

# Women at Work: Early Elementary Explorations of Gender Roles and Career Options for Women



Grades 1–4

Using AIT Products

- *Math @ Work*, program 4, “Weather: A Whirlwind of Numbers”
- *Math @ Work*, program 5, “Newspapers/Sports: Digital Deadlines”
- *Retro News*, program 7, “Women in the News”

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## Overview

The subtle message that there is such a thing as “women’s work” and “men’s work” affects all children, both boys and girls, and children still encounter hidden stereotypes at very young ages. This lesson plan utilizes programs from two AIT series to combat the stereotypes that girls can’t or shouldn’t go into any career that interests them. After meeting both men and women whose math skills allow them to work in jobs that were considered male-only positions in the past, students will learn about famous American women who broke stereotypes and made names for themselves in a variety of occupations.

This lesson plan offers teachers several activities designed to teach early elementary students about women and work. Students will discuss

and sort pictures of working women, interview a female friend or family member about her job, and collaborate in small groups to create posters honoring famous American women workers.

## Objectives

- Recognize that both men and women perform important jobs and may work at the same careers.
- Examine the career of a female friend or relative to discover job opportunities that currently exist for women.
- Investigate the lives of famous women to learn how they obtained and succeeded in various jobs and careers.

## Vocabulary

|            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| biography  | job          |
| Braille    | job training |
| career     | male         |
| female     | occupation   |
| interviews | work skills  |

## Preparation

### Materials Needed

- AIT video *Math @ Work*, program 4, “Weather: A Whirlwind of Numbers”—CUE the tape to begin right after the opening, at approximate time code 01:08 (about 1.5 minutes in total length).
- AIT video *Math @ Work*, program 5, “Newspapers/Sports: Digital Deadlines”—CUE the tape to begin right after the opening, at approximate time code 01:07 (two separate clips: the first, used on Day One, is about 2 minutes long; the second, used on Day Two, is about 1.5 minutes in total length).
- Supplies for creating bulletin boards or wall murals, including background paper, cutout letters, etc.
- Optional: An overhead transparency or other projection copy of the **Women at Work Interview Question Sheet**
- Classroom copies of the reproducible **Women at Work Interview Question Sheet** (one per student)
- AIT video *Retro News*, program 7, “Women in the News”—CUE the tape to approximate time code 03:51 (several separate clips, less than 8 minutes in total length; optional: show older students the entire 28-minute program).
- Copies of the **A Great American Working Woman** poster template, one for each small group
- Large sheets of poster board, tag board, or construction paper (e.g., 18" x 24", 22" x 28", etc.), one sheet for each small group
- Assorted art supplies for creating posters, such as colored markers, glue, construction paper, a set for each small group

### Planning Notes

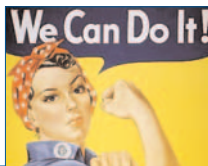
- The lessons described here are not intended to be held on consecutive days. The first two lessons each include an assignment that may require several days to complete; therefore, you should plan the lessons so that students have time to complete those assignments before you begin the next part of the lesson.
- This lesson plan makes use of learning logs. A learning log is a thinking tool, a journal or notebook in which students record ideas, questions, and thoughts about what they have learned. Make sure each student has such a notebook before beginning the lesson. (NOTE: This notebook doesn't have to be reserved for this lesson—if you already use journals or learning logs in your instruction, those can be used for this lesson.) Depending on the ages, resources, and writing abilities of your students, these notebooks may take different forms:
  - \* Students could bring in a bound or loose-leaf notebook or journal.
  - \* You can create notebooks by stapling several sheets of paper together, adding a construction-paper cover if desired.
  - \* Young students just learning to write may need unlined notebooks in which to create drawings.
- The group work activity on Day One requires students to work together to find images of working women performing various jobs. Depending on your teaching situation, you may wish to gather old magazines or catalogs

for students to search through, or arrange for computer lab time if you prefer to have students look for and download images electronically or online.

- On Day Two you will work as a class to create a bulletin board using those images of working women. Prepare a bulletin board (or mural space on a wall if you prefer), and assemble the materials you wish to use for the display (see the Reflection activity on Day Two for details): background paper, yarn, markers, cutout letters for headings, etc.
- The group work activity for Day Three involves researching a famous American woman and collaborating to create a poster about her. You may wish to arrange for Internet or library research time ahead of time.
- One extension activity for this lesson suggests allowing students to work in groups to interview women who work at a variety of different jobs in the local community. If you choose to conduct this activity, you may wish to begin early to arrange these class visits. More information about setting up the group interviews can be found in the Extension Activity section.

