

Lesson Plan Seven

THE WOMEN OF CONGRESS SPEAK THEIR MIND



RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7 to 12



OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to accompany *Women in Congress, 1917–2006*. Students have the opportunity to analyze a series of statements made by women Members of Congress. Students are encouraged to think about the role that quotes can play in the study of history. (Citations for the quotation exercise used in this activity appear at the end of the Historical Quotations document.)



CURRICULUM CONNECTION

- U.S. history, American government, women’s history, social studies
- Women’s suffrage, women’s rights movement, World War II, civil rights movement



OBJECTIVES

1. Students should be able to analyze public statements made by historic figures.
2. Students should be able to analyze the relationship between public statements and the historical record.
3. Students should be able to discern between opinion and fact.
4. Students should be able to analyze the relationship between statements made by public figures and the careers of women who have served in Congress.



LESSON PLAN

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
 - a. What are a few famous statements made by historical figures that you recall? What makes these statements memorable?
 - b. What are some of the reasons why people make public statements?
 - c. What is the relationship between opinion and fact in public statements?
 - d. What purpose can quotes play in the study of history? Provide several examples.
2. Divide the class into small groups. Distribute the “Detecting History” worksheet (located on pages 4 and 5) to each group and review the directions with the class. Ask students to complete the worksheet and provide time for students to present their findings to the class.
3. Distribute the accompanying Historical Quotations document <http://womenincongress.house.gov/educational/quotes.pdf> to the class. At this point, each group can compare this document with their answers on the “Detecting History” worksheet. Allow time for a brief discussion and questions.
4. Assign or have each group choose three of the quotations made by women Members of Congress. Distribute the “Quote Analysis” worksheet (located on page 6). Review the directions and ask students to complete the worksheet.

5. If time permits, have each group read the *Women in Congress* profiles for the quoted Representatives or Senators, <http://womenincongress.house.gov/profiles/index.html>. Then, ask students to draft an outline of the profile which includes: state represented; years of service; one opinion and one fact from the profile; two quotes (not including the one already analyzed); and three career highlights. As a class, display each of the outlines for the women Representatives and Senators on a bulletin board or in a central location. Lead a class discussion which encourages students to compare and contrast the quotes and the careers of the women Representatives and Senators. Also, ask students to talk about the difference between fact and opinion, and the role this plays in the analysis of quotes.
6. If time permits, conduct one of the optional extended activities.

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SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Assign a series of topics (historic and current) and have students create their own quotes to express their opinions. Encourage students to research the topics so that they can make an informed and factually-based quote on the subject.
2. Write a 500-word newspaper article on your Representative or one of your Senators which includes at least three quotes by the featured politician.
3. Invite a historian to speak to the class to explain the importance and usefulness of quotes in the study of history.



ONLINE RESOURCES

Online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*

Searchable database that contains biographical information on every person who served in Congress.

<http://bioguide.congress.gov>

Office of the Clerk, Art & History

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. House of Representatives such as weekly historical highlights, party divisions, congressional apportionment, leadership and officers, and significant events.

http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/index.html

Senate Historical Office

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. Senate such as facts and milestones, historical statistics, featured biographies, and a photographic collection.

http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate_Historical_Office.htm

Library of Congress/THOMAS

Searchable database of congressional legislation from 1973 to present (bill text and roll call votes are available from 1989 to present).

<http://thomas.loc.gov/>

GPO Access

Includes links for searchable databases of the *Congressional Record* and *House Journal* (1994 to present) as well as information on how to find the nearest federal depository library.

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html>

Center for American Women and Politics

Provides facts and figures about current and historical women office holders at the state and national level.

<http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/>



DETECTING HISTORY WORKSHEET

Play the role of a historian and a detective by completing the table below. Match the Congresswomen listed on the next page with the correct corresponding quote. For each quote, compile a short list of clues. Note that each Congresswoman should be used only once in this exercise.

Quote	Congresswoman	Clues
<p>“A few of [the party leaders] opposed my nomination, but most of them thought it would be a graceful gesture which would do them no harm since they were sure I would get tired of politics in a few months, and flit on to something else.”</p>		
<p>“How shall we answer the challenge, gentlemen? How shall we explain to them the meaning of democracy if the same Congress that voted to make the world safe for democracy refuses to give this small measure of democracy to the women of our country?”</p>		
<p>“I believe that woman’s place is in the home. But I believe that the modern mother considers the world her home. The community in which she lives and the children grow is her home and for that reason she should assure herself of the opportunity of getting good government.”</p>		
<p>“We will no longer wait for political power to be shared with us, we will take it.”</p>		
<p>“Sometimes I’m really afraid that tourists are going to poke me with their umbrellas! And yet there’s no sound reason why women, if they have the time and ability, shouldn’t sit with men on city councils, in state legislatures, or in the House and Senate . . . Women are essentially practical because they’ve always had to be. From the dawn of time it’s been our job to see that both ends meet. And women are much more realistic than men, particularly when it comes to public questions. Of course, having had the vote for such a short time is a distinct advantage, for we have no inheritance of political buncombe.”</p>		
<p>“Politics is a job that needs doing—by anyone who is interested enough to train for it and work at it. It’s like housekeeping; someone has to do it. Whether the job is done by men or women is not important—only whether the job is done well or badly.”</p>		

Quote	Congresswoman	Clues
<p>“I am not a feminist or anything else of that sort. I do not use my womanhood as a weapon or a tool. . . . What I want most is to be respected and thought of as a person rather than as a woman in this particular job. I would like to feel that I am respected for my ability, my honesty, my judgment, my imagination, and my vision.”</p>		
<p>“The day I wore a pants suit onto the [House] floor you’d have thought I asked for a land base for China. I just want to do my job. Does it make any difference if I have a bow in my hair or not?”</p>		
<p>“I am neither a black politician nor a woman politician. Just a politician, a professional politician.”</p>		
<p>“There is an unfortunate tendency on the part of women just now, having hardly found themselves in politics, to criticize faults rather than to encourage virtues. They call themselves non-partisan and stand on the side as harsh critics instead of going right in at the very source of government in their own immediate communities to build up what is best.”</p>		
<p>“Politics...is like sailing a boat. You have to learn to tack, going from one side of the river to the other. It takes a bit longer, but you can make good progress.”</p>		
<p>“Women of my generation who entered public office had a very different kind of experience supposed to be than those who come in today...There was little women’s movement... and one had to work one’s way up the political ladder without too much assistance from either men or women. When I was one of four women in the Washington state house of representatives, in 1939, the other 95 members could not have cared less whether we were there or not.”</p>		

Women Members Of Congress

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative Frances Bolton • Representative Cardiss Collins • Representative Julia Butler Hansen • Representative Coya Knutson • Senator Gladys Pyle • Representative Alice Robertson | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senator Hattie Wyatt Caraway • Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas • Representative Barbara Jordan • Representative Ruth Bryan Owen • Representative Jeannette Rankin • Representative Patricia Schroeder |
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