart thoroughly.



Newspaper follow up: From your newspaper, choose a story about someone and complete the chart above based on what you learn from the story.

Assessment question: Name something that you learned and inspired you about Harriet Tubman.

Name _____

Emma Lazarus

Vocabulary – write a brief definition of the following words:

plight _____

Judaism _____

ethnicity _____

anti-Semitism _____

refugees _____

obscurity _____

enclave _____

Read the Famous New Yorker profile of Emma Lazarus. Then answer the following questions.

1. Who paid for the printing of Lazarus' first book? _____
2. True or False: Emma Lazarus was an immigrant _____
3. Why did Russian Jews flee their native country in the 1880s? _____

4. What was the pedestal project raising money for? _____

5. How old was Emma Lazarus when she died? Where did she die? _____

6. Find New York City on a map of New York State or use an online mapping tool. About how far is it from your school? _____

Related Online News Articles:

The Blade, published in Toledo, Ohio – July 4, 1986, Headline: Recalling the Passage Through the “Golden Door”

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1350&dat=19860704&id=IkBPAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=5AIEAAAAIBAJ&pg=6196,726492>

Related website: <https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/statue-liberty-bringing-new-colossus-america#sect-activities>

Newspaper Tie-ins:

- Look through recent editions of the newspapers and other reliable news sources for stories about immigrants to the United States. Compare and contrast the struggles of recent US immigrants to those of people who came to America in the 1880s.
- Emma Lazarus was an author and poet using the graphic organizer on the next page, create your own poem dedicated to LIBERTY.

Name _____

An acrostic poem is a poem in which the initial letters of the lines, taken in order, spell a word or phrase. Each line should relate back to the central theme. In honor of Emma Lazarus and her poem, “The New Colossus,” to honor the Statue of Liberty write an acrostic poem using LIBERTY as your theme.

L
I
B
E
R
T
Y

Assessment: Write a sentence or two about something you learned while studying about Emma Lazarus.

Name _____

Margaret Bourke-White

Vocabulary – write a brief definition of the following words and phrase:

pioneering _____

amateur _____

philanthropist _____

metropolis _____

empathize _____

correspondent _____

Read the profile of Margaret Bourke-White. Then answer the following questions.

1. Who influenced the young Margaret to become a photographer? _____

2. What risk did Bourke-White take to get great pictures in New York City? _____

3. Name two major periods in American history that Bourke-White captured with her photography? _____

4. What accomplishment was Margaret Bourke-White the first woman to achieve? _____

5. What magazine was Bourke-White's photograph printed on the inaugural cover? _____

Related Websites: <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/08/28/archives/margaret-bourkewhite-photojournalist-is-dead-margaret-bourkewhite.html> - Bourke-White's obituary from The New York Times

Newspaper Tie-ins:

- Have the class imagine they are photojournalists. Their assignment is to capture the feeling, mood, and sense of their school, community and its people. Invite one of the photographers from your local newspaper to critique the classes work.
- The saying goes a picture's worth a thousand words. Look through several editions of the newspaper for a larger photograph that seems to capture an event, place or person. Enlarge it or make a transparency so everyone in class can see it. Now look at the details in the image for facts, inferences, and projections. What facts are in the picture? What might you infer about the image? What can you predict about what happened after this picture was taken?

Assessment question: After completing this lesson, what one thing would you like to know more about? Where do you think you could look to find out more?

Name _____

Analyzing a photograph

Quickly scan the photo. What do you notice first?

Type of photo (check all that apply):

- Portrait Landscape Aerial/Satellite Action Architectural
 Event Family Panoramic Documentary Candid
 Posed Selfie Other
- Is there a caption? yes no

Observe its parts. List the people, objects and activities you see.

PEOPLE	OBJECTS	ACTIVITIES

Write one sentence summarizing this photo.

Try to make sense of it. Answer as best you can. The caption, if available, may help.

Who took this photo?

Where is it from?

When was it taken?

What was happening at the time in history this photo was taken?

Why was it taken? List evidence from the photo or your knowledge about the photographer that led you to your conclusion.

Use it as historical evidence. What did you find out from this photo that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents, photos, or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?

