

1938

## EC5548 Epoch of American Women

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Nebraska  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK  
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS  
U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating  
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

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1938

EPOCH OF AMERICAN WOMEN

A good reader whose voice can be distinctly heard may read the story. As each character is described, the curtain or screen is drawn to show the person representing that individual.

Appropriate music played very, very softly while the reading is being done may add to the effect. Solos or duets may be sung between the scenes to give time for changing the characters. The music may be entirely omitted or other appropriate music may be used. These are only suggestive. The music should not interfere with the reader.

Have the characters ready so the changes can be made quickly and quietly. The characters in their order of appearance are:

Indian maiden . . . . Pocahontas  
Pilgrim maiden. . . . Priscilla  
Colonial woman. . . . Betsy Ross  
College days. . . . Mary Lyon  
Pioneer woman . . . . Abbie Deal McKenzie  
Civil war . . . . Clara Barton  
Woman's suffrage . . Susan B. Anthony  
Modern maiden . . . . Amelia Earhart

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READER: An epoch in history is difficult to define -- movements gain force and rise to a peak, then merge with the influence of a new day, and gradually the fabric of our national life is woven, with threads from the past carrying over and beautifying the new designs, as they are introduced. Historians have been prone to define epochs in terms of wars, but we would like today to think in terms of periods, movements, and characters which have enriched our heritage as American women.

Before the first white man came to these shores, the original Americans roamed undisturbed, save by other hostile tribes. Savages they were, and as savages they met the intruders from across the seas. Yet there was in the heart of one Indian maid a touch of kindness and compassion which has formed a bond of sympathy with American white women through the years.

Indian Maiden - POCAHONTAS

The curtain is drawn and reveals Pocahontas dressed as an Indian maiden. A camp fire girl's costume or a blanket, headband of beads, feathers, etc. may be used. Books which picture Pocahontas may have suggestions for the costume. Indian music such as the Indian Love Call or any others may be played very softly as the story of Pocahontas is read.

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READER: It was Pocahontas, the Indian maid of the Virginia woods.

The Algonquin Indians, who inhabited the shores of the James River in Virginia, had "long houses" of bark and boughs which were each large enough to hold twenty families. Each family had a compartment to itself with sleeping bunks and curtains of deer skin to shield the family from the open passage which ran the length of the house.

It was in such a house that Mat-a-oka was born. She was early nick-named Pocahontas, which in the Indian language means "tom boy." When she was only a little girl she was able to save the life of her good friend, John Smith, and warn the Jamestown settlement of coming Indian raids.

Pocahontas was a real heroine -- one of the few daughters we know of that brave, romantic race which so quickly vanished from America after the white settlers came. Many among the Indians were cruel and bloodthirsty, but Pocahontas, we know, was warmhearted and true. We are glad that history kept for us her story.

An Indian song may be sung while the next character is being arranged behind the curtain.

Pilgrim Maiden - PRISCILLA

As the curtain is drawn someone representing Priscilla may be seen seated or standing. Her costume would be a plain dark colored dress having a full skirt. The bodice would be neat and close fitting with tight sleeves. There could be deep flaring cuffs with a wide flat collar and a big full white apron. A cap could be worn over hair parted in the middle. Holy, Holy, Holy, (No. 21, Favorite Songs of the People) could be used as the soft music played while the reader is giving her part.

READER: Life was stern, and religion a serious matter among those who had risked everything to begin life anew in the wilderness of the new world. Records tell of one sea captain in Boston, who was placed in the stocks one wintry afternoon for "lewd and unseemly behavior," which consisted in kissing his wife publicly, at his own front door on the Lord's day! The fact that he had just returned from a long voyage and was moved to the deed by some excess of emotion made it no less a crime. But in spite of the excessive zeal and sternness of the Pilgrim fathers, the Pilgrim mothers furnished the gentler touch which made, even in the wilderness - homes.

Priscilla Mullins, the "May flower of Plymouth," daughter of devout pilgrims typifies the courage, faith and constancy of that period. She was in the first boat leaving the Mayflower to land on Plymouth soil. The story of the way in which John Alden came to press the suit of another, Miles Standish, is familiar to every American--

"As he warmed and glowed, in his simple and eloquent language, quite forgetful of self, and full of the praise of his rival;

Archly the maiden smiled, and with eyes overrunning with laughter, said in a tremulous voice, 'why don't you speak for yourself, John.' "



In a strange land, surrounded by a wilderness full of hostile Indians, on the first Thanksgiving day, the devoted band of Pilgrims turned to God with thankful hearts. Their frail boats had been delivered from the vast sea. Here in the forest they had lifted their roof trees, laid open the new soil, and cast the shining grain. And now their strong, small cabins stood in the whiteness of the clearing.

