

LESSON PLAN

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II

Image: US Army Women's Museum.

Introduction

During World War II, nearly 350,000 American women volunteered to serve in a variety of roles in the uniformed services. In this lesson, students will gain a better understanding of the demands, sacrifices, and experiences these women faced as they served their country. By examining a series of artifacts, students will learn more about the items needed for women's military duties, as well as the personal mementos that kept their spirits going during the war. Students will need to choose five artifacts to include in a servicewoman's footlocker as she ships off to service. As they select their objects to pack, students will need to balance what to include in the footlocker, taking into account job duties, safety, and morale.

Objectives

By analyzing a series of artifacts from the collections of The National WWII Museum, students will be able to:

- Determine the wide range of jobs women performed in the military service during World War II
- Evaluate the function and significance of each artifact
- Explain the challenges that women in the service faced during World War II

Grade level

6-12

Time Requirement

One 45- to 50-minute class period with extension options

Materials

- Copies of Jumping into the Unknown Student Essay
- Copies of Footlocker Packing Lists

- Copies of Service Profiles
- Copies of Artifact Images
- Copies of Exit Ticket

Online resources

ww2classroom.org

 Full-Size Images of Artifacts

 *Our War Too* Video

STANDARDS

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-12.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

8th Grade Social Studies (LOUISIANA)

8.14 Describe the causes, course, and consequences of World War II. J. Explain the sacrifices and contributions of US soldiers during World War II such as the Tuskegee Airmen, the 442nd Regimental Combat team, the 101st Airborne, Cajun "Frenchies," the Women's Army Corps (WAC), and the Navajo Code Talkers.

High School US History (LOUISIANA)

US.15 Explain the causes, course, and consequences of World War II. D. Describe the sacrifices and contributions of American service members in the war effort including the Tuskegee Airmen, Military Intelligence Service, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the 101st Airborne, Women's Army Corps (WAC), Navajo Code Talkers, and the Army Signal Corps.

PROCEDURES

1. Before facilitating this lesson plan, the teacher can assign students the *Jumping into the Unknown: The Origins of Women's Military Service in World War II Overview Essay* to read before class. Alternatively, students can read and annotate this essay together as a class. Read-aloud tools can be used for students who need accommodation. Middle school and high school reading levels of this essay can be found online at ww2classroom.org.
2. The lesson will begin with a discussion about the different jobs women performed in the military during World War II. The teacher will show the *Our War Too* video providing an overview of women's military service. Through a whole-class discussion, the teacher will ask students to identify some of the jobs women did in the military during the war and some of the challenges women faced serving in the military. As the teacher facilitates this

discussion, they will highlight that women of color faced their own unique challenges due to segregation and racism.

3. After discussing the video with students, the teacher will share the lesson objectives, especially that today's goal will be to analyze a series of artifacts.
4. The teacher will assign each student group a different servicewoman to learn about. The teacher will distribute copies of the Footlocker Packing Lists, Service Profiles, and Artifact Images to student groups preselected by the teacher.
5. Instruct students to read the profile of their assigned servicewoman and examine the artifacts that go along with their individual. Note to students that these are artifacts from the Museum's collection and did not specifically belong to each individual but they are representative of what these servicemembers may have had with them during the war. Once students have read through these materials, their group will need to complete the Footlocker Packing List, which includes summarizing their assigned servicewoman's job in the military and selecting five artifacts to pack in her footlocker before shipping off to service. Instruct students to select a balance of objects that connect to their individual's job duties, their safety, and their morale.
6. Once each group has completed the Footlocker Packing List for their assigned individual, each group will be asked to share with the whole class about their individual and the five artifacts their group packed and why.
7. Exit Ticket: Following the whole-class discussion, the teacher will distribute the Exit Ticket and instruct students to provide a written response explaining what challenges women in uniform faced during World War II. Their responses should be based on the servicewoman and artifacts they examined during class. Depending on time constraints and grade level, teachers can instruct students to respond with four to five sentences or bullet points.

DIFFERENTIATION AND EXTENSION

Differentiation

Teachers can employ an "I Do, We Do, You Do" or gradual release approach. The teacher will model filling out the Footlocker Packing List and selecting artifacts for one of the Service Profiles before asking students to complete the activity as a class and then independently.

Teachers can use read-aloud tools such as text-to-speech readers for the Overview Essay and Service Profiles for students who need accommodations.

Depending on time constraints, teachers can select fewer artifacts for students to examine during this activity or assign fewer profiles.

Teachers can facilitate examining the artifacts at student desks or use the full-size artifact images to have students examine these items in a gallery walk.

Extensions

Teachers can ask students to complete a listening guide that asks them to record what their fellow student groups share about their assigned individuals.

For older grades or higher levels, teachers can assign the Exit Ticket as an essay or long-answer response.