Source: This graphic organizer is modified from one available from the National Archives.

Name _____

Nancy Davis Reagan

Vocabulary – write a brief definition of the following words:

aspiring _____

privileged _____

“blacklist” _____

left-wing _____

commission _____

partisanship _____

Read the Famous New Yorker profile of Nancy Davis Reagan. Then answer the following questions.

1. Where did Nancy earn her degree? What subject was the degree in? _____

2. Where did Nancy work before her small role on Broadway? _____

3. Who helped Nancy get a 7-year contract with M-G-M Studios? _____

4. How did Miss Davis meet Ronald Reagan? _____

5. What was first lady Nancy Reagan’s anti-drug slogan? _____

Related Online News Articles: *The Kingman Daily Miner* – February 15, 1982 – Nancy Reagan to visit clinics for drug users
<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=932&dat=19820215&id=T7xPAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=sFMDAAAIBAJ&pg=6785,4361375>

Nancy Reagan’s obituary in *The New York Times*: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/07/us/nancy-reagan-a-stylish-and-influential-first-lady-dies-at-94.html?_r=0

Related Online Video: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?60321-1/nancy-reagan-reflects-time-first-lady>

Newspaper Tie-in:

- Imagine you are serving as first lady or gentleman of the United States. Using the newspaper as a resource, determine what you would focus your time and attention on, and then create a slogan to promote your cause. Discuss the slogans/causes you and your classmates decided upon and created.
- Nancy Reagan’s cause as first lady was to try and influence young people from using/abusing illegal drugs. Using the newspaper and other sources, investigate how the current and other first ladies have influenced the American people. Using the graphic organizer on the next page to record your findings.

Name _____

The Impact of First Ladies

Directions: Track the impact of first ladies using the graphic organizer shown below. Place the action and the name of each first lady in the rectangle and the impact of their action in the starburst. One example is completed for you.

Press organizations started to hire female journalists. Prior to her actions some

Eleanor Roosevelt
Held press conferences, no men allowed

Nancy Reagan

Assessment question: Which first lady’s cause above do you think had the greatest impact and why?

Source: This graphic organizer is modified from one available from CSPAN Classroom

Series Exercises:

1. Select any two women and compare and contrast their lives and accomplishments.
2. Create a crossword puzzle using key vocabulary words from each profile. Consider using the crossword puzzle student interactive tool available free online at www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/crossword/
3. Write an obituary notice for each.
4. Write a classified ad for each profile. The classified could be a help wanted ad, an item for sale ad, or perhaps a lost and found notice. Use your imagination and have fun!
5. Write a journal entry from each personality's perspective regarding the challenge(s) she faced during her lifetime.
6. Using various sources, including the Internet, try to find primary documents relating to each woman.
7. Some of these famous women's homes may now be museums or have been designated as historical landmarks. Research online to find out. What more can you find out about any of the women that you didn't already know from her profile?
8. Check your library for an autobiography or biography about one of these women and read an extensive account of her life. Write a book report using appropriate organizational strategies and make an oral presentation to the class.

Answer Key:

Harriet Tubman:

1. Araminta Ross, Minty, and Moses
2. False
3. 1850 Fugitive Slave Law but accept all reasonable answers
4. Accept any two of the following: cook, laundress, scout and spy
5. (Answers will vary by location – a fast way to find an answer is by using www.mapquest.com or Google maps)

Emma Lazarus:

1. Her father paid to have her book printed.
2. False, Emma Lazarus was born in New York City.
3. They fled Russia to escape religious discrimination and the violence of riots/pogroms.
4. The pedestal project was raising money to pay for the giant base for the Statue of Liberty.
5. Emma Lazarus was 38 years old when she died in New York City.
6. The Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged.