The blue smoke of their sturdy chimneys drifted warmly against the black wall of the wilderness. Present on that first Thanksgiving occasion was a company of ninety Indians headed by their chief, Massasoit. For three days the company feasted, the Indians providing their share of the food. The harvest was bountiful. Maize, pumpkins, dry herbs, buckwheat, maple syrup and sugar, hominy, beans, potatoes, nut butters not unlike the nut butters sold today, cranberries, oysters and clams, popcorn buttered with hickory nut oil, besides the wild turkeys, venison, squirrel and grouse. Most of these foods had been unknown to the white man prior to his coming among the Indians.

True it is, there were times when rations among the Pilgrims ran low, but on their first Thanksgiving day, the occasion was one of happiness and thankfulness to God for the boon of life, for roof tree and fire and food, and the privilege of the thankful heart.

The Doxology (No. 26) or some other piece typical of that period may be played or sung as the intermission.

Colonial Maiden - BETSY ROSS

Betsy Ross could be in a flowered dress having a full skirt. She could wear a large white neckerchief. This would be pointed in the back, crossed in front with the ends tied in the back. A turned-back white cap or ribbon band may be worn around the hair. She may be sewing on a large flag in her lap.

The Star Spangled Banner (No. 3) or the Minuet may be played softly.

READER: As Colonial life came to maturity, the inevitable break with England along cultural and religious, as well as political lines, became more and more apparent. And in these momentous times, the thought and activity of women played a most important part. They organized Daughters of Liberty, they boycotted British goods with unrelenting vigor, they spun and wove to supply the markets thus closed to importations. They wrote letters and spoke hot words to spur on halfhearted men folk, cheered the crowds which tore down royal insignia, and added their enthusiasm to the excited tumult.

As a type of the helpful, inspiring womanhood of colonial days, Betsy Ross stands out as a colorful figure. As a little girl, in a Quaker home in Philadelphia, she was taught to sew almost as soon as her little fingers could hold a needle, and by the time she was a young woman she was known all about for her beautiful needlework. When she married George Ross, an upholsterer, she took charge of a dozen or more women doing expert needlework and creating designs for the decoration of many a colonial mansion.



Among her customers was George Washington and it was he who came to her door one June day in 1777 asking her to make a flag for the American army. It was the supreme moment of her life, and as her skilled fingers worked out the design suggested by Washington, of thirteen stars on a field of blue, and thirteen red and white stripes, the patriotism in her heart burned with a brighter glow.

But life in the colonies was not always shadowed by the privations and heartaches of war. There were times of gaiety and laughter, gracious hospitality, and comfortable living. The people of some wealth dressed in most elaborate style. Betsy Ross was a shrewd business woman and one of the chief importers of velvets, brocades, and satins, which she helped fashion into the elaborate costumes of the day.

It was an era of unbounded hospitality and guests from out of town were most heartily welcomed for they brought news from the outside world. In Virginia and Carolina, where the plantations were far apart, guests were so welcome that a negro servant was often stationed at the planter's gate where it opened onto the post road to hail travelers and assure them of a hearty welcome at the "big house up yonder." There the travelers were given every comfort the house afforded, and after supper, perhaps guests and members of the household gathered in the great hall lighted by a huge fire and many twinkling candles, and there they danced the graceful minuet.

As Betsy Ross works upon the flag which is to be the symbol of the new day in America, she dreams of these happy times and the music of the minuet seems to come floating in to her.

During the intermission the music may be continued but played louder.

#### College Days    MARY LYON

The person representing Mary Lyon could be in a senior's cap and gown. She could carry a roll of paper to represent a diploma. Sweet and Low (No. 65) or Robin Adair (No. 83) or America (No. 4) could be played softly.

READER: Toward the close of the colonial period, a restlessness and a desire for some intellectual development began to appear among the young women. The girls were admitted to the primary schools, they often seemed to have to sit at the second table. After the schoolmaster had finished a full day teaching the boys, he might give instruction to the girls for an hour or so. To be sure, there were private boarding schools where girls were taught social graces, but little that was intellectually stimulating. The sentiment regarding education for girls was well expressed by one Haverill tax payer in these words -- "Haverill educate shes! Never!"