ABOUT THE LESSON AUTHORS

SHELBY ANDERSON is a high school social studies teacher and women's military historian in California. In addition to her five years teaching in the classroom, Shelby is a WWII reenactor who represents women of the Armed Forces through educational presentations, videos, and publications. She has received creative teaching awards from both the California Council of Social Sciences and Disney's 100th Anniversary Teacher Celebration and participated in The National WWII Museum's summer teacher program.



STUDENT HANDOUT

FOOTLOCKER PACKING LIST

Why Did You Choose These Items?					
Packing List					
Job Description					
Military Branch					
Name					





SUSIE OGATA



Name: Sue Suzuko "Susie" Ogata

Branch: US Army

Unit: Women's Army Corps

Ethnic Background: Japanese American

Military Specialty: Military Intelligence Translator

Personal background:

Susie Ogata was born in North Platte, Nebraska. She lived with her father and two brothers; her mother passed away when she was 11 years old. She grew up in a farming area that included about 25 Japanese families. Because her parents were Japanese immigrants, they were not allowed to own land in Nebraska. After she graduated from high school in 1938, the family moved to Greeley, Colorado, where they were allowed to purchase a farm.

Draw to the military:

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese Empire attacked the military base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. After the attack, many Americans looked at Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans with suspicion and distrust. Susie said she was "stunned and very angry" about the attacks on Pearl Harbor. She felt she needed to join the military and that it would be an opportunity "to prove my Americanism." Susie joined the Women's Army Corps when she was 21 years old. Although no Japanese Americans or Japanese immigrants were ever convicted of **espionage**, the US government forced the relocation of thousands of Japanese Americans to detention camps during World War II, beginning in 1942. "I knew they needed WACs to take desk jobs so the fellows could go to the front," she said. "We did it for all Japanese Americans. I was proud to be an American."

Joining up:

Susie started her basic training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, and then was assigned to Fort Devens,



Massachusetts, in the personnel office doing clerical work. "There were three of us **Nisei** there," she recalled. At times, **Nisei** women faced discrimination in the military like they did at home. In basic training, a fellow WAC's brother had been killed by a Japanese sniper, and Susie fell victim to the girl's anger. "I looked **Oriental**, so there was instant hatred. One night, she threw out my clothes from my rack, and we had angry words. My friends were worried and told me she could have knifed me. But I understood why she felt the way she did, with her brother being killed by a Japanese sniper," stated Susie.

Job training and duties:

In 1945, Susie was one of several dozen women ordered to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, to form a detachment of **Nisei** WACs for instruction in Japanese language and military terminology at the Military Intelligence Service Language School. Nearly every day for eight months, the **Nisei** women marched to classes from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. They studied the Japanese language, history, geography, military



terminology, and writing in about six different courses. After supper, the women had a compulsory study period of two hours. "The language training was pretty intense. Everything was in Japanese, five days a week. Saturday morning we had an inspection. Then the rest of that day and Sunday we had off," she said. The *Nisei* WACs translated captured Japanese documents. The Japanese Empire did not account for the employment of the *Nisei* in the US military, and communications were often transmitted in plain language rather than code. In addition, the Japanese did not train their troops on how to act when captured, because surrendering or being captured was not acceptable. So rather than being prepared with the standard "name, rank, and serial number," Japanese POWs often told their *Nisei* interrogators anything they asked.



Vocabulary Terms

ESPIONAGE

Spying or using spies to obtain information about the plans and activities

NISEI

A person born in the United States whose parents were immigrants from Japan

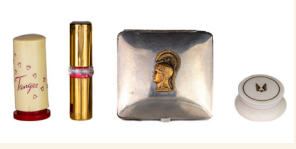
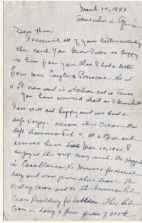
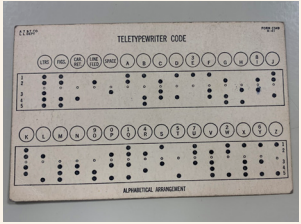
ORIENTAL

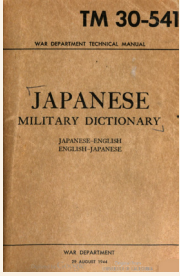
Literally, Eastern of Europe or coming from Asia, especially China and Japan; today this term is considered outdated.