Margaret Bourke-White:

1. Her father – he was an amateur photographer
2. She climbed outside of the Chrysler Building
3. The Great Depression and World War II
4. The first female war correspondent attached to the Army Air Force
5. *LIFE* magazine

Nancy Davis Reagan:

1. She earned her degree in dramatic arts from Smith College.
2. Nancy Davis worked in a department store before she got a part in Broadway show.
3. Nancy's mother and actor, Spencer Tracy, helped Nancy get an screen test which got her a contract.
4. Nancy met Ronald Reagan when she went to the Screen Actors' Guild over fears of being blacklisted.
5. Nancy Reagan's anti-drug slogan was - Just Say No

Additional online resources:

<http://www2.ed.gov/free/features/women-history-month.html> – Women's History Topic on Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) website. FREE is among the most popular K-12 websites maintained by the U.S. Department of Education because of the many great resources being offered by contributing federal agencies.

<http://constitutioncenter.org/learn/civic-calendar/womens-history-month> - National Constitution Center's Women History Month resources

http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/resource_library/women_resources.html - Women's History Teaching Resources – Smithsonian Education

www.greatwomen.org – National Women's Hall of Fame, Seneca Falls, NY

<http://www.womenshistorymonth.gov/> - Women's History Month from Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html> - Using Primary Resources Teacher's Guide and Analysis Tool from Library of Congress

Additional generic NIE graphic organizers are included on next pages to extend these lessons or to use as you wish.

Name _____

A Study Guide*

Working in groups of no more than five, choose and study carefully a newspaper story about a woman who is contributing to your community. Answer the questions below based on details from the chosen story.

1. Remembering (retrieve)

Who committed the action? _____

What is the action? _____

When did the action take place? _____

Where did the action take place? _____

2. Understanding (summarize)

Retell or give the main idea. _____

3. Applying (carry out)

Why is (the specific event) _____ significant?

4. Analyzing (compare)

How does (the problem in the story) _____ compare

with another problem _____?

5. Evaluating (judge)

Do you agree with a viewpoint offered by someone in the story or the opinion expressed by the person writing the opinion _____?

What do you think? _____

6. Creating (plan)

Devise an action plan to solve the problem and present your plan to a group of students, parents, school and/or community officials _____

(*Bloom's Taxonomy revised)

Name _____

Levels of Thinking and Reasoning*

From your newspaper, choose a story about a woman or group of women in your community that interests and/or involves you and is likely to appeal to other students in your class. Ask a question on each level and have a classmate read the story and answer the questions. Also, ask for a critique of the questions.

