

WHO SAYS WOMEN CAN'T BE DOCTORS? THE STORY OF ELIZABETH BLACKWELL

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Ages: 5-8

Themes: biography, U.S. women's history, stereotypes

Runtime: 11 minutes

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

SUMMARY

When Elizabeth Blackwell was a girl in the 1830s, women were supposed to be wives, mothers, and teachers. For awhile, Elizabeth thought that she too would follow that path, until a sick friend told her that she wished she could have a woman doctor, and planted the seed in Elizabeth's mind that this could be a different course for her. Despite many rejections from colleges, and the ridicule of society, Elizabeth persevered, finally getting accepted to Geneva Medical School. After years of hard work, Elizabeth graduated first in her class, becoming the first female doctor in the United States, and paving the way for thousands after her.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will compare and contrast life in the 1800s with life today.
- Students will learn about stereotypes.
- Students will discuss the character traits of Elizabeth Blackwell.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Discuss stereotypes. Make a list of things that students think are "boy things" and things that students think are "girl things." Ask students to explain why they have these views. Ask students if boys can ever do any of the "girl things" or vice versa. Explain that stereotypes are categories that groups people or things are placed in that are based on one characteristic or idea, but that do not accurately reflect all of the characteristics of those people or things. Give students examples, such as: Native Americans are stereotyped as always wearing feather headdresses, when in fact only some tribes of Native Americans wear feather headdresses; or, pitbull dogs are stereotyped as being mean, but not all pitbulls are mean. Help students understand why stereotypes may make people feel bad and create false impressions. Generate a list of stereotypes that students have heard or experienced. Work with students to give examples of how the stereotypes are untrue. Lead into the video by saying: "We will watch a video about a girl who lived at a time when women couldn't have many jobs. Watch and listen to learn about how she went against the stereotypes of her time."

Use a **KWL** chart to elicit background knowledge (a three-columned chart: What I **K**now, What I **W**ant to Know, What I **L**earned). Students will brainstorm what they know about life in the 1800s, specifically regarding women's role in society. Record all of this information in the What I Know column of the KWL chart. Next, have students generate a list of questions of what they want to know. Record these ideas in the next column. Tell them that they are about to watch a movie about Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman in the U.S. to become a doctor. Encourage students to watch and listen for ways that life in the 1800s was different from life today. Revisit the KWL chart after viewing the movie to fill in the What I Learned column.

Define character traits for students. Give students time to list some of their own character traits. Remind them that character traits include how a person looks as well as how a person acts. After students have listed some of their own character traits, give them time to share these with each other. Tell students that they are going to watch a movie about Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in the U.S. Provide students with guiding questions and encourage them to pay attention to Elizabeth's character traits. Guiding questions:

- What character traits did Elizabeth show when she was a child? What evidence or example from the movie supports your answer?
- Did Elizabeth change as she grew up? Why or why not?
- How did Elizabeth's character traits shape the way that people saw her? How did she respond?

Follow up after viewing the movie to discuss students' answers to these questions.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Common Core Connection Activities:

Revisit the KWL chart. Students should independently make a list of what they learned from the movie. Then, have students share what they learned and record it on the KWL chart. Then lead students in a discussion in which they compare and contrast life in the 1800s with life today. Guiding questions:

- What were some of the differences in technology between the 1800s and today?
- What were some differences in the ways that women were thought of in the 1800s?
- What were some similarities between the 1800s and today?

Consider having students use a graphic organizer such as a Venn diagram or a table to record their ideas. Conclude the discussion with having students write 1-5 sentences comparing the 1800s with today, including an illustration of each time period.

Follow up on the discussion of stereotypes. Guiding questions:

- What were some stereotypes about women that you heard in the movie?
- How did Elizabeth Blackwell help to disprove that stereotype?
- How have people's ideas about women changed since the time when Elizabeth Blackwell lived?
- What stereotypes about girls and women exist today? What about stereotypes about boys and men? What actions can you take to dispel those stereotypes?

Revisit the character traits discussion from the Before Viewing Activities. Discuss students' answers to the guiding questions. Then, have students fill out a character trait graphic organizer to summarize the discussion.

Character Traits Graphic Organizer: Elizabeth Blackwell

| Character Trait | Evidence from the Movie |
|-----------------|--|
| Determined | She was rejected from medical school twenty-eight times before finally being accepted. |

OTHER THEME-RELATED TITLES FROM WESTON WOODS

- **The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins** by Barbara Kerley, ill. by Brian Selznick
- **I Could Do That! Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote** by Linda Arms White, ill. by Nancy Carpenter
- **Me...Jane** by Patrick McDonnell
- **Miss Rumphius** by Barbara Cooney
- **Players in Pigtails** by Shana Corey, ill. by Rebecca Gibbon

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