## Time

This project will take about three, non-consecutive, 60- to 90-minute class periods, in addition to assignments and extension activity time.



“I am neither a man nor a woman but an author.”

—Charlotte Brontë, Author

## Procedure—Day 1

### Introduce Topic:

#### What is “Women’s Work”?

Conduct a brief (30- to 45-second) brainstorming session, asking students to name jobs and careers. List all suggestions on the board, chart paper, or with a projection system. (NOTE: You will need to save this list to review during the Final Class Discussion on Day Three, so you might want to use chart paper or a projection tool that will save these results.)

Then ask each student in the class to identify what he or she wants to be. Make a mark next to each job as it’s identified, designating whether the student is a boy or a girl. (For example, place a check when a girl names a job, but make another mark—e.g., an asterisk or star—when it is claimed by a boy.)

As a class, identify the jobs or job types most often picked by girls and those picked mostly by boys. Ask students if they can guess why the results ended that way. Accept any answers at this time. Save the results for Day Three.

### Pre-Viewing Activity

Divide the class into groups of four students, assign students in the groups to the numbers 1–4, then write “Men’s Work” and “Women’s Work” on the board and complete the following think-pair-share activity.

1. **Think** silently about this question: When you hear the words “men’s work,” what kind of work do you think of? How about when you hear the words “women’s work”? Are there some jobs that you think should only be performed by men or by women? (Younger students can draw pictures to remind themselves of the jobs they think of; have older students write their ideas in their learning logs.)

2. **Pair** students: Have odd-numbered and even-numbered students in each group pair up and discuss their ideas about the jobs that they think can only be performed by men or women.
3. **Share** with the class: Randomly select four to five students and ask them to either share their own or their partners' ideas with the class. (NOTE: Both the random selection and the switch between their own and their partners' ideas will help ensure that all students are listening carefully.)

Lead a very brief class discussion about whether some jobs should be reserved for either men or women, accepting any opinions from students without comment at this time.

## Video

Prepare students for watching clips of the AIT videos from *Math @ Work* by explaining that these programs describe how important math is in the types of jobs found at a newspaper or television studio, but right now you just want them to notice the jobs themselves and the men and women who work at them.

Show students the two short clips from these *Math @ Work* programs. NOTE: The time codes listed here are approximate, beginning immediately after the opening theme song on each program. Adjust the codes to match your own video player

- “Weather: A Whirlwind of Numbers”: approximate time codes 01:08–02:31
- “Newspapers/Sports: Digital Deadlines”: approximate time codes 01:07–03:12

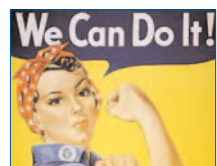
Briefly discuss the people and jobs described on the videos, asking volunteers to name some of the jobs associated with producing the sports section of a newspaper and with forecasting the weather. Ask if students think the jobs per-

formed by the women in these clips are as important as the work of the men. Were any students surprised at the jobs these women performed? Do students think women could have performed the same jobs as the men in the clips?

## Group Work

Working in the same groups, have students collaborate to find pictures of women performing a variety of jobs. Depending on your circumstances, you may have students search old magazines or catalogs, draw pictures themselves, or search the Internet to add to the collection. (NOTE: If you choose to have students download online images, you might wish to set bookmarks for safe Web sites that contain such images. Or you may prefer to search for the online images yourself and create a folder on the school network that contains a collection of images. See the Resources section for suggestions.)

Set a minimum number of images you expect each group to locate, based on the grades you teach. (For example, each group of younger students should find at least two, groups of older students might be expected to gather six to ten pictures, and so on.) You might choose to make this a homework or in-class project. The pictures will be used in the Reflection activity on Day Two—postpone the Day Two lesson plan, if necessary, to provide students with enough time to gather images.



“We are coming down from our pedestal and up from the laundry room.”

—Bella Abzug, Lawyer

## Procedure—Day 2

### Review/Reflection

Return students to the groups they worked in on Day One, and then mix up and randomly distribute an equal number of working women pictures to each group. Ask groups to discuss the jobs women are performing in the pictures, and sort them into categories (each group should decide which categories they want to use, based on the pictures in their collections). Ask them to name female friends or family members who work in similar jobs.

Finally, work as a class to create a “Working Women” bulletin board, grouping the jobs into categories depending on the ages and understanding of your students. Possible groups might include:

- Outdoor jobs, indoor jobs
- Industrial/labor, professions/careers
- Jobs requiring college degrees or specialized training, jobs anyone can do
- Jobs with uniforms, jobs without uniforms
- Jobs using special tools, jobs without tools

### Introduce New Topic: Interview a Working Woman

Ask students how they can learn more about women and the work they do. Explain that an “interview” is a conversation you have with someone in which you get her to answer a list of questions. Ask students if they’ve ever seen or been part of an interview.