Headline: _____ Author: _____ Newspaper: _____ Date: _____
--

Create

Evaluate

Analyze

Apply

Understand

Remember

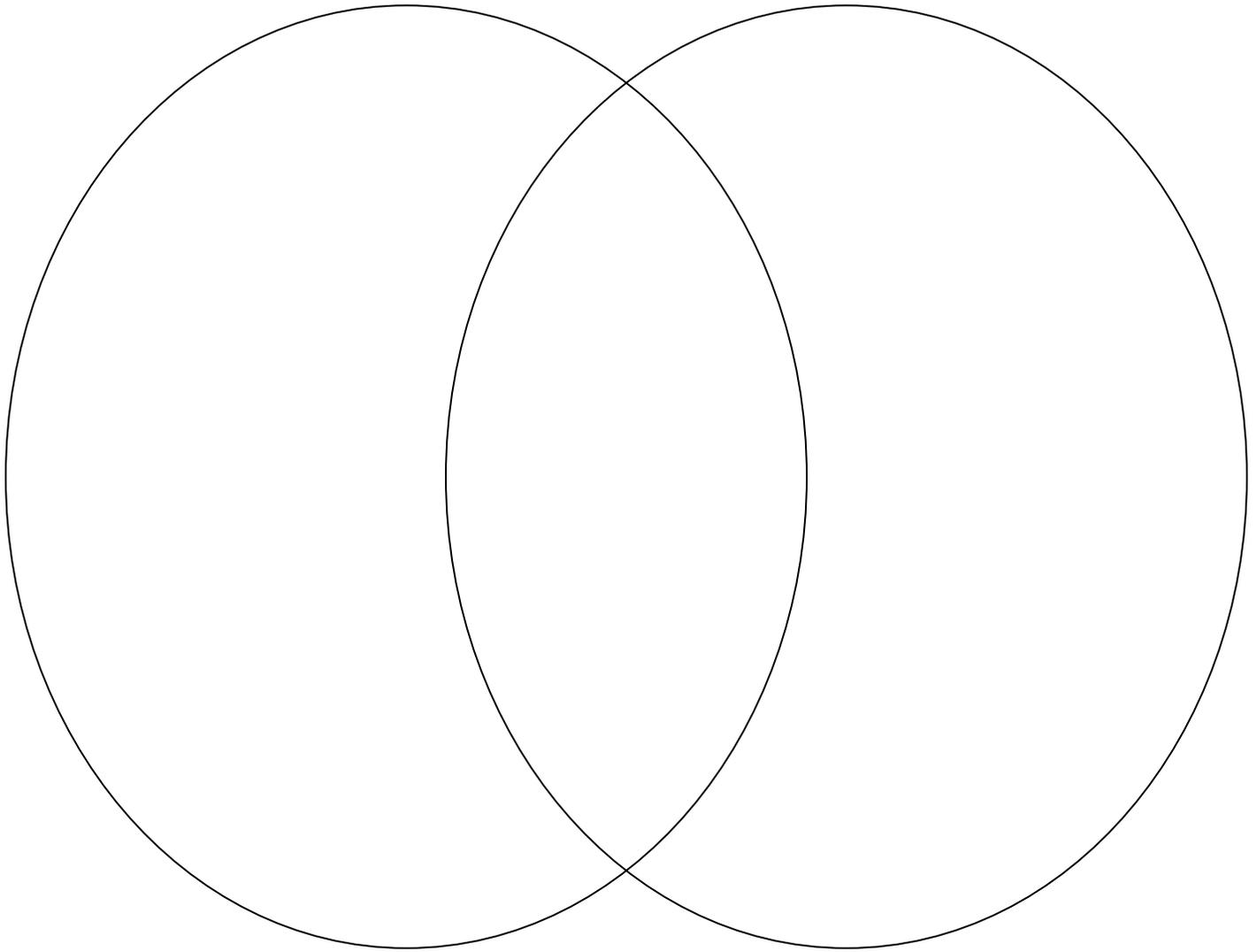
Follow-up: Did the story appeal to your classmate? Did your classmate offer complete answers to the questions? Did your classmate recommend any changes to the questions?

(*Bloom's Taxonomy revised)

Name _____

Venn Diagram

Directions: Compare two women featured in the profiles or compare one of the women profiled with someone featured in current print or online newspapers.



Follow-Up: What character traits to the women have in common?

Name _____

KLW Chart

Directions: Before you read fill out the **KNOW** column with what you already know about the topic. As you read fill in what you've **LEARNED** in the center column. After you have finished reading fill in the **WANT** column with what you *want* to know more about.

KNOW	LEARN	WANT TO KNOW

Follow-Up: Conduct research to answer your questions.

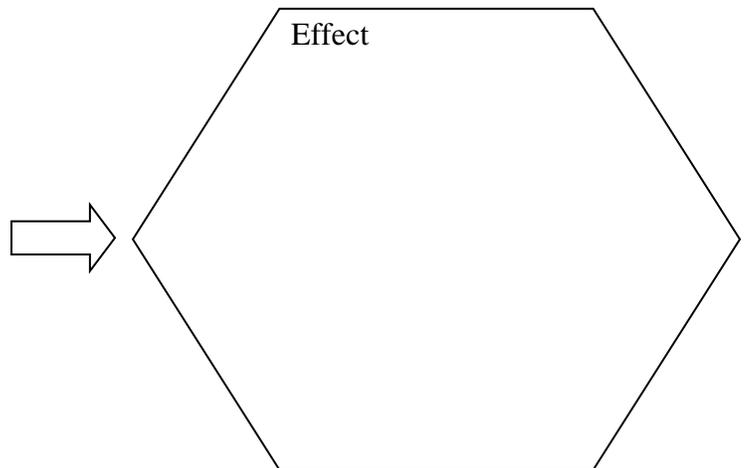
Name _____

Cause and Effect

Directions: From today's news, choose one or more stories that focus on news about women. Identify cause-effect relationships.

