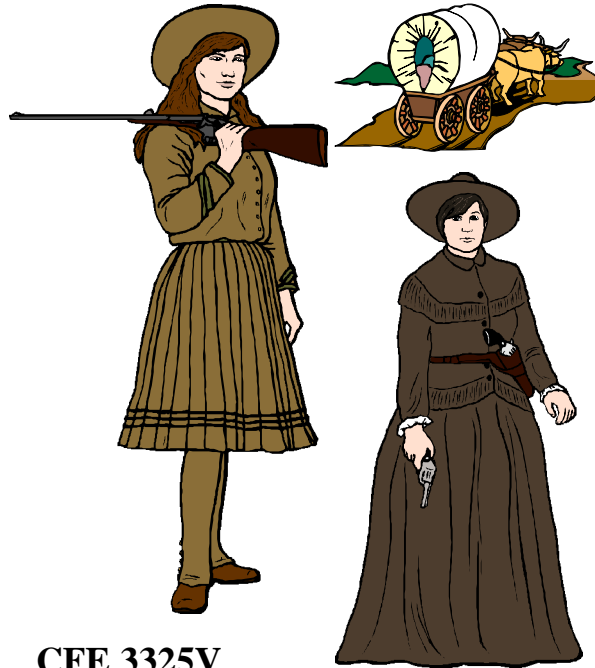


WOMEN OF THE WEST



CFE 3325V

OPEN CAPTIONED
UNITED LEARNING INC.

1994

Grade Levels: 8-13+

32 minutes

DESCRIPTION

Who were the women of the West? What were their contributions to its settlement? Letters and diaries reveal their daily tasks, joys, loneliness, and sense of freedom. Relates the impact different groups of women had on the development of the West. Explores the freedom and independence women found in dress, occupation, and thought. Combines the history of westward expansion with their contributions.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

- To describe the emigration of women from the eastern United States and from other countries to the West.
- To describe the hardships women endured as they traveled along the trails.
- To illustrate the accomplishments of women as they helped settle the West.
- To identify the progress of equal rights for women in regard to dress, work, and suffrage.
- To identify motives for westward expansion.
- To depict the frontier life and experiences of women of the West.

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Read the CAPTION SCRIPT to determine unfamiliar vocabulary and language concepts.
2. Note that information will be presented in a variety of ways: vintage photos and paintings, archival films, narration, and reenactments.
3. On a map depicting North America during the westward expansion, identify the unexplored land between Missouri and the Pacific Ocean. Compare the settled and unexplored land.
4. Read *Along the Santa Fe Trail: Marion Russell's Own Story* by Marion Russell, adapted by Ginger Wadsworth. Discuss life on the trail for a woman and child alone.

DURING SHOWING

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Pause after the section on women's dress. How did women adapt their clothing to the changes in environment and lifestyles?
3. Pause after the scenes of hardships on the trail. Recount the various hardships women and children endured during their long journeys.
4. Pause after the scenes of women in mining towns. Compare the different experiences of women from different cultures in these towns.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Describe the contributions women made to the settlements in the West. Include information such as occupations, dress, and attitudes.
2. Contrast work women did in the 1800s with work women do today.
3. Compare the type of stress and worries which women in the 1800s experienced with those of the women of today.
4. Describe the cultural makeup of the women who journeyed to the West.
5. Discuss and list the natural barriers and weather conditions that women had to face on their travels.
6. Identify reasons some women endured repression in the East, but others reveled in freedom in the West.
7. Discuss the roles of women among the various ethnic groups living in the West. Compare the following:
 - a. Equality with men
 - b. Contribution to family life
 - c. Rewards
8. Identify and discuss ways function dictated fashion for women's clothing in the West.
9. Why was it appropriate for western states to lead the fight for women's suffrage?