If you created the optional projection copy of the worksheet **Women at Work Interview Question Sheet**, display it for the class. Otherwise, write on the board or simply read aloud each question, discussing why students might want to

know the answer to each of the questions on the sheet.

### Pre-Viewing Activity

Conduct a mock interview for the class by asking one or two students to come to the front of the room and interview you about your job as a teacher. (If you are a male teacher, the questions will still apply, but if you prefer, you might ask a female colleague to help you out with this activity). Have the students ask the questions on the sheet and demonstrate how they might make notes about your answers, depending on their ability levels. Younger students might write only a word or two to help them remember the answers.

### Video

Prepare students to watch the clip from *Math @ Work* by asking them to imagine that they are interviewing this working woman, Susan Vinella, who is a sportswriter for the *Dayton Daily News* in Ohio. Tell them to listen carefully to discover if Ms. Vinella answers any of the questions on the **Women at Work Interview Question Sheet**. PLAY the clip from “Newspaper/Sports: Digital Deadlines,” beginning at approximate time code 07:41 (as the scene changes to a girls’ basketball game—tip-off), and continuing to approximate time code 09:05 (after Vinella says, “. . . sports is sometimes a metaphor for life”).

Return to the **Women at Work Interview Question Sheet** and, as a class, discuss how they would record answers to the questions if they had interviewed Ms. Vinella.

### Assignment

Give each student a copy of the **Women at Work Interview Question Sheet** and explain that they are to interview a female friend or family member about her job, using the questions on the interview sheet as a guide. (NOTE: You may need to allow a few days for students to complete this activity. Don’t begin the Day Three lesson until students have turned in their sheets.)

## Procedure—Day 3

### Review/Reflection

Lead a whole-class discussion about the interviews students conducted at home. Read aloud the different occupations reflected in the students' interviews, and ask if students were surprised that women work at any of the jobs. Have students record in their learning logs their feelings about the interviews they conducted, as well as how they now feel about the kinds of jobs women can perform—older students should write a few sentences or a paragraph; younger students might write one sentence with an accompanying picture.

Ask a few volunteers to give a full report of their interviews, describing the most interesting things they discovered about those jobs and the women they interviewed. You may want to post the interviews on your Working Women bulletin board or create a classroom book to put in the reading corner for students to examine during free time.

### Introduce New Topic: Famous American Working Women

Remind students of some of the jobs they've been talking about. Ask if they can think of any famous people, men or women, who had one of those jobs.

### Pre-Viewing Activity

Write the following jobs on the board, overhead, or chart paper. Ask students if they can name a famous person for each category (man or woman).

Factory worker  
Leader  
Lawyer/Judge  
Sports figure  
Airplane pilot  
Teacher  
Astronaut

### Video

Prepare students for watching clips of the AIT video from *Retro News* by explaining that this program features women who have done some amazing things, including working at the jobs listed on the board. Ask them to notice the types of jobs the women in the video perform. (NOTE: You may prefer to show the entire 28-minute program for older—4th-grade—students.)

The following clips are organized in the order in which they appear in the video. The time codes are approximate, so you should adjust them during your preview of the clips to match your copy. After showing each clip about specific American women, STOP and discuss the woman and job, adding the names in bold to the career list on the board (Susan B. Anthony and Eleanor Roosevelt are both added to the “Leader” category).

- Women in factories, World War II (03:51–04:55)
- Dateline: **Susan B. Anthony** (06:53–07:14)
- Professor Whatsit discusses **Eleanor Roosevelt** (07:14–09:07)
- Dateline: **Sandra Day O'Connor** (14:15–14:43)
- **Wilma Rudolph** (16:46–17:10)
- **Amelia Earhart** (18:48–19:29)
- Professor Whatsit discusses Helen Keller and her teacher, **Annie Sullivan** (20:00–22:04)
- Dateline: **Sally Ride** and other American women astronauts (23:07–23:40)

### Group Work

Divide the class into groups and assign to each group one woman from the list of famous American working women. Have the groups research their assigned American woman: her

life, her accomplishments, and the job that she performed. They should also try to find a quotation from that person that they can add to the poster (see Resources for online quotation collections). Each group should collaborate using the **A Great American Working Woman** poster template to create a poster for a Wall of Fame mural on a classroom or hallway wall.