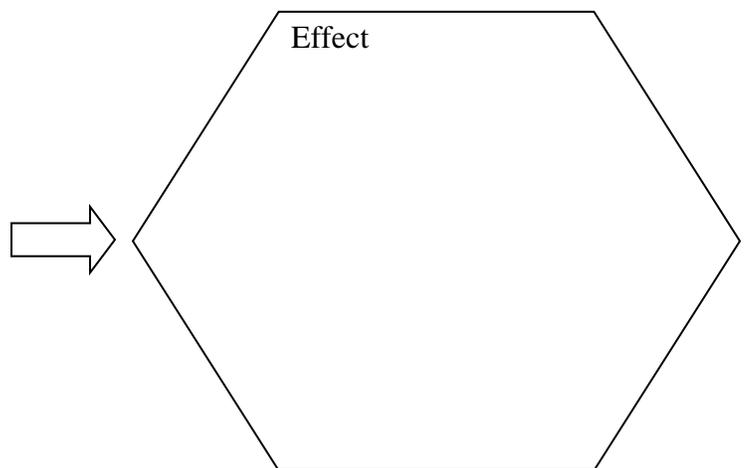
Story Headline:

Cause



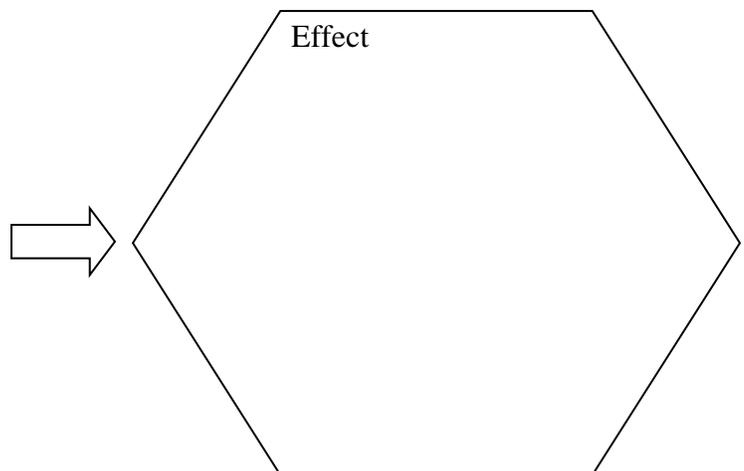
Story Headline:

Cause



Story Headline:

Cause



Follow-Up: Which effects represent positive and which, negative results, for the women involved?

Florida Press Education Services activity: Do the research

Doing research is a great way to learn about a topic or person. The process of doing the research – finding credible websites, reading the information, looking at photos, and understanding the information – will increase your knowledge in a fun way. For this research assignment, you will take on the role of being a detective to learn more about a notable Floridian woman. The first step is to choose one of the notable Floridians listed and learn more about her. You can work by yourself or with a partner.

Harriet Bedell
Betty Castor Bell
Mary McLeod Bethune
Mary B. Billie
Roxcy Bolton
Jacqueline Brice
Gwendolyn Sawyer Cherry
Lucreaty Clark
Jacqueline Cochran
Marjory Stoneman Douglas
Dorothy W. Glisson
Ida Goodson
Rhea Grossman
Zora Neale Hurston
Betty Mae Jumper
JoAnn Hardin Morgan
Carrie Meek
Julee Panton
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
Augusta Savage

1. When you are doing research, it is important to use credible websites. Websites such as Wikipedia and personal blogs are not always credible since some of the information presented as fact may be opinion or plagiarized from another source. Be sure to keep a list of your sources.
2. Research the person you chose. Write down the important facts, including:
 - Who is this person?
 - What is his or her background?
 - Where was this person born and where did he or she live?
 - When did this person live?
 - Why is this person notable and/or important?
 - How is this person a role model?
3. Create your own set of lesson plans about the person you chose. Using one of the worksheets from this packet as a model, create your own vocabulary list, reading comprehension questions and newspaper tie-in activities.
4. Next, compare the person you chose to one of the other individuals you have read about: Margaret Bourke-White, Emma Lazarus, Nancy Davis Reagan or Harriet Tubman. Create a graphic organizer to show what you have learned (comparison chart, Venn diagram, KWL chart).
5. Create an oral presentation about what you have learned and discovered. Have the other students in the class complete your worksheets.