SUSIE OGATA

ARTIFACTS

	Item	Description
#1	WAC Uniform 	The Women's Army Corps (WAC) Class A uniform during World War II consisted of a tailored olive drab wool jacket and skirt. The uniform pictured here is shown with a khaki skirt. The jacket featured a high, closed collar and four front buttons, and the skirt was knee-length with a tailored fit. Women also wore ties, stockings, and a simple watch, and were issued a brown leather purse. These style choices were purposefully designed to maintain a sense of professionalism and femininity, while also ensuring practicality and comfort for the women who served in the WAC, allowing them to perform their duties effectively and with dignity during wartime service.
#2	Lipstick and Compact Mirror 	During World War II, WACs were permitted to use compact makeup and lipstick as part of their uniform. The makeup had to be applied conservatively and in natural tones to maintain a professional military appearance without being distracting. Tangee brand lipstick was favored for its ability to adjust to the wearer's natural lip color, ensuring a subtle and understated look that balanced femininity with the requirements of military service.
#3	Example Letter from Home 	Letters from family back home played a vital role in bolstering the morale of WACs during World War II. These letters provided a heartfelt connection to their loved ones, offering emotional support and encouragement, which was especially vital during challenging assignments. Reading words of love and encouragement from family served as a powerful motivator, helping WACs endure the hardships and demanding responsibilities of their wartime service, ultimately boosting their resolve and dedication to the cause.
#4	Teletype Code Card 	A Teletype Code Card was a reference card used to decipher and encode messages transmitted via Teletype machines, which were widely employed for long-distance communication during World War II. WACs utilized these code cards as a means to securely and efficiently transmit classified or sensitive information. By following the instructions on the code card, WACs could encrypt and decrypt messages, ensuring that critical wartime communications remained confidential and accurate.

	Item	Description
#5	Japanese to English dictionary 	In the Military Intelligence translator unit, Nisei WACs like Susie used Japanese to English dictionaries to translate a wide range of materials, including captured Japanese documents, intercepted communications, and official reports. These documents encompassed military orders, strategic plans, intelligence briefings, and other critical information related to the enemy's intentions and operations in the Pacific theater. Using these dictionaries helped these women understand Japanese words and translate documents and messages accurately, making sure that important information was shared with the Allied forces.
#6	Typewriter 	Typewriters were an essential tool and used extensively by Military Intelligence translators. Women like Susie would have used it to transcribe the translated Japanese documents and messages from their work at the Military Intelligence Service Language School onto paper, making them more accessible for analysis and distribution. Typewriters played a crucial role in creating legible and organized English versions of the Japanese documents, enabling the effective sharing of vital intelligence within the Military Intelligence unit.
#7	Propaganda Poster 	The “Loose Lips Sink Ships” poster contains a wartime slogan from World War II that serves as a reminder of the importance of keeping military information and plans confidential. It encourages people to not have discussions about sensitive information, emphasizing that this type of talk may unknowingly aid the enemy and risk Allied troops' lives. Many soldiers and civilians felt a need to be careful about what they shared in their conversations, as they realized that the war effort depended on keeping military information confidential.
#8	Nisei Women's Army Corps Unit 	During World War II, nearly 500 Japanese American women served in the military for the United States. Japanese American women served in the Women's Army Corps (WAC), Army Nurse Corps (ANC), and the Cadet Nurse Corps (CNC). The WAC began accepting Japanese American women in September 1943. Japanese American women who served during World War II faced many different challenges including leaving behind family members in Japanese American incarceration camps. Despite these challenges, Japanese American servicewomen served their country with courage and sacrifice. This unit photograph shows a Nisei WAC detachment at Fort Snelling, Minnesota.



MINNIE SPOTTED- WOLF



Name: Minnie Spotted-Wolf

Branch: US Marine Corps

Unit: Women's Reserve

Ethnic Background: Native American

Military Specialty: Heavy equipment operator

Personal background:

Minnie was born on June 20, 1923, on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana and worked on her family's homestead as a child into adulthood. Minnie, her three sisters, and her parents lived on the White Tail Ranch that her father started. She was an experienced horseback rider and hunter, and she helped her parents raise cattle, sheep, and horses on the family ranch.

Draw to the military:

Minnie was interested in the materials that were handed out by a **recruiter** in her town about joining the Marines shortly after the United States entered World War II. However, the recruiter discouraged her, saying that "the war was really not for women." Through some encouragement from her grandmother and family, Minnie joined the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. Minnie was the only member of her family able to serve after her brother died as a young boy.

Joining up:

When Minnie first joined, she went to basic training at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and was the first Native American to join the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. At basic training, women underwent medical examinations, uniforming, and classification tests and interviews to assess their abilities, education, training,



and work experience. Women also were held to a strict schedule and had to be in training starting at 5:45 a.m. each day. She stated that the Marines were hard for some women, and that people were harder and tougher on women in particular while they served. Women faced verbal harassment and pranks from the male Marines, which took a toll on the **morale** of women like Minnie. She said she protected herself against the men. She knew if she stood up for herself, they would leave her "alone after that first attempt." Minnie said basic training was "hard, but not too hard" after all the physical labor she had done on her father's ranch, including "cutting fence posts, driving a two-ton truck and breaking horses." Minnie really enjoyed meeting new people and making friends in the service.

