

A Curriculum Guide to

Herstory: 50 Women and Girls Who Shook Up the World

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About the Book

Herstory: 50 Women and Girls Who Shook Up the World introduces some of the most intriguing women from the past and today. Organized into themes, each section highlights and organizes women according to their contributions and work. The women hail from different time periods, countries, and ethnic and cultural groups. Empowering, moving, and inspiring, these women's stories welcome readers to begin a journey that both celebrates remarkable achievements and shows that anything is possible if you believe in yourself.

Prereading activities

The activities below particularly address the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4-7.2,9)

1. Look at the title of the book. Why did the author decide to call this book “herstory” and not history? What does “shook up” mean? What is the context for this expression, and how is it shown through each of the book’s themes? Keep a list of examples as you are reading.
2. In the introduction, there is a quote from Malala Yousafzai that says, “If people were silent, nothing would change.” What does this mean to you? What does the introduction tell us about the book’s content? How does the quote fit the theme of the book?
3. Find a map of the world to display in your classroom. As you read, place a pin where each story takes place, and mark the map with the characters’ names. Can you explain how ideas moved from one part of the world to another?
4. Look at the table of contents, glossary, index, introduction, chapter explanations, and page edges. How is the book organized? Why is it important that it’s organized this way?

Discussion Questions

The discussion questions below particularly address the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4-7.1,2,3,7,9) (W.4-7.6,8,9) (RL.4-7.6) (W.4-7.6,7,8,9)

1. What theme best fits you? What experiences have you had or would like to have that fit into your chosen theme? Of the women and girls featured in those pages, whom do you most identify with? What qualities do you admire, and how do you see these qualities reflected in your everyday life? Provide examples from your life that illustrate this.

2. Where do you see influences of these women's lasting legacies today? For example, Florence Nightingale's efforts helped to create the British Red Cross. Make a chart of these legacies.
3. Some of the women in this book became more famous than others, such as Florence Nightingale, Amelia Earhart, Rosa Parks, and Malala Yousafzai. Others are not as well known. Why do you think this is? Who do you think should be widely known or respected for their contributions? Write a persuasive essay introducing her, and make your argument as to why she should be more well known. Be sure to include at least three reasons and specific details from her time period to support your choice. Explain your point of view using convincing language to deliver a strong message.
4. Name some of the women whom you weren't familiar with before reading this book. What did they do? Why do you think they are considered to be people who "shook up the world"?
5. What is a Nobel Prize? Explore the Nobel Prize website (<https://www.nobelprize.org>) to understand the categories and criteria for the award. Then note how many of these women have won the Nobel Prize. Of the group of winners, what characteristics do they have in common? Is there someone in the book who you think should have won? Explain your answer by citing evidence from the book. Use a graphic organizer like the ones found on this website (<https://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/>) that features the Nobel Prize in the center and the women, their characteristics, and their winning areas out to the sides.
6. Throughout the book, the author uses quoted statements for each of the women to help us understand and define them. Find a quote that is interesting and inspirational to you. Write a personal essay on why the quote is important, what it means to you, and what it means to the book's themes. Be sure to include an introductory paragraph, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.
7. Many of the women in *Herstory* played roles in advancing women's rights and the role of women in the workplace. How do the rights of women from different time periods compare to the rights of women around the world today?
8. In small groups using one group per theme, make a chart of the different kinds of obstacles each woman in the thematic section had to face. Include the name of the woman, who encouraged her, why they were encouraged, obstacles they had to overcome, and the results of that encouragement. How many of these obstacles were related specifically to being a woman in their field? Hang charts on the wall, and with your classmates, look for common elements across themes. Discuss the different approaches these women took, and how they accomplished their goals.
9. What does advocacy mean? What does it take to become an advocate? Make a word cloud (<http://www.wordle.net/>) using words that show personal characteristics that made these women strong advocates for what they believed in.
10. If you were going to write a sequel to *Herstory*, what criteria would you use for including other women? Consider living vs historical figures, award winners, areas of study. Compile a list

of women that fit your rationale and decide what thematic section they should belong in. If they don't belong in any existing category, what new category would you create? Be sure to give reasons and examples from your current reading and research.

11. Choose a woman from one category and find a modern-day equivalent; for example, Ada Lovelace could be compared to present-day mathematician Dr. Christine Darden. Once you've selected a woman from *Herstory* and one from today, think about current challenges versus challenges faced during an earlier time period. How are these challenges similar or different? Share your findings with your class.

12. The chapter explanations at the end of the book help us better understand how the women in each category fit in. Why is this explanation located at the end of the book? Would it have been better in the beginning? Explain your reasoning. Were you surprised by any of this information?

13. Emmeline Pankhurst was a women's suffragist. Who is her American counterpart? Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast these two women. Who is more well known? Why do you think this is? Cite evidence from the book and your research to support your answer.

14. This book has many visually appealing elements with interesting information. Discuss specific examples that show how pictures, drawings, quotes, and other elements helped your understanding of the women and their roles within the theme or category where they are placed. What did the illustrations add to your experience?

Extension Activities

The activities below particularly address the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (SL.4-7.1,2,3,4,5,6) (RL.4-7.5) (W.4-7.6,8,9) (RI.4-7.3) (RST.6-7.7)

1. Journals and journal writing played a big part in many of these women's everyday lives. Using updated technology, choose a woman from *Herstory* and write two blog posts that contain elements of her life experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and anything else that you think she might include in her journal. Find primary source material such as broadsides, newspapers, diaries, government documents, and photographs that would help you to write your blog posts. Take a selfie or create an Instagram picture (<https://www.paperzip.co.uk/resource/instagram-template>) that would support what is happening in your posts.

2. With your classmates, stage a debate about what kind of change matters most. Divide yourselves into groups; each group will take one theme from the book. Discuss the struggles and impact on change for your group's theme, and talk about the qualities that someone needs in order to change history, such as courage, compassion, persistence, dedication, and willingness to work hard. Then, in front of the class, debate why your theme or section showcases the most important types of accomplishments. Your arguments should include examples of specific women and evidence from the text.

3. With your classmates, create a time line of the 50 women featured in *Herstory* to post in your classroom. The time line can be constructed using lengths of butcher paper on the walls or floor.

Decide with your classmates whether to use birthdates or dates of major accomplishments to mark the time line, and add pictures of the women or objects related to their work.

4. What would it be like to spend a day with one of these women? Choose one woman and write a letter to her explaining what you would like to do or discuss if you could spend the day with her. You can either go back in time, or have her come to the present. Be sure to include where you would go, what you would do, and the kinds of questions you would like to ask her.

5. Some of these women have been placed on postage stamps. Select one woman from *Herstory* who hasn't been included, then petition the US Postal service on their behalf and explain why you believe they should also be included on a postage stamp. Go to <https://www.usps.com/>; at the bottom of the page, click on "About USPS Home" and then "Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee." Look at the stamp selection process and criteria, and then work in a group to put together a petition to have a woman from *Herstory* placed on a new postage stamp.

6. Create a "Choose your own adventure" book using Google Forms or Google Slides for one of the women from *Herstory* (<https://www.google.com/slides/about>). Consider the different consequences if she had not been encouraged, had chosen a different path, or lived during a different time period.

*For teachers: use examples and suggestions from <http://blog.justinbirckbichler.com/2017/06/creating-their-own-adventures.html> to help set up a "Choose your own adventure" template for students to use.

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