Celebrating Women's History Month

Margaret Bourke-White

(1862 - 1937)

Margaret Bourke-White dedicated her career to photographing the defining images of 20th century history. In the process, she made history as a pioneering photojournalist.

Margaret was born in the Bronx on June 14, 1904. Her father was a printing industry engineer and an amateur photographer. Margaret considered following her father's career, and took summer school engineering courses at Rutgers in 1921, but began turning to photography during her freshman year at Columbia.

Her father's death made it difficult to continue college, but a local philanthropist paid Margaret's way to the University of Michigan, where she worked as a yearbook photographer. A short-lived marriage took her to Case Western Reserve in Ohio, and after a divorce, she graduated from Cornell in 1927.

Throughout these years, Margaret helped pay her own way by selling photos and teaching photography at summer camps. After graduating, she moved to Cleveland to specialize in industrial photography, which she hoped to turn into modern art while making money from business commissions.

Because of her subject matter, the risks she took for good pictures, and her attractive appearance, Margaret became newsworthy herself. Her pictures impressed Henry Luce, the publisher of Time magazine, who hired Bourke-White in 1929 as the first staff photographer for *Fortune*, an illustrated business magazine.

Bourke-White moved to New York's skyscraper Chrysler Building, where she climbed outside to take powerful pictures of the bustling metropolis. Her work for *Fortune* took her all over the world. She published a picture book, "Eyes on Russia," portraying the country's rapid industrial development, and remained fascinated with technology in all forms.

A *Fortune* assignment to the "Dust Bowl" of the American Midwest confronted Bourke-White with the human suffering of the Great Depression. Her own struggles to make ends meet helped her empathize with the stricken farmers, and the pictures published in the book "You Have Seen Their Faces" gave her modern world a more human face.

In 1936, Bourke-White became a staff photographer for Luce's newest magazine, *LIFE*, which used photographic essays as a new way to report news in-depth. The first issue featured Bourke-White's photographs inside and on the cover. *LIFE*'s photographers became celebrities themselves, with Margaret Bourke-White the most glamorous of all.

For years, Bourke-White had anticipated a world war and wanted to photograph the defining event of her generation. By chance, she was the only foreign photographer on the scene when Germany invaded Russia in 1941. When America entered the war, Bourke-White became the first woman war correspondent attached to the Army Air Force. She covered dangerous bombing raids and followed the troops through North Africa, Italy, and the Nazi death camps.

After the war, Margaret Bourke-White continued to travel the world, photographing leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and humble men like South African coal miners. When Parkinson's Disease ended her career in photojournalism, her fight against the illness inspired a TV movie. She continued to write, remained on *LIFE*'s staff until 1969, and was remembered when she died on August 27, 1971, as a photographer who had achieved her life's ambition.



Self-Portrait, 1943, courtesy of The Sandor Family Collection

For more information about Margaret Bourke-White and her photography go to <https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/margaret-bourke-white?all/all/all/all/0>. This is one of a series of four Celebrating Women's History Month profiles, written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - News Media Literacy/Newspaper In Education Program. All rights reserved 2019.

Celebrating Women's History Month

Emma Lazarus

(1849-1887)



**Engraving by T. Johnson
Library of Congress, Prints and
Photographs Division [reproduction
number LC-USZ262-53145]**

Emma Lazarus lived a privileged life as one of 19th century America's literary elite, but it was the plight of helpless refugees that inspired her most famous words.

Emma Lazarus was born in New York City on July 22, 1849. Her father was a wealthy sugar refiner. The Lazarus family suffered little prejudice over their Jewish heritage. Instead, Emma's father socialized with the Gentile elite, both in New York and at the family's summer resort in Newport, Rhode Island. Emma received private tutoring and acquired a love of literature and foreign languages. Her father paid for the printing of Emma's first book of poems and translations in 1866, as well as a second edition the following year.