Job training and duties:

During the four years Minnie was in the service, she performed a variety of duties at stations across Hawaii and California. Based on Minnie's skills from working on her father's ranch, Minnie was assigned a job as a heavy equipment driver, a job usually done by men.



In this role, she would drive large trucks full of heavy equipment such as **artillery**, construction equipment, or other large supplies around the base. Minnie would be required to drive her over rough roads or in areas where there were no roads, as well as maintain the truck if it broke down. Her male military friends taught her how to drive and repair other vehicles. Minnie was eventually able to keep up with the guys, and could take apart and rebuild an engine, an invaluable skill. She was also responsible for driving important generals around the base. When these men would come visit, she would pick them up in a Willys Jeep and take them around the base. Minnie was also responsible for repairing and maintaining these smaller Jeeps.



Vocabulary Terms

RECRUITER

A person in the military who provides information regarding service, training, and career opportunities to people interested in joining a branch of the Armed Forces

MORALE

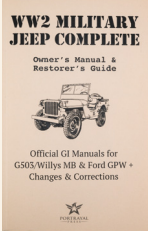
The capacity of a group of people to pull together persistently and consistently in pursuit of a goal

ARTILLERY

Very large guns that are moved on wheels or metal tracks and has very long range



MINNIE SPOTTED-WOLF ARTIFACTS

	Item	Description
#1	USMCWR Uniform 	Work overalls were commonly used for more physically demanding tasks, such as maintenance and other hands-on assignments. They provided protection and allowed for ease of movement, ensuring the safety and comfort of the women while engaged in their duties. The dress uniform for women Marines prioritized style and professionalism.
#2	Mechanics Tool Box 	In the US Marine Corps Women's Reserve during World War II, a mechanic's toolbox was a fundamental resource for heavy machine operators. These toolboxes contained an array of essential tools tailored to vehicle maintenance and repair needs, such as wrenches, pliers, screwdrivers, jacks, fire extinguishers, snow chains, oilers, and hammers. Heavy machine operators used these toolboxes to conduct routine maintenance, address breakdowns, and keep military vehicles in operational condition, contributing to the efficiency and reliability of the transportation and logistics infrastructure during the war.
#3	WWII Jeep Manual 	In the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, a Willys Jeep manual was a valuable resource. These manuals typically included detailed instructions on operating and maintaining the Willys Jeep, covering topics like engine maintenance, troubleshooting common issues, and driving techniques.
#4	Canteen and Mess Kit 	Each Marine was issued a canteen and mess kit that they were responsible for maintaining. These items were typically made of durable materials such as stainless steel or aluminum. Heavy machine operators used canteens to carry and access drinking water while on duty, ensuring hydration during long hours of work, and mess kits were used for meals in the field, allowing them to sustain their energy and focus while supporting wartime operations. Canteens could be carried in a pouch that was hooked onto the belt, and mess kits would fold up containing the fork, knife, and spoon inside.



	Item	Description
#5	Personal First Aid Kit 	These personal first aid kits typically contained essential medical supplies such as bandages, antiseptics, and basic medications. Heavy machine operators used these kits to provide immediate and initial care for minor injuries or accidents sustained while on duty.
#6	"Be a Marine, Free a Marine to Fight" Poster 	The poster "Be a Marine, Free a Marine to Fight" held deep significance for women in World War II, highlighting their essential contributions to the war effort. It conveyed the idea that women's roles in support positions were critical in relieving male Marines from noncombat duties, allowing them to serve on the front lines. This message instilled a sense of purpose and pride, ultimately boosting morale among female Marines by emphasizing their integral role in the broader mission and their vital contribution to the war.
#7	One Little Indian story on Minnie Spotted-Wolf 	A dramatic, four-page comic book-style recounting of Minnie Spotted-Wolf's story appeared in the <i>Calling All Girls</i> magazine for teen girls, outlining what happened to Minnie the year before she joined the military. The comic shows her riding a horse through deep snow to get provisions for her family after a severe blizzard, then correctly predicting the spring melt would cause bad flooding. The comic book was meant to inspire other young women to support the war movement, boost soldier morale, and encourage civilians to join the military service.
#8	"Be a Marine... Free a Marine to Fight" Booklet 	"The Be a Marine... Free a Marine" Booklet was published by the US Marine Corps Women's Reserve. This booklet was intended to help recruit and enlist women into the Women's Reserve. This booklet contains information on the benefits of joining the Marine Corps, necessary qualifications to enlist, and what to expect once you join the Marines.