But one New England she had different ideas on the subject. Her name was Mary Lyon. As she began to dream of higher education for girls, she encountered discouraging opposition. New England parents approved of education but a girl didn't need Greek or Latin or Mathematics to help her spin and weave and cook. The good men argued "If a girl can read and write, that's book learning enough. As for arithmetic, all she needs to know is how many yards she'll have to spin to buy a  
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peck of potatoes. Why, who would cook our food or mend our clothes if females went to college?"

But Mary Lyon was determined to have an education. She read everything she could find at home and then started teaching for 75¢ a week and her board. When she had saved a little money she went to an academy at Ashfield. She gave her choicest possessions, a bed and some coverlets she had spun, woven and dyed herself, in payment for board.

The other students would point her out saying "That is the famous Mary Lyon -- famous for three things, her home spun dress, her amazing mind, and her kindness."

She taught in Ashfield in the winter and at a girls' boarding school in Connecticut in the summer. The pupils paid 25¢ weekly for tuition and boarded for \$1.00 per week. Mary worked and planned to give the girls the best she knew and to make education easy for girls of moderate means. She went from house to house asking women for small amounts to be invested in her new school which was to be called Mt. Holyoke. At last her dream was realized and the corner stone was laid in the town of South Hadley in the Massachusetts hills. In November, 1837, the school was opened and under the supervision of Miss Lyon the girls did the housework with hours for study and recreation. For twelve years she was principal of Mt. Holyoke and even tho the school grew, her salary remained \$200 per year for she would accept no more.

When she died at the age of 52, she was buried under a great oak in the heart of Mt. Holyoke - and on her monument are written words from one of her last talks with the girls, "there is nothing I fear more than that I shall not know all my duty, or shall fail to do it."

In November we celebrate the founding of the first college for women in America. It has been a long way from the first seminaries, boarding schools and modest girls' colleges to the large co-educational universities of today where girls meet on equal terms with boys in class rooms and the expression of school spirit as they join in such songs as this:

Music - There is No Place Like Nebraska or some other college song.

Pioneer Woman - ABBIE DEAL MCKENZIE

The person representing the pioneer woman could have an old fashioned full skirt, a neat waist, a sun bonnet and heavy shoes. A child may be by her side. For the very soft music the Quilting Party (No. 79), Jingle Bells, O' Susanna (No. 72), or others could be played.

READER: Of all the courageous women of history, those who pioneered in the early days are entitled to a prominent place. Many of them left comfortable homes, family and friends to brave the hardships of new and barren lands. Traveling overland in covered wagons over country inhabited by Indians, only to reach a destination, desolate and cheerless, these women made the best of conditions as they met them, showing the finest type of courage.



In Bess Streeter Aldrich's book, "A Lantern in Her Hand," she portrays Abbie Deal McKenzie as a beautiful character of pioneer days. Abbie had been born in the east and all thru her life had dreams of some day being a lovely lady like the portrait she remembered of her grandmother McKenzie. But the years brought many hardships as drouth, grasshoppers, and hard times came. Hers was a large family of children, and instead of being the "grand lady," she had to be content to be to them the best mother she knew how to be. And they did have some happy times at husking bees and quilting parties, and after an evening at singing, school work seemed lighter as the melodies came to her mind for days afterward.

The house in which the pioneer mother made a home for her family was often of sod or of logs and provided only the barest necessities. The days were more than full as she wove and spun, served, cooked and churned as well as helping her husband out-of-doors with garden and chores. Often she taught the children at home, when schools were too far away. It must have taken a brave heart many a time not to give up and long to return to the comforts of homes they had known in the east.

And so we honor the pioneer mother and give to her a place in history second to none. To her we owe a debt of gratitude which can never be repaid, for her courage, fortitude, and great sacrifice. --All honor to the pioneer mother.

#### Civil War - CLARA BARTON

A nurse's costume can be worn by the one representing Clara Barton. A headband with the red cross on it could be used. For the soft music, The Battle Hymn of the Republic (No. 6) or Maryland, My Maryland (No. 4) may be used.

READER: As we approach the civil war period we find women also beginning to pioneer in fields of service outside the home. Clara Barton came upon the stage of our national life as one of the first to serve her country in a public way, and her service to the world was so outstanding that her life forms a chapter in National and International history. Altho timid and of a retiring disposition, she forgot herself entirely when she saw the opportunity to serve her fellow men.

When she volunteered for service in the civil war, her many years of teaching, followed by her work as a government clerk, were but stepping stones to her great life work of relieving the distress of mankind. Due to her great ability and force of character, unaided she directed and led corps of field nurses upon the battle fields, created hospital organizations and began the work of tracing and recording the names of missing soldiers, alive or dead, serving impartially both the Blue and the Gray. In all this war work she, almost alone, established the principle that all wounded had equal right to aid.