Emma received encouragement from some of the country's most famous writers. During the 1870s, she became a famous writer herself. She contributed to many of the most prestigious literary magazines and published plays as well as poems and stories. She helped popularize Jewish poetry by translating poems from German, Spanish and, eventually, Hebrew.

In 1881, Judaism became more than a literary interest when Lazarus learned of pogroms – violent riots against defenseless Jewish communities inside Russia following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. Many Russian Jews fled to the U.S., where they encountered hostility due to their ethnicity and religion. When one magazine published an article blaming Jews for the pogroms, Lazarus published a reply and became a public critic of anti-Semitism.

As a member of the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society, Lazarus saw police beating refugees who were protesting conditions at a compound on Ward's Island in Manhattan. The refugees were poor in a way Lazarus had never been and spoke a language, Yiddish, that she didn't understand. But their plight inspired her to become a champion for the rights of Jews around the world and refugees of all kinds in America.

Before the word "Zionist" had been coined, Emma Lazarus believed that Jews should have a country of their own in Palestine. She also believed that Americans, Jews and Gentiles alike, could do more to welcome Jewish refugees to the U.S. As an eloquent advocate for refugees' rights, Lazarus was invited to help raise money for a pedestal for the giant statue France was building as a gift to the United States. "Liberty Enlightening the World" would welcome immigrants and refugees to New York and the country. For a fundraising auction, Lazarus composed a poem in the fourteen-line sonnet form about the statue. "The New Colossus" was read aloud at the auction on December 3, 1883. It appeared in newspapers and magazines soon afterward to publicize the pedestal project.

Lazarus spent much of the rest of her life in Europe, meeting famous writers and promoting the refugee cause. She took ill in 1887 and died on November 19, not long after returning to New York. She was mourned as one of the greatest Jewish writers of the 19th century, but her writing soon faded into obscurity -- except for "The New Colossus." In 1903, lines from Emma Lazarus's sonnet were carved into the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, inviting the "huddled masses, yearning to breathe free" to pass through the "golden door" to the United States.

To learn more about Emma Lazarus and the Statue of Liberty National Monument go to
<https://www.nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/emma-lazarus.htm>.

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Celebrating Women's History Month

Nancy Davis Reagan

(1921-2016)



Official portrait of the Reagans in the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden, 1988.

Source: Reagan Library

Nancy Davis dreamed of stardom as an actor but achieved far greater celebrity as Nancy Reagan, first lady of the United States during the 1980s.

Nancy was born Anne Francis Robbins in Manhattan on July 6, 1921. Her mother was an aspiring actress and her godmother was the famous actress Alia Nazimova. When Nancy's parents divorced in 1928, she lived with an aunt in Maryland until her mother married a rich doctor, Loyal Davis in 1929. Nancy Davis moved to Chicago and lived a more privileged life. She attended the Girls' Latin School and graduated from Smith College in Massachusetts with a degree in dramatic arts in 1943.

A college degree didn't guarantee an acting career. Nancy Davis worked in a department store until she won a small non-speaking role in a play that eventually made it to Broadway. As her career advanced, her mother arranged with an old friend, the movie actor Spencer Tracy, to get Nancy a screen test at the Metro-Goldwyn Mayer studio in Hollywood. The test earned Nancy a seven-year contract, starting in 1949.

Nancy Davis's name soon threatened to get her in trouble. In the early years of the Cold War, movie studios maintained a "blacklist" of talent suspected of communist ties or sympathies. People on the blacklist could not get work in the movies. Davis feared that she would be confused with another Nancy Davis, an alleged leftist, and blacklisted by mistake. She reportedly sought help from the president of the Screen Actors' Guild, Ronald Reagan. After Davis was elected to the SAG Board in 1950, she and Reagan began going steady. They married in 1952, but Davis continued to act under her maiden name.

Ronald Reagan soon became a TV spokesman for General Electric, while Nancy acted only occasionally after their marriage. In the 1960s, the Reagans joined a new grassroots political movement opposed to high taxes and excessive government regulation of the economy. After a well-received speech at the 1964 Republican National Convention, Reagan was encouraged to run for political office. He was elected governor of California in 1966 and 1970.

