



WOMEN'S ROLES IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

TEACHER VERSION

Subject Level:

High School History

Grade Level:

11-12

Approx. Time Required:

45 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to gather information from a primary source.
- Students will be able to interpret a political cartoon from 1851 in historical context.
- Students will be able to find evidence of women's rights issues during the Antebellum Period in an 1850 Census questionnaire and an 1851 political cartoon.

Activity Description

Students will examine an 1850 Census questionnaire and an 1851 political cartoon to understand women's rights issues during the Antebellum Period.

Suggested Grade Level:

11-12

Approximate Time Required:45 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to gather information from a primary source.
 - Students will be able to interpret a political cartoon from 1851 in historical context.
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Topics:

- Antebellum Period
- Gender equality
- Social norms
- Women's rights

Skills Taught:

- Analyzing a political cartoon
 - Analyzing historical information
 - Drawing conclusions
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Material Required

The student version of this activity, 4 pages

Activity Items

The following items are part of this activity. Items, their sources, and any relevant instructions for viewing them online appear at the end of this teacher version.

- Item 1: 1850 Census Return
- Item 2: 1851 Political Cartoon

For more information to help you introduce your students to the U.S. Census Bureau, read [*"Census Bureau 101 for Students."*](#) This information sheet can be printed and passed out to your students as well.

Standards Addressed

See charts below. For more information, read [*"Overview of Education Standards and Guidelines Addressed in Statistics in Schools Activities."*](#)

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Standard	Strand	Cluster
<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2</p> <p>Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.</p>	RH 11-12 - History/ Social Studies	Key Ideas and Details
<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9</p> <p>Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.</p>	RH 11-12- History/ Social Studies	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

UCLA National Standards for History: U.S. History Content Standards

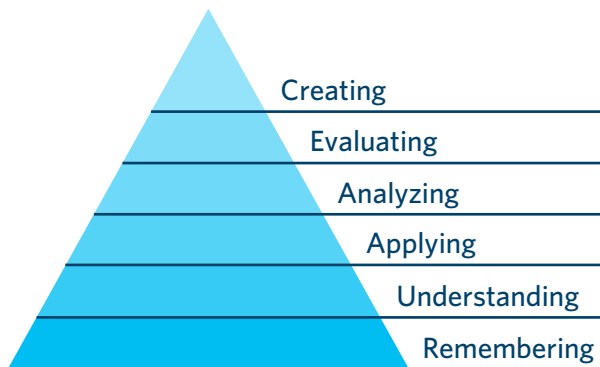
Era	Standard
4 - Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)	Standard 4: The sources and character of cultural, religious, and social reform movements in the antebellum period

UCLA National Standards for History: Historical Thinking Standards

Standard	Description
Standard 2: Historical Comprehension	Draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources. Students will examine a political cartoon to understand women’s rights issues during the Antebellum Period.

Bloom’s Taxonomy

Students will examine primary and secondary sources to *understand* what life was like for women during the Antebellum Period.



Teacher Notes

Before the Activity

Students must understand the following key term:

- **Antebellum Period** – the time period before the Civil War, during which the divide between opponents and supporters of slavery grew

Students should have a basic understanding of the following concept:

- The cultural, economic, and social changes that occurred in the United States in the decades leading up to the Civil War

Teachers could go here (www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/overview/1850.html) to learn more about the 1850 Census.

Teachers should spark a class discussion by asking students what life would have been like for a woman living in 1850 — socially, economically, and politically.

During the Activity

Teachers should tell students that **Item 1** is an example of a completed questionnaire from the 1850 Census. It is notable because it includes information for then-statesman Henry Clay (including a large value of real estate owned), and because it was the first census that listed all free people by name, not just the heads of household.

After students complete question 2 (or after the activity), teachers could explain that the questionnaire prompt about occupation type was changed in the next decennial census, in 1860, to include women.

After the Activity

Teachers should ask students to reflect on what they learned.

Extension Idea

- Teachers could have students draw a political cartoon about a current reform issue and write a caption.

Student Activity

Click [here](#) to download a printable version for students.

Activity Items

The following items are part of this activity and appear at the end of this student version.