### Final Class Discussion

Once again do the first activity you conducted on Day One:

*Conduct a brief (30- to 45-second) brainstorming session, asking students to name jobs and careers. List all suggestions on the board, chart paper, or projection.*

*Then ask each student in the class to identify what he or she wants to be. Make a mark next to each job as it's identified, designating whether the student is a boy or a girl. (For example, place a check when a girl names a job, but make another mark—e.g., an asterisk or star—when it is claimed by a boy.)*

Now compare these results to the list of jobs created on Day One. Remind students of the types of jobs boys picked and the jobs claimed by girls. Discuss any changes in the jobs selected and point out any differences in the types of jobs chosen by girls.

## Assessment

### Individual Assessment

Ask students to use their learning logs to reflect about working women. Younger students might draw and color a picture with a simple sentence, while older students should write at least one paragraph about the topic. Ask students to reflect in their learning logs whether they now believe there is such a thing as “women’s work” and “men’s work.” Encourage them to draw or describe a specific job that they used to think a

woman couldn’t do. Their descriptions or drawings should describe the tools a woman might need to perform the work as well as any required uniforms or costumes. Finally, ask students to think about or write about the skills someone would need to develop in order to perform that job, and how both men and women can develop the skills.

Collect and evaluate older students’ paragraphs, but ask younger students to tell you about their drawings and sentences. Use this opportunity to determine whether students have developed opinions about a woman’s ability to contribute to the world of work.

### Group Assignment

Evaluate each group’s work in researching information about famous American working women and in sharing the work of designing the poster to illustrate information about their lives and accomplishments. Looking for evidence of collaboration and cooperation, ask students from the group how they decided what to include as quotations and major accomplishments on the poster.

## Extension Activity 1: Group Interviews of Local Working Women

Invite women who work at a variety of different jobs in the local community to visit your class and talk with your students. Divide the class into groups of four to five students a few days before the visit and, depending on the ages and abilities of your students, decide how the interviews should be conducted and recorded.

Provide groups with a list of the jobs that will be represented and have them work together before the visit to decide on questions they would like to ask these visitors, including the questions from the Women at Work Interview Question Sheet as well as anything else that fits the age levels of your students.

## Extension Activity 2: Exploring Video Interviews

The Resources section contains two PBS sites that host video interviews: *Reading Rockets* has interviewed more than 50 children's book authors and illustrators, and *Design Squad* offers interviews of engineers who design many items children will find interesting. Have students work in pairs or small groups to view one of the interviews of a woman author, illustrator, or engineer and prepare a report or poster highlighting that job.

## Resources

### Online images of working women

NOTE: The following image sites are recommended as resources for the Group Work activity on Day One. The downloading of images from the Internet is subject to copyright restrictions. However, if you use the images from the following sites in the manner described in this lesson, your use will fit within the guidelines of *fair use*, an exception to copyright that allows teachers a limited use of such materials without permission from the author or owner.

<http://images.google.com/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi>

**Google Images.** Type the keywords “working woman” into the search box for a large collection of downloadable pictures of women performing various jobs. Note that you can set the search engine to a “strict safe search” setting to limit the results students will see.

[www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/126\\_rosi.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/126_rosi.html)

**Rosie Pictures.** The Library of Congress offers archived images of American working women during World War II, sorted by black-and-white photographs, color slides, posters, and cartoon drawings. NOTE: The image collection Web site Flickr is currently piloting a few collections of Library images, one of which is the Rosie the Riveter collection. Go to [www.flickr.com/photos/Library\\_of\\_Congress/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/Library_of_Congress/) to examine the images there.

[www.fotosearch.com/](http://www.fotosearch.com/)

NOTE: Searches at this site may deliver images inappropriate for children. Teachers should review and download a selection of images into an offline folder for students to browse.

**Fotosearch.** This site hosts a vast collection of stock images. Search with the word “woman” followed by a job title, e.g., “woman doctor,” “woman truck driver,” etc., to find specific pictures. The images displayed on Fotosearch have a watermark imposed on them to prevent theft, but the mark shouldn't detract from the fair-use purposes of this lesson's bulletin board activity.

### Quotation collections

<http://womenshistory.about.com/library/qu/blqulist.htm>

About.com—Women's Voices: Quotations by women

[www.quotationspage.com/](http://www.quotationspage.com/)

The oldest quotations page on the Internet

[www.bartleby.com/quotations/](http://www.bartleby.com/quotations/)

Bartleby.com combines the best of both contemporary and classic quotations collections into a searchable database of over 87,000 entries, the largest of its kind ever compiled.

### Video interviews

[www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews](http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews)

Reading Rockets. Watch exclusive video interviews with over 50 top children's book authors and illustrators. Select female authors and illustrators to use in the Extension Activity of this lesson plan.