As first lady of California, Nancy Reagan served on the state arts commission and as a supporter of the Foster Grandparents Program. She became first lady of the United States after Reagan was elected President in 1980. Reagan's victory began an era of increasingly bitter partisanship in American politics. Nancy was widely disliked by her husband's political opponents, but remained one of the country's most admired women throughout the Reagan administration.

Nancy Reagan became best known for her "Just Say No" publicity campaign against drug abuse by young people. She brought her anti-drug message to the United Nations general assembly, becoming the initial first lady to address that body. While she represented conservative values to many people, she played a progressive part in the evolution of the first lady into a more influential voice in public policy.

Once the Reagans retired, partisan feeling against Nancy faded. After Ronald Reagan was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 1994, Nancy earned sympathy nationwide. After he died in 2004, she planned his state funeral. Until her own passing on March 6, 2016, Nancy Reagan remained a model of class and dignity for women in public life.

To learn more about Nancy Reagan and other first ladies of the U.S. go to The National First Lady Museum at www.firstladies.org.

This is one of a series of four Celebrating Women's History Month profiles, written by Kevin Gilbert for the NYNPA - News Media Literacy/Newspaper In Education Program. All rights reserved 2019.

Celebrating Women's History Month

Harriet Tubman

(Unknown - 1883)

Harriet Tubman was a famous New Yorker by choice, not by birth. She lived in New York as a free woman after liberating herself and many others from slavery before the Civil War.

Tubman was born Araminta (Minty) Ross in Dorchester County, Maryland. Like many slaves, she didn't know exactly when she was born; it was most likely between 1820 and 1822. Her father, Ben Ross, and her mother, Harriet Green, belonged to two different masters, but lived together until Green's owner separated the family. While she bore her father's family name, Minty lived with her mother as the property of the Brodess family. At age six, she was put to work as a nursemaid. During her childhood, she checked muskrat traps, drove oxen and ran errands for her master. She was beaten often, once suffering a head injury that caused fainting spells in later life.

Minty married John Tubman, a free black man, in 1844. Adopting her mother's name, she became Harriet Tubman. As a slave, she was subject to separation from her husband if the Brodess family chose to sell her. After her master's death in 1849, Harriet worried that Brodess's widow would sell her to pay off family debts. She convinced her brothers to run away with her, hoping to reunite with John Tubman later.

The siblings ran away in September 1849, while hired out to another plantation. Before long, the brothers persuaded Harriet to return to the Brodess plantation, but she soon escaped again on her own. With help from the "Underground Railroad" network of white and black activists who sheltered fugitive slaves, she reached Philadelphia and went to work as a free woman.

In 1850, Harriet learned that a niece was going to be sold. She became part of the Underground Railroad, returning to Maryland to help her niece escape. She liberated her brother Moses the following year, and was nicknamed "Moses" herself as she guided more fugitives to freedom. Despite her successes, she never convinced John Tubman to join her in the North.

Assisting fugitive slaves became more dangerous after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law required law enforcement to assist in capturing fugitives. Despite the heightened danger of recapture, Tubman found a safe haven in Auburn, a community hostile to slave-hunters. U.S. Senator William H. Seward sold her a plot of land outside Auburn, where she settled her parents after transporting them from Maryland to Canada. With Auburn as her base, she rescued more slaves from Maryland and helped a fugitive slave escape imprisonment in Troy, New York.

During the Civil War, Tubman served the Union Army as a cook, laundress, scout and spy. She liberated hundreds of slaves at once while leading raids on plantations. After the war, she struggled to secure a government pension and joined the women's rights movement. In Auburn, she became a church leader, donating land for a Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged.

Harriet Tubman was recognized as an American hero when she died on March 10, 1913. She was buried with military honors, while Auburn honored her memory with a commemorative plaque. Her place in history has only grown as Americans have given black women like Tubman proper credit for liberating themselves.



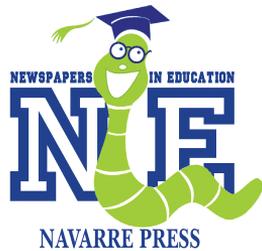
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