



Teacher Share

LANGUAGE ARTS, SOCIAL STUDIES

Bag-It Book Reports

Here's a great alternative to the traditional "book report." Students choose a famous woman in history to read about. Then they prepare an oral presentation by gathering props that in some way relate to the woman's life. (See Book Break, below, for a way to model this.) Students place the props in a grocery bag decorated with pictures, symbols, and words that reveal more about the person. Let them take turns presenting their "bag-it" book reports during the month of March. Provide time for questions following each presentation. This is a great way for students to take the lead in learning about many different women.



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Book Break

George Washington's Mother

by Jean Fritz (Scholastic, 1992)

Mary Washington smoked a pipe, hated dress-up clothes, and didn't believe what she read in the newspapers. Learn more interesting facts about this fascinating woman in this colorful biography.

Before sharing the book with students, pique their interest with this guessing game. Place the following items in a bag: newspaper, gingerbread pan, money, rock, pipe, a piece of dress-up clothing, and a picture of George Washington. Show them to students one at a time. Ask: *What do all these items have in common?* The answer: *George Washington's mother.* Read the book aloud and let students figure out how each item relates to Mary Washington.

SOCIAL STUDIES, MATH

The Right to Vote

Students will be able to empathize with historical women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton when they are left out of a classroom vote. Choose something to vote on that affects all members of the class, such as which book to read, or what equipment to bring to the playground. Create a ballot box by cutting a slit in the top of a shoebox. Explain to students that for now, only the boys will be allowed to vote. Distribute a slip of paper to each boy, and ask him to cast his vote by placing it in the ballot box. Withdraw the slips and record the votes on a graph. Ask the girls how it made them feel to be left out of the vote. Repeat the activity, letting only the girls vote this time. Ask the boys to share their feelings. Record the combined results from the first two graphs on a third one. Discuss how the results of the vote were different when both boys and girls had their say.

Book Break

You Forgot Your Skirt, Amelia Bloomer

by Shana Corey (Scholastic Press, 2000)

Amelia Bloomer lived in the nineteenth century, when “proper women” wore heavy hoop skirts and tight corsets. Tired of being uncomfortable, Amelia dared to dress differently. Your students will enjoy learning about the trend she started and how she impacted women’s rights. Use this book to introduce the activity “Fashion Heavyweights.” (See below.)

SOCIAL STUDIES, MATH

Fashion Heavyweights

In the 1800s, women wore clothing that weighed between 20 and 40 pounds. Let your students experience how difficult it was to move carrying all that weight. Place a large book-bag on a bathroom scale. Let students take turns adding books, one at a time, until the scale reads 20 pounds. Give each child an opportunity to lift the bag and walk around the classroom. Ask them to imagine wearing all that weight every day! Ask: *How much do you think pants and a shirt weigh?* Take out a child’s shirt and pants (bring them to school in advance), and place them on the scale. Compare the weight of the pants and shirt to the weight of women’s clothing in the 1800s.



Book Break

Girls Think of Everything: Stories of Ingenious Inventions by Women

by Catherine Thimmesh (Houghton Mifflin, 2000)

Who invented the fire escape, pastry fork, and electric hot water heater? Women, of course! Your students will enjoy hearing these stories of legendary females who have impacted our lives by turning their dreams into realities. They'll find out what inspired these inventors, what obstacles they encountered, and what it took to follow through.

SCIENCE, SOCIAL STUDIES

Mystery History

What do windshield wipers, alphabet blocks, and underwater telescopes have in common? They were all invented by women! Play this guessing game so students can see that many objects still used today were the product of a woman's ingenuity. Gather the following objects: chocolate chip cookie, ice cream cone, paper bag, disposable diaper, signal flare, medical syringe, and interlocking block. Each day, place a different item inside a box. Give three clues about the object, and let students try to guess its identity. As you reveal each object, share the following information:

- ☉ chocolate chip cookie invented by Ruth Wakefield in 1930
- ☉ ice cream cone invented by an anonymous woman in 1904
- ☉ paper bags invented by Margaret E. Knight in 1870
- ☉ disposable diaper invented by Marion Donovan in 1951
- ☉ signal flares invented by Martha Hunt Coston in 1850
- ☉ medical syringe invented by Letitia Geer in 1899
- ☉ interlocking blocks invented by Mary Nolan in 1877



Book Break

The Ballot Box Battle

by Emily Arnold McCully (Knopf, 1996)

As the fictional neighbor of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, young Cordelia learns of this woman's fight for suffrage and how she once longed to "be as good as any boy" to please her father. Although more interested in horses than in voting, Cordelia goes to the polls with Mrs. Stanton. This experience leads to a turning point in Cordelia's life.