Never of rugged physique, Miss Barton went to Europe to rest after her war activities were concluded. There she learned of the International Red Cross movement and became its ardent supporter. When she returned home she succeeded in bringing America into the organization, but she insisted upon enlarging the scope of our Red Cross to include aid during any major disaster -- fire, flood, and famine, as well as war.

The work of the Red Cross during the recent floods of the Ohio, Mississippi and Republican rivers brings forcibly to our minds Clara Barton's broad vision for the aid of distressed mankind.



Her cousin, the late William E. Barton, fittingly summarizes her life in these words, "It was not her need of earning a living that sent her out into the world, but the joy of service. There was that in her being that compelled her to give the best she had unstintedly, to human service. No task was too humble for her to perform. No peril was great enough to daunt her. She poured out the rich treasure of her life like Mary of Bethany. She broke her alabaster box over the head of her Lord and the whole house is still fragrant with the memory of her good deeds."

Woman's Suffrage - SUSAN B. ANTHONY

The one representing Susan B. Anthony can be dressed in an old fashioned dress having large leg-of-mutton sleeves and a bell-shaped skirt. Her hair may be pompadour or a sailor hat may be worn. A mannish coat may be used. The whole effect may be rather severe. The soft music could be Follow the Glean, Stars of a Summer Night (No. 98), or the 4-H Girls' Clubs song of Dreaming.

READER: As women began to play an even larger part in the life and development of our country, some began to feel very keenly the injustices which existed in the rights which were granted to women. A woman was paid \$10 a month for teaching school while a man would have been paid \$40. When a petition for control of the liquor traffic was presented to the New York legislature in 1854, a member asked, "Who are these signers, nobody but women." The young teacher who had presented that petition said as she turned away, "A woman's name on a petition will never be as good as a man's until she has the vote." That young woman was Susan B. Anthony. From that moment she set her face steadfastly toward the accomplishment of one end--to gain the vote and equal rights for women. Her executive ability and greatness of soul compel admiration and we would know more about her.

Susan B. Anthony  
by Genevieve Richards Moritz

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Susan Brownell Anthony<br>Was born a Quaker maid;<br>She wore no gold or laces<br>Yet rich her dress, though staid.              | 5. For Women's Rights Conventions<br>Her father joined the scheme;<br>Thru ridicule and jeerings<br>She always walked serene.                   |
| 2. With tall and angular stature<br>She plied the teacher's art<br>No levity she practiced<br>No humor in her heart.                | 6. Amelia Bloomer, her good friend,<br>To designate their clan<br>Thought if they wore mannish clothes,<br>They would be peer to man.           |
| 3. Born in Massachusetts<br>Most practical were her ways;<br>She taught for a meagre pittance<br>And labored all her days.          | 7. So Susan donned a Turkish suit,<br>But much to her dismay<br>The jeers and sneers disturbed her calms<br>So she put them all away.           |
| 4. When first she spoke on temperance<br>She met the Misses Motts<br>With Elizabeth Cady Stanton,<br>They formed some active plots. | 8. Annoyed and heckled, jeered, maligned,<br>Her purpose never failed;<br>And thru her efforts from the first,<br>The Women's Rights prevailed. |



9. In Rochester, on her closing day,  
The flags were all half-mast;  
And all the city mourned for her,  
Courageous to the last.
10. Susan Brownell Anthony!  
Your work on earth is done,  
For other hands took up the task  
That you so well begun.

Modern Maiden - AMELIA EARHART

The modern woman may be dressed in a leather jacket, breeches, puttees, or high-topped boots and a boy's leather helmet. The music could be a spirited march if it can be kept soft.

READER: And so we come to the modern woman. In spite of the dire predictions made by the opponents of woman's suffrage, she has lost none of her love for home and babies, but she has gained greater efficiency, self-confidence and vision. As a type of the woman of today and of the future, let us take that eaglet of the air, Amelia Earhart - a woman of wit and spirit, intellect and courage, and yet alluringly a woman. No longer need girls sigh and wish they had been born boys. They can, and usually do, do most of the things boys do. The woman of today works at everything, plays at everything. She is on the mountain, on the sea and in the clouds. We may expect the new woman to go on and on, building upon the heritage of the past, a more glorious womanhood.

(Written by Mrs. Eva Bolton Smith. Arranged by Mary-Ellen Brown)

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