MARGARET BAILEY



Name: Colonel Margaret E. Bailey

Branch: US Army

Unit: Army Nurse Corps

Ethnic Background: African American

Military Specialty: Nursing

Personal background:

Margaret Bailey was born in Selma, Alabama, on December 25, 1915. Margaret spent much of her childhood living with her uncle on his farm and participating in programs that her community church put on. Because segregation was the law of the land, Margaret couldn't go to the public theaters or playgrounds, so her church was her sanctuary. After finishing high school, she attended nursing school at Montgomery Fraternal Hospital and graduated in 1939; she eventually got a job at Mercy Hospital, a segregated hospital for Black patients, in St. Petersburg, Florida. Margaret also found work in a tuberculosis hospital in New York in the surgical unit.

Draw to the military:

One of the reasons that Margaret joined the military was to support her family and allow her mother to not have to work. As someone who experienced segregation, she also saw the military as an opportunity to gain equality and use her service as a standard to demand civil rights in the **civilian** world. In addition, Margaret wanted to travel and experience how other parts of the world lived.

Joining up:

The Army Nurse Corps didn't originally accept African American nurses, but through dedication and persistence, 50 nurses—including Margaret—were allowed in. As a proud Second Lieutenant, Margaret

went to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, for basic training, where she learned military skills such as pitching a tent and map reading. The 144-hour program also focused on administration, organization, sanitation, and ward and clinic nursing. At this base, the nurses took care of the African American soldiers in the 92nd and 93rd Divisions, as segregation required Black nurses to only treat Black patients. As Margaret stated: "Many people assumed we could not perform, that we could not do our jobs, but once we were in, then they realized we could."

Job training and duties:

Margaret's first station outside of basic training was a prisoner-of-war camp in Florence, Arizona, where Black nurses were assigned to treat the German and Italian prisoners. The women often experienced harassment from the enemy prisoners, and **commanding officers** often did little to protect or support the Black nurses. Margaret eventually was stationed at Camp Beale, California, where she was able to work at an **integrated** hospital and treat all soldiers. Although they lived in segregated barracks and didn't socialize with the other white female nurses, Margaret said, "you felt that you were really becoming a part of it [the war effort]." She also had to learn to manage the emotional demands of being a nurse and losing patients: "If you're going to be a nurse, you will have to learn to cope with it. But when they pull through the joy is there."



Vocabulary Terms

CIVILIAN

A person not in the Armed Forces

COMMANDING OFFICER

A person who is in charge of a group of people in the military or of a military camp or base

INTEGRATED

The ending of a law or practice requiring isolation of the members of a particular race in separate groups



MARGARET BAILEY

ARTIFACTS

	Item	Description
#1	ANC Uniform 	The Army Nurse Corps uniform during World War II served multiple crucial functions. It prioritized practicality and comfort, with brown and white seersucker fabric offering breathability and ease of movement, vital for nurses working in demanding conditions. Additionally, the uniform's distinct appearance, complemented by enlisted ANC insignia like the US cutout and caduceus lapel pins, helped with easy identification and instilled a sense of pride among nurses, symbolizing their dedication to both the medical profession and their country. Finally, the inclusion of brown oxfords in the ensemble ensured that nurses had suitable and comfortable footwear, essential for their long hours of duty caring for wounded soldiers.
#2	M1 Helmet 	During World War II, Army Nurse Corps women, including flight nurses, occasionally used the M1 helmet to ensure their safety during air evacuations and other hazardous situations. This included situations where they might be exposed to falling debris, such as areas subject to bombing or artillery shelling. The helmet offered crucial defense against head injuries, turbulence, and potential dangers encountered during missions. Sometimes they also washed their clothes in the helmet.
#3	Medical Equipment - Aluminum Syringe 	The aluminum syringe would be included in a nurse's medical equipment case, a specialized aluminum container designed to securely hold supplies used by nurses. It featured secure fastening, compartments, and accessory pockets to keep syringes, needles, medications, and other medical supplies organized and easily accessible. Nurses utilized these cases to administer injections, medications, and vaccinations, both in field hospitals and during emergency medical procedures, ensuring the efficient and sterile delivery of critical health care services to wounded soldiers.
#4	Medical Equipment - Portable Sterilizer 	A portable sterilizer was a compact and portable device, typically consisting of a metal container with a built-in burner. Nurses in World War II used these sterilizers to ensure that their medical tools and equipment were free from pathogens, providing a hygienic and safe environment for treating wounded soldiers on the front lines or in field hospitals, where access to centralized sterilization facilities was limited. The burner was used to heat the sterilizer, creating the necessary high temperatures to effectively eliminate bacteria and other contaminants from medical instruments, thus reducing the risk of infections in wartime medical settings.

