



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2013 Volume I: Picture Writing

Inspiring American Women: Painting Them into the Picture

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Women of American history need to be taught in elementary schools. Our textbooks are stuck in the male-dominated twentieth century. We need to pull the teaching of history into the twenty-first century by stressing the contributions of women in order to complete the picture of American life. Our list of women should be multicultural, reflecting our population's true variety. The best way to introduce young children to history is by having them read picture books. Picture books blend the media of words and images, creating easily understood content. This is especially useful for teaching second-language learners. Students learn strategies for "reading" pictures. They refer back and forth between text and image to make meaning. Illustrations provoke discussion by giving students practice in debating concepts—a crucial prewriting step. Biography links informational text and good story telling. Not all picture books, however, are successful with young readers. This unit lays out what makes a good picture-book biography. The student reference bibliography at the end of the unit is a treasure trove. The list will give teachers a strong start in building their own library of books about great American women.

(Developed for Language Arts and History/Social Studies, grade 5; recommended for Language Arts, grades 2-6, and History/Social Studies, grade 5)

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