- Item 1: 1850 Census Return
- Item 2: 1851 Political Cartoon

Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to gather information from a primary source.
- I will be able to interpret a political cartoon from 1851 in historical context.
- I will be able to find evidence of women's rights issues during the Antebellum Period in an 1850 Census questionnaire and an 1851 political cartoon.

The decades leading up to the Civil War were a time of great change in the United States — politically, economically, and socially. Rapid economic growth brought about a growing middle class, in which many women were better educated than previous generations of their peers. At the same time, a greater number of lower-class women began working outside the home to earn a living. These and other changes led to gender equality becoming one of the most important societal issues of the era.

Answer the following questions using **Item 1: 1850 Census Return**, which lists the responses of several households in Kentucky.

1. Record several observations and questions about the data.

Student observations will vary but could include commentary about the types of common occupations (e.g., gardener, baker) or the fact that more than half of people counted were not born in the United States. Student questions will vary but could include how the census process was carried out by the enumerator.

2. Looking closely at column 7, what do the wording of the prompt and the answers provided reveal about the role of women at the time? Explain.

The prompt, which says "Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age," shows that women's occupations were not considered important to record as part of the census in 1850. Women were not given a profession even when they were the head of household at the time. For the two women listed on the form, column 7 is blank; for the men without jobs, however, column 7 is marked "None."

Answer the following questions using **Item 2: 1851 Political Cartoon**, which was featured in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in July of that year. The cartoon's caption reads, "Upon my word, Mr. Peewitt! Is this the way you fill up your census? So you call yourself the 'head of the family' — do you — and me a female!"

3. Who are the characters in the cartoon, and what are they doing?

A woman is reviewing the census questionnaire that her husband filled out.

4. What does the caption tell you about what's really going on in the scene?

The woman is offended by what her husband wrote in the census. She probably considers herself the "head of the family" because she likely takes care of things around the house and for any children they may have.

5. How are the woman and the man portrayed physically in the cartoon? Why do you think the illustrator chose to draw them that way?

The woman is much larger than the man. She also appears stern, while her husband looks more doubtful, indecisive, and even childlike. The illustrator could have chosen to draw them this way to reinforce the idea that the wife really has more authority in the home and is the true "head of the family."

Answer the last question using both **Items 1 and 2**.

6. Do the two items support or contradict each other in terms of what they reveal about women's rights during the Antebellum Period? Use specific details to support your answer.

Student answers will vary but could mention that in the census questionnaire, women were not recognized for their professional accomplishments by the government and that in the cartoon, women were not recognized for their personal accomplishments by some men.

Item 1: 1850 Census Return

SCHEDULE I. Free Inhabitants in District No. 2 in the County of Fayette of Kentucky enumerated by me, on the 7th day of Aug^t 1850. Jno. M. Maness

Dwellings in the order of visitation.	Families numbered in the order of visitation.	The Name of every Person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age.	Value of Real Estate owned.	PLACE OF BIRTH. Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.			
			Age.	Sex.	Color. White, black or mulatto.				Married within the year.	Attended School within the year.	Persons over 20 yrs of age unable to read or write.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
		Nancy Wheatley	59	F				Maryland				
		Walter S. Wheatley	17	M		Printer		Kentucky				
408	429	John M. Croacker	71	M		Farmer	8,000	Ireland				
		Emily M. Croacker	54	F				Ireland				
		Fredelic Myers	35	M		Gardener		Germany				
409	430	C. M. Farland	44	M		None		Massachusetts				
		J. J. Moore	29	M		None		Maryland				
410	431	Augustus Moseback	24	M		Baker		Germany				
		Charles Kanz	25	M		Baker		Germany				
		James Hanna	40	M		None		Ireland				
411	432	Henry Clay	73	M		Statesman	50,000	Virginia				

www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/programs-surveys/sis/resources/historical-documents-and-images/h03-figure6.jpg

Click on the link above to view the census return online.

Item 2: 1851 Political Cartoon



www.census.gov/main/.in/php_module/lightbox/media.php?l_de573330249590dfb8f201907a585880

Click on the link above to view the cartoon online.