

**Timothy Sheasgreen**  
**Lesson Plan 1**  
**Teaching American History Program**  
**Women's History**  
**Submitted to: Dr. Susan Williams**

**Class:** American History

**Unit:** Women and Weaving

**Grade Level:** 8<sup>th</sup>

**Standards:**

USI.28 Explain the emergence and impact of the textile industry in New England and industrial growth generally throughout antebellum America. (H, E)

- A. the technological improvements and inventions that contributed to industrial growth
- B. the causes and impact of the wave of immigration from Northern Europe to America in the 1840s and 1850s
- C. the rise of a business class of merchants and manufacturers
- D. the roles of women in New England textile factories

**Topic:** Women at Work and the Power they Had (or did they?)

Statement of Purpose: The purpose of the lesson is to provide students with a better understanding of the role of women in 19<sup>th</sup> century textile factories in America. The lesson encourages students not only to investigate the jobs of women in the factories but the feelings that individual women had surrounding their experiences at the mills. In addition, the students are expected to draw conclusions about the “power” of the mill woman based upon in class experiences and discussions. Lastly, the students will interpret the influences that immigration during the 19<sup>th</sup> century had on the women that worked at the mills in America.

**Learning Objectives:**

- The students use readings and primary source documents to help explain the roles of women in 19<sup>th</sup> century American textile factories.
- The students diagram and explain the growth of immigration during 19<sup>th</sup> century America.

- The students identify the causes and effects of immigration growth on the women that worked at textile mills in America.
- The students explain how some women felt about their experiences at the mills.
- The students explain if the women who worked at the mills had “power” over their employers.

### **Schedule:**

#### Materials:

<http://tech.worlded.org/docs/lowell/home.htm>, Lowell Mills Virtual Tour

<http://www.slatermill.org/>, Slater Mills Tour

Sources from Women at Work, Dublin Thomas

The Boott Cotton Mills and Boarding Houses, Lowell MA

#### Time

Class One and Two

Introduction-The students are presented with the essential questions that will be investigated.

1. What was it like to be a woman working in the textile mills during 19<sup>th</sup> century America?
2. Why did women work in textile mills during 19<sup>th</sup> century America?
3. How did women feel about working in the textile mills during 19<sup>th</sup> century America?
4. Did women that worked at the mills have power? Did it change throughout the century? Explain.

The students are required to answer the questions before the class begins investigating any primary sources. The class brainstorms how one could better answer the questions. The students are told that they will create a power point presentation or video that explains their findings. In cooperative learning groups of two or three the students investigate a poem, writing, or illustration that may help explain the life of a Yankee mill woman. The students are charged with explaining their interpretation to the class. The investigation and interpretation process acts a springboard to begin to uncover the answers to the essential questions (sample readings and illustrations from Women at Work are noted in the references). The students are also taken to the computer lab to visit the Slater Mill and Boott Mill virtual tours.

### Class Three

Visit to the Boott Mill in Lowell. Focus on boarding house life and the politics of mill life and work. The students will gather information from primary sources throughout the tour to help them answer the essential questions.

### Class Four

The students organize the information that they have gathered into power point presentations and or videos. The presentations must answer all of the essential questions and use findings to support the student answers.

1. What was it like to be a woman working in the textile mills during 19<sup>th</sup> century America?
2. Why did women work in textile mills during 19<sup>th</sup> century America?
3. How did women feel about working in the textile mills during 19<sup>th</sup> century America?
4. Did women that worked at the mills have power? Did it change throughout the century? Explain.

### Day Five and Six

The students give the presentations, provide peer feedback, and reflect on their discoveries. The class also discusses and diagrams how living and working conditions changed for mill women throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of immigration increases.

**Assessment:** The students provide each other with peer feedback and reflect on their experiences through the use of a reflection and peer assessment materials. The students self-assess through the use of a rubric and feedback is provided from the teacher through a rubric (sample materials provided).

### References

Reference: Women at Work, Dublin Thomas, 1979

I have included the page selections from which the students will read and investigate primary source documents.

Page 98-99 poem "I will not be a slave" Protestors March.

Page 101 caption statement about the power the workers had over mill production.

Page 135 caption about the living conditions in Lowell.

Page 62 the pictures on the following pages-one per group.

Page 191 diagram of pay trends at the mills.

Page 148 diagram of compensation based on nativity and sex.

Page 68 Harriet Robinson describing her skill as a drawing-in girl.

Page 69 Harriet Robinson describing her work.

**Materials:** Access to a computer lab, copies of the essential questions, copies of the primary sources, rubrics, reflections materials, and peer assessment materials.

## Sample Rubric for Presentation

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**KNOWLEDGE:** 4 3 2 1 0

Shows an understanding of the material  
Able to answer questions

**PARTICIPATION:** 4 3 2 1 0

Does their “fair share” in presenting the material  
Participates in each part of the presentation

**LENGTH:** 4 3 2 1 0

Long enough to adequately cover assigned material

**CONTENT:** 4 3 2 1 0

Topic covered thoroughly  
Enough information given to understand topic  
Did not exclude any important information or include  
any unnecessary information

**DESIGN:** 4 3 2 1 0

Very creative  
Easy to see and follow  
Did not include any unnecessary graphics

**HANDS-ON ACTIVITY:** 4 3 2 1 0

Included class in the learning process  
Did more than lecture to the class

**TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

23-24 A

21-22 B

18-20 C

16-17 D

0-15 F

Rubric acquired from: [www.schools.lth5.k12.il.us/aviston/KBLesson8.html](http://www.schools.lth5.k12.il.us/aviston/KBLesson8.html)

## Essential Questions Guiding Sheet

1. What was it like to be a woman working in the textile mills during 19<sup>th</sup> century America?
2. Why did women work in textile mills during 19<sup>th</sup> century America?
3. How did women feel about working in the textile mills during 19<sup>th</sup> century America?
4. Did women that worked at the mills have power? Did it change throughout the century? Explain.

## **Sample Reflection Log**

What do you know now that you didn't know a week about the textile workers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

What was your favorite experience during the learning? Why?

Would you have liked to be a mill worker? Why? Why not?

## **Sample Peer Reflection Sheet**

What did you like about the presentation? Why?

What was unclear during the presentation? How could it be improved?



We visited the **Boott Cotton Mill**, incorporated in 1835 and named for Kirk Boott, the first mill agent. The Boott Manufacturing Company was one of many cotton textile mills established in the early 1800's in the growing city of Lowell.

**Click the arrow to go on**