	Item	Description
#5	First Black Nurses Land in England Photograph 	During World War II, Black female nurses in the US military were subject to racial segregation and were often restricted to treating Black male soldiers and prisoners of war. These nurses faced challenging conditions, including segregated living arrangements, limited career opportunities, inadequate resources, and racial discrimination from within the military as well as from some patients and colleagues. Despite these obstacles, these dedicated nurses displayed resilience and professionalism, providing essential medical care to those in need while contributing to the broader fight for civil rights and desegregation in the military.
#6	"Nurses Are Needed Now!" Poster 	Propaganda posters like "Nurses Are Needed Now!" were instrumental in motivating women to join the Army Nurse Corps during World War II. They appealed to women's patriotism and sense of duty, emphasizing the urgent need for their professional skills in healthcare to support the war effort. By providing clear application instructions and a sense of immediate importance, these posters effectively encouraged women, particularly registered nurses, to apply and make a significant contribution to their country.
#7	Little Army Nurse Kit 	The "Little Army Nurse" kit served as a fun and educational toy for children. Dated 1942, this vintage playset included items that allowed children to mimic the role of a nurse, such as a cloth apron, cap, and arm band, as well as a toy wristwatch, stethoscope, and thermometer for engaging in imaginative health care scenarios.
#8	Evening Gown Made by Army Nurse 	Everyone who served wanted a break from the grit and grime of the war, especially during the holidays. When invited to a wartime Christmas dance during her overseas service in Europe, Army nurse Emma Irene Doty wanted some glamour and individuality in a sea of uniformity. She used the materials she had at hand—a silk parachute and a zipper from a pair of men's trousers—to fashion herself an evening gown.



PHYLLIS ANKENEY



Name: Phyllis Jensen Ankeney

Branch: US Navy, Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES)

Unit: Aviation Specialists

Ethnic Background: White

Military Specialty: Parachute Rigger

Personal background:

Phyllis was born in Superior, Nebraska, on January 27, 1923. Her family were farmers on the prairie during the Great Depression. Her father was a WWI veteran, and when his final pension payment arrived, he said, "That's not going back into seed to be blown away." Her father packed up his five children, including Phyllis, and his wife and moved to Portland, Oregon. In her high school years, Phyllis attended an all-girls polytechnic high school where she learned cooking, baking, nursing skills, and sewing. When World War II broke out, Phyllis sewed sleeping bags for the war effort, and eventually went to work at a shipyard.

Draw to the military:

Both of Phyllis's parents were immigrants and were supportive of her desire to join the service. Phyllis was the only one eligible in her family to join, and she cites that "everyone wanted to be a part of it [the war effort]." Phyllis had seen propaganda posters inviting women to join the WAVES and recalled a neighbor boy joining the Navy, "so it was the Navy for me too!" As Phyllis was only 20 years old, her parents had to sign to allow her to go, and off she went to WAVES boot camp.

Joining up:

In order to get to boot camp at Hunter College's Bronx campus in New York City, Phyllis took a four-day trip across the country by train and got to meet many of the new WAVES joining the service just like her. Upon arriving in New York, Phyllis was issued her uniform and wool stockings. She then started her basic training, which included learning how to march in formation, swab decks, and exercise daily; she was also screened and classified for one of the various types of positions available. Since Hunter College did not have barracks, the women lived in apartment buildings nearby to the college campus. The WAVES slept on wooden double-deck bunks, and each room was equipped with a locker, chest of drawers, table, chair, and lamp. Apartment sizes varied, and two to four women occupied each room, including dining and living rooms repurposed for sleeping.

Job training and duties:

Women like Phyllis were trained at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station in New Jersey, where they would spend eight hours in a classroom every day for 12 weeks. They would be expected to march, train, and do physical exercises every day. As a parachute rigger, Phyllis was responsible for packing, inspecting and mending the parachutes the men used. Prior to the WAVES involvement, male parachute riggers would be required to jump out of airplanes using the parachutes they packed. The women would be required to watch the men jump out of the airplanes with the parachutes they packed. Eventually women were allowed to skydive using their own packed parachutes to show their dedication and attention to detail. Prior to World War II, parachutes were made of **silk** from Japan,



but once war was declared with Japan, the United States could no longer gain access to this material and switched to **nylon**. The women had extensive training in both machine and hand sewing and became very talented at carefully packing and repacking the parachutes to ensure they were released properly when **deployed**. This essential job required the women to be extremely dedicated to perfecting their job as the safety of the soldiers relied on them.



Vocabulary Terms

SILK

A soft but tough elastic fiber produced by silkworms and used for textiles

NYLON

A very strong artificial material, used for making clothes, rope, brushes, etc

DEPLOYED

The process of fully opening a parachute's canopy in order to float down to the ground