Applications and Activities

1. Make a time line of major events in the history of women of the West, based on information from the video.
2. Using a computer software program, print a map of the United States. Draw it as it existed in 1865. Outline the territories to be traveled.
3. Plan a journey west by wagon train. On separate charts, list duties and responsibilities of women and men. Include:
 - a. Length of trip in miles and months.
 - b. Equipment and supplies needed.
 - c. Animals needed and their purposes.
 - d. Armaments needed and their purposes.
 - e. Preparations for injuries, diseases, and emergencies.
4. Keep a diary for a week as a deaf woman on the Santa Fe Trail. Describe the joys as well as the hardships of life on the trail.
5. Describe how a Native-American family might have felt upon seeing their homeland invaded and way of life destroyed by settlers.
6. With a partner, play one of the computer games related to the Oregon Trail or life on the frontier.
7. Imagine being a deaf pioneer in the 1800s.
 - a. Develop a list of practical signs for the journey.
 - b. Record experiences in a journal.
 - c. Write letters to family and friends at home.

WEBSITES

Explore the Internet to discover sites related to this topic. Check the CFV website for related information (<http://www.cfv.org>).

SUMMARY

“Any woman who can stand her own company, can see the beauty of a sunset, loves growing things, and is willing to put in much time and hard labor . . . will certainly succeed. Persons afraid of coyotes, work, and loneliness had better let ranching alone.” When Elinor Pruitt Stewart wrote these words nearly eighty years ago in a letter from her homestead in Wyoming, she could have been speaking for all women of the West: Native-American women who roamed The Plains 30,000 years ago, Spanish settlers who followed the conquistadors from Mexico to the Southwest, pioneer women who traveled west on the Oregon Trail, Asian women who sailed east to California and African-American women in search of a new life after the Civil War.

These early pioneers contributed much to the settling of the West. In most Native-American tribes, women were viewed with respect and held positions of authority. Sioux women were treated as equals in their tribes. They were responsible for setting up teepees, gathering and growing food, tanning skins, making medicine from herbs, and drying buffalo meat into jerky. Navajo women learned to grind corn for bread. When the Spaniards introduced sheep into the Southwest, Navajo women became responsible for herding sheep, carding wool, and spinning the wool to be woven into rugs.

As pioneer women moved west, their change of dress was often a sign of freedom. They abandoned their petticoats and adapted their dress to fit their very active, new lifestyles. Freedom to move was part of being a western woman.

By the 1500s the Spaniards traveled north from Mexico to the Southwest looking for gold. As they established settlements and missions, women managed the colonies, servants, and children.

1843 was the Great Immigration year. Two hundred families traveled to Oregon from the East in

wagon trains. Women were responsible for cooking, washing clothes, and gathering buffalo chips for cooking fires. The long journeys were a challenge. Disease, lack of water, intense heat, lightning storms, flies, dirt, overwhelming weariness, and the unchanging scenery should have been enough to drive any woman back East. But most persevered and shouldered their responsibilities with determination.

As mining became a booming business, greater numbers of women migrated to the West. However, surviving in a mining town was difficult. Many women existed by providing laundry services for the miners. However, some became destitute and turned to prostitution. A number of Asian women were brought to America and sold to husbands or brothels in mining towns. It was a rough life for women and they learned to rely on each other for help and companionship.

Women continued to raise a loud voice in their efforts to help settle the West. In 1864 Helen Hunt Jackson protested the killing of 137 peaceful Cheyenne and Arapahoe old men, women, and children by U.S. soldiers during the Sand Creek Massacre. She outlined the aggressions of white men in her book *A Century of Dishonor*.

Carrie Nation began the battle against alcohol in Cripple Creek, Colorado. Before, where only saloons stood, churches, schools, and libraries began to take their places. In 1916 the Presbyterian Women's Home Society rescued 1,000 Chinese and Japanese women from brothels.

Under the banner of pioneer suffragist Esther Morris, Wyoming passed the first suffrage laws in 1869. By 1914 every state west of the Rockies followed suit.

The character of the West was changed by the presence of women, and women changed to meet the demands of the West. Women's work came to mean whatever needed to be done, and women found they could tackle just about anything.