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SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE YOUNG LEARNER (ISSN 1056-0300) is published by National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) four times a year: September/October, November/December, January/February, and March/April. Logotype is an NCSS trademark. Contents © 2019.

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INDEXED by Institute of Education Sciences, eric.ed.gov.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Social Studies and the Young Learner
NCSS, 8555 Sixteenth St., Suite 500
Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA

EDITOR’S NOTES

Enhancing Women’s Studies in the Elementary Grades

Bárbara C. Cruz, Guest Editor

As we near the 100th anniversary of the adoption of the 19th Amendment in 1920, it is a fitting time for elementary educators to reconsider ways of addressing and enhancing women’s studies in the PK-6 social studies curriculum. Contributors to this guest-edited issue of *Social Studies and the Young Learner* have done just that.

“Belle Case La Follette: A Study in Leadership in the Suffrage Movement” by Kate Van Haren tells how 4–5 students used the C3 framework to learn about Progressive Era reformer Belle La Follette’s activism for suffrage and equal rights. Students developed inquiry questions about La Follette’s impact on American history and then used primary and secondary sources to conduct research to answer them.

“Beyond Pocahontas: Learning from Indigenous Women Changemakers” by the Turtle Island Social Studies Collective, describes how students in grades 3–5 can learn about and from Indigenous women changemakers. By educating children about the context and dynamics of historical and contemporary indigenous peoples, the four co-authors argue that students can move beyond stereotypes and expand their awareness.

Local history and stories are central in “Remembering the Ladies: Connect to Local Women’s History using Storytelling” by Tina M. Ellsworth, Janelle Stigall, and Amy Walker. By using primary sources and developing historical thinking skills, the authors describe how students can visit local museums and historic sites, conduct research, and create and present engaging evidence-based narratives. The Pullout by these same authors provides four student handouts to guide their classroom activities.

Amy Allen poses a thought-provoking question in “Where Are the Women? A Continuing Absence on U.S. Currency.” Her own curiosity piqued by questions posed by her students, Allen relates how a teachable moment evolved into a lesson that incorporates primary source documents, maps, close reading, persuasive writing, and the creation of models for new currency by students.

Jing Williams, in “HERstory: When We were at War,” emphasizes the importance of including women’s contributions in times of armed conflict. Too often, she argues, the curriculum is silent on the topic. Using children’s literature and other sources, Williams recounts how teachers can discuss the long history of women in the U.S. military—and specifically World War II—with their elementary-aged students.

Finally, Andrea S. Libresco reviews two books that will enhance any elementary classroom. In “A Different Kind of Superhero: Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” Libresco provides some background on the Supreme Court justice and offers ideas for teaching activities such as literature circles, analyzing court cases, and comparing biographical sources.

I hope you find these articles as instructive and useful as we have. And when you implement some of these lessons and approaches, drop us a line—we’d love to hear about your classroom successes. ●