PHYLLIS ANKENY

ARTIFACTS

	Item	Description
#1	WAVES Uniform 	The WAVES uniforms were designed Mainbocher, a famous New York fashion house. The dress white uniform was made of lighter material than the blue dress uniform. It was typically accompanied by a silk shirt, black tie, white gloves, shoes, and a hat. Although initially designed for only officers, it was soon designated as the summer dress uniform for all WAVES.
#2	Parachute Rigger Tools 	WAVES who worked with parachute rigging used a range of tools to meticulously inspect, repair, and pack parachutes for military use during World War II. Rigging sleeves were employed to secure parachute lines, while packing tools allowed for careful folding and organizing of the parachute fabric into the container. Needles and measuring instruments were utilized for precise repairs and measurements, ensuring the parachutes were in optimal condition for safe deployment in airborne military operations.
#3	ID Bracelet 	During World War II, servicemen and servicewomen could wear an identification bracelet as part of their uniform. They ranged from bent metal bands to metal plates on thick chains. Each was engraved with key elements of identification, including name, rank, and serial number.
#4	Sewing Machine for Parachutes 	Women parachute riggers commonly used industrial sewing machines designed for handling durable fabrics like parachute materials. These machines were equipped with strong motors and heavy-duty needles to sew multiple layers of sturdy fabric, ensuring the strength and reliability of parachute construction. Their design allowed for precision stitching and reinforced seams, essential for creating dependable parachutes for military use.

	Item	Description
#5	Stuffed Navy Goat 	"Gobby the Goat" was a stuffed animal that served as the mascot for the Navy. Legend has it, in 1890, sailors realized that goats made excellent shipmates because they could give them milk, cheese, and butter without needing a fridge. Plus, goats can eat anything, so rather than needing to store special feed, sailors could use pet goats as walking garbage disposals. Women in the Navy could purchase the stuffed animal to show their support for their military branch.
#6	"Have You Got What It Takes to Fill an Important Job Like This?" Poster 	WAVES propaganda posters during World War II played a crucial role in encouraging women to join the service and support the war effort. The posters also influenced societal perceptions, and reassured the public that women would retain their sense of femininity while part of the military.
#7	Rosary 	During World War II, rosaries and religious tokens held significant meaning for women in the service, providing comfort and strength in challenging times. These items served as personal spiritual anchors, helping female servicemembers maintain a connection to their faith amid the demands of wartime service. The presence of religious symbols not only offered solace but also contributed to a sense of camaraderie among women in uniform, fostering resilience and unity in the face of adversity.
#8	Sweetheart Jewelry 	Sweetheart jewelry provided a tangible reminder of the relationships waiting for them, boosting morale and emotional well-being. The jewelry served as a meaningful link between servicewomen and their loved ones.



ETHEL FINLEY



Name: Ethel Meyer Finley

Branch: US Army Air Forces

Unit: Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)

Ethnic Background: White

Specialty: Pilot

Personal background:

Ethel Meyer Finley was born on August 29, 1920, in Lake City, Minnesota, and lived on a corn farm with her mother, father, and younger sister. They went to the Lutheran church in their community regularly, and as a child Ethel loved spending time outside working in the fields and riding her horse. Ethel went to school in a one-room schoolhouse that did not have electricity or running water. She graduated from high school in 1937 and went on to earn bachelor's degrees in science, mathematics, and physical education from Winona State Teachers' College. Ethel then became the first woman at the school to participate in the Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) program.

Draw to the military:

Although recognized as part of the military today, during World War II, the women of the WASP were seen as civilians. Ethel had the unique opportunity to train as a pilot prior to joining the WASP program, which required that all female applicants had a civilian pilot's license, which was very hard to come by for many women at the time due to discrimination. In addition to teaching math, science and PE, Ethel ran the flight simulator program for the CPT program in exchange for flight time, and was able to gain 150 hours of flight time. When Pearl Harbor was attacked in December 1941, Ethel knew she had to do something different, and in December 1942 she received a telegram asking her to fly for the US Military. With the support of her mother, her mentor Max Conrad, and her grandparents, Ethel joined the WASP program in March 1943.

Joining up:

Ethel's first station was Sweetwater, Texas, as she entered the fifth class and joined the Women's Flying Training Detachment at Avenger Field. The trainees were up before dawn and spent nearly 12 hours a day at the airfield. Half their day was spent flying in very crowded airspaces doing stalls, spins, turns, take offs, and landings. The other half of the day was spent in ground school studying navigation, flight training, physics, aerodynamics, electronics, mathematics, weather, communications, **meteorology**, Morse code, military law, and aircraft mechanics. The barracks that Ethel lived in were six to a room and one bathroom for 12 girls. The women marched everywhere, did **calisthenics**, and ended their day with "Taps." They took part in parades, infantry drills, barracks inspection, and oaths of allegiance just like the male cadets.

Job training and duties:

Ethel was stationed at Shaw Field in South Carolina and, for more than a year and a half, flew 12 different aircraft. Some of her jobs included being a co-pilot as they transported generals and other personnel, test-piloted planes after they were repaired, and taught pilots as part of a squadron of male instructors. Some WASP pilots like Ethel had other jobs, including towing targets while being shot at for **gunnery** training and transporting planes across the country for deployment. In 21 months of active service, Ethel logged a total of 1,074 hours in the air before the WASP was disbanded in December 1944. Although these women flew military aircraft, they were considered civilians, and



were not granted military benefits. The WASP were finally recognized as veterans in 1977, more than 30 years after the end of World War II.



Vocabulary Terms

CALISTHENICS

A form of exercise that uses a person's body weight and requires little to no equipment

GUNNERY

The activity of firing large guns

METEOROLOGY

The scientific study of the Earth's atmosphere and weather

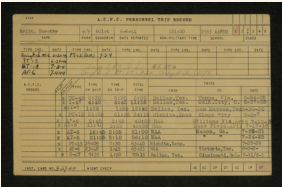
"TAPS"

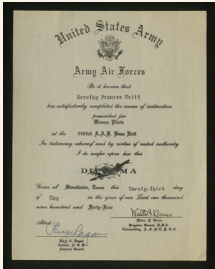
A bugle call sounded to signal lights out at the end of a military day, and during memorial ceremonies and military funerals



ETHEL FINLEY

ARTIFACTS

	Item	Description
#1	WASP Uniforms 	The flight uniform during World War II prioritized comfort and protection for women pilots. The A-2 Flight jacket, made of quality leather, provided insulation against high altitudes, while the leather flight helmet and goggles ensured safety by shielding the pilot's head and eyes from wind and debris. The durable flight boots offered ankle support for ease in operating aircraft controls and navigating diverse terrains, collectively embodying the resilience and professionalism of the pioneering WASP during their vital service in World War II. In contrast, the dress uniform for WASP servicewomen prioritized style over comfort or function.
#2	Flight Log 	The WASP flight log played a crucial role in documenting and tracking the flying hours and experiences of women pilots. This meticulous record-keeping was essential for monitoring skill progression, ensuring adherence to training requirements, and contributing to the overall safety and efficiency of their missions. The flight log served as a comprehensive tool that supported the professionalism and dedication of the women in the Women Airforce Service Pilots during their vital contributions to the war effort.
#3	Navigator's Kneeboard 	The navigator's kneeboard featured a practical design with a secure strap for attachment, providing a stable platform for navigation tools on the pilot's leg. This crucial accessory allowed women in navigation roles to have quick and easy access to charts, instruments, and other essential information while in flight. The kneeboard's convenience and functionality supported the efficiency and precision of female navigators, contributing to their success in fulfilling critical roles during the war.

	Item	Description
#4	Diploma from the US Army Air Forces 	The diploma from the US Army Air Forces, awarded to WASP upon completing pilot training, acted as a morale booster during World War II. Serving as official recognition of their competence and training, the diploma validated the crucial contributions of these female aviators to the war effort. It became a tangible symbol of pride and accomplishment, instilling a sense of morale among the WASP as they undertook their vital roles in support of the military.
#5	Fifinella Patch 	The WASP Fifinella patch, featuring the whimsical Disney character designed by Roald Dahl, served as a unifying symbol for the Women Airforce Service Pilots during the war. Worn on their uniforms, the patch not only represented a sense of camaraderie and identity but also conveyed the unique spirit and resilience of these women aviators. The Fifinella patch played a vital role in fostering a supportive community and boosting the morale of the WASP, contributing to their effectiveness and dedication in fulfilling their crucial roles in the war effort.
#6	Aviation Headset 	The aviation headset provided essential communication capabilities for women pilots, enabling clear and effective coordination during flight missions. Designed for comfort and functionality, these headsets allowed WASPs to maintain vital communication with ground control and fellow aviators, enhancing overall mission efficiency. The reliability and ease of use of the aviation headset contributed to the effectiveness of female pilots, supporting their navigation, coordination, and successful execution of their critical roles during the war.
#7	Wings Lapel Pin 	The WASP wings lapel pin served as a distinguished symbol of accomplishment and recognition for Women Airforce Service Pilots during the war. This pin signified that its wearer had successfully completed rigorous training and was a certified pilot, highlighting her expertise and dedication to the war effort. The lapel pin became a proud emblem of the pioneering women aviators, symbolizing their vital role in supporting the military through their skilled service.
#8	Parachute 	The parachute was a critical piece of safety equipment for Women Airforce Service Pilots, ensuring their protection in the event of an emergency during flight. This essential gear provided a reliable means of escape and served as a lifeline for the pilots, emphasizing their safety while navigating the challenges of wartime aviation. The presence of a dependable parachute was paramount in instilling confidence and reassurance among the WASP, allowing them to focus on their missions with the knowledge that their safety was prioritized.

STUDENT HANDOUT

EXIT TICKET

BASED ON THE SERVICEWOMAN
AND ARTIFACTS YOU EXAMINED
DURING CLASS, WHAT CHALLENGES
DID WOMEN IN UNIFORM FACE
DURING WORLD WAR II?