[http://pbskids.org/designsquad/parentseducators/program/video\\_clips.html](http://pbskids.org/designsquad/parentseducators/program/video_clips.html)

PBS Kids Design Squad. These short videos are profiles of real engineers who showcase diverse and creative career paths in engineering. Look for female engineers who design toys, animal habitats, robots, and racecars.

## Books, Activities, and Online Games — for younger students

[http://pbskids.org/curiousgeorge/games/on\\_the\\_job/](http://pbskids.org/curiousgeorge/games/on_the_job/)

Curious George: On the Job. Match workers to their tools in this online interactive game. NOTE: A self-leveling feature reinforces new learners and challenges more advanced students.

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonrepro/reproducible/impcoin.htm>

Scholastic. An Important Coin design-and-color sheet. Students design their own coin using the Susan B. Anthony dollar for inspiration. Printable worksheet.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/puzzle/rosie/rospuz1.html>

Library of Congress—The Big Picture: Rosie the Riveter Jigsaw Puzzle Set. Drag pieces to assemble jigsaw puzzles made from images found in the Library’s American Memory collections. As each puzzle in the set is completed, a new puzzle will appear . . . until you have completed all of the puzzles in that set. Optional for older students: You will then have a chance to use what you have learned to discover the Big Picture . . . the theme the images in the set have in common. NOTE: This interactive game requires the Macromedia Flash plug-in.

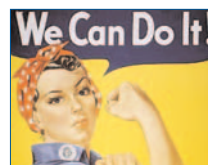
Cheney, Lynne. *A is for Abigail: An Almanac of Amazing American Women*. Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing, 2003.

From Amazon.com: Soldiers, scientists, performers, writers, entrepreneurs, politicians, quilt makers, pilots . . . as author Lynne Cheney writes, “America’s amazing women have much to teach our children—and much inspiration to offer us, as well.”

## Books, Activities, and Online Games— for older students

<http://pbskids.org/wayback/fair/tp.html>

American Experience—Wayback: It’s Not Fair. Play Inequity, a game that is “unfair” to one



“I believe in me more than anything in this world.”

—Wilma Rudolph, Olympic Gold Medalist

player to explore the feelings brought out in groups who are discriminated against. Investigate the lives of everyday people and famous people like Robert F. Kennedy, who fought for equal rights.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/puzzle/rosie/rospuz1.html>

Library of Congress—The Big Picture: Rosie the Riveter Jigsaw Puzzle Set. Drag pieces to assemble jigsaw puzzles made from images found in the Library’s American Memory collections. As each puzzle in the set is completed, a new puzzle will appear . . . until you have completed all of the puzzles in that set. Optional for older students: You will then have a chance to use what you have learned to discover the Big Picture . . . the theme the images in the set have in common. NOTE: This interactive game requires the Macromedia Flash plug-in.

<http://school.familyeducation.com/tv/printables/fe/pc/0,,10481-529,00.gif>

Family Education.com: Famous Women in the Millennium word search. Look for the names of famous women from Joan of Arc to Ruth Bader Ginsberg in this printable word search puzzle. NOTE: May require a free registration.

[http://www.wic.org/bio/idex\\_bio.htm](http://www.wic.org/bio/idex_bio.htm)

Women’s International Center: Biographies. “(W)e have brought hundreds together to celebrate the accomplishments and positive and lasting contributions of women—in so doing

many now know, understand, appreciate, and hopefully incorporate the gifts women have given to improve the world.” Read biographies of women who have made a difference in the United States and around the world.

Weldon, Amelia. *Girls Who Rocked the World: Heroines from Sacagawea to Sheryl Swoopes*. Beyond Words Publishing, 1998.

Card Catalog Description: Thirty-three short biographical sketches of young women who achieved “something extraordinary” before age 20. The entries are in chronological order, beginning with Cleopatra and ending with tennis star Martina Hingis. Some of the names are familiar (e.g., Helen Keller, Anne Frank, and Wilma Rudolph), while others are less well known.

# Women at Work Interview Question Sheet

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person being interviewed \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to student (e.g., mother, aunt, neighbor, friend) \_\_\_\_\_

Use the following questions to begin your interview. Add any extra information you gather on the back of the page.

1. What is your job?
2. What do you do in your job?
3. Did you need special schooling or training for your job?
4. Do you wear a uniform?
5. What tools do you use in your job?
6. What skills do you need to do your job?
7. What do you like best about your job?

# A Great American Working Woman Poster Template

Design your poster to match this template, adding pictures, quotations, and facts about her life and work.

**A Great American Working Woman**

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(Fill in name here)

She was a:  
(career)

She once said:

She was born on:

She died on:

Draw or glue a picture  
of your person here.

We remember her because: