

WRITING FOR CHANGE: *The Power of Women's Words*

THE BOSTON WOMEN'S MEMORIAL CURRICULUM



ABIGAIL ADAMS



LUCY STONE



PHILLIS WHEATLEY

Developed by the Boston Women's Heritage Trail

Written by Sara M. Masucci
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The Boston Women's Heritage Trail

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The Boston Women's Heritage Trail (BWHT) seeks to restore women to their rightful place in the history of Boston and in the school curriculum by uncovering, chronicling and disseminating information about the women who have made lasting contributions to our city. The five walks in our guidebook introduce over 180 Boston women in a wide variety of settings, occupations, and backgrounds. The walks are: the Back Bay Walk, the Beacon Hill Walk, the Downtown Walk, the North End Walk, and the South Cove/Chinatown Walk.

BWHT has also sponsored the development of 5 mini trails in Boston neighborhoods: Charlestown, Grove Hall/Roxbury, Lower Roxbury, the South End, and West Roxbury. Teachers and students blazed these trails at Boston Public Schools. In addition, BWHT collaborated with the Museum of Fine Arts to develop a trail *Women Artists in the Back Bay*.

BWHT sponsors teacher workshops and showcases and supports a values-based literature program, *Perseverance*, for Boston Public Schools eighth graders. We give guided walks and presentations, and are actively involved in a wide range of projects that promote women's history.

In connection with the dedication of the Boston Women's Memorial, BWHT has developed this curriculum and has also published a trail based on the lives of the three women honored in the statue, showing where they lived and worked and other sites which honor them.

Please visit our web site – bwht.org – for up-to-date information or contact us at the information above.

We would love to help you with a women's history project!

Writing for Change: *The Power of Women's Words* is divided into two sections. The first, this booklet, provides you with the goals, objectives and key questions, an overview of the primary source and activity sheets, and resource lists for further information.

Within each section is material about Abigail Adams, Phillis Wheatley, Lucy Stone and The Boston Women's Memorial. The primary source sheets present students with the writer's words on one side and questions on the back. There is also a full page image to accompany each section.

The primary sources and activity sheets are designed to be used individually or as a unit. Included in the section focusing on the Memorial is a guide for visiting the Memorial.



WRITING FOR CHANGE: *The Power of Women's Words*



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ To recognize the importance of Abigail Adams's, Phillis Wheatley's, and Lucy Stone's contributions to history
- ◆ To understand and appreciate how these women are real and relevant today
- ◆ To analyze the writings of Adams, Wheatley, and Stone with regard to their goals
- ◆ To learn ways that change can be facilitated through language written and spoken
- ◆ To consider the influence of public art in our interpretation of history
- ◆ To help instill in young people a commitment to, as Lucy Stone implored, "make the world better" through change



KEY QUESTIONS:

- ◆ How have the contributions of Abigail Adams, Phillis Wheatley, and Lucy Stone helped improve society today?
- ◆ How are Abigail Adams's, Phillis Wheatley's, and Lucy Stone's goals relevant today?
- ◆ Abigail Adams's, Phillis Wheatley's, and Lucy Stone's work changed social norms and government policy. What issues were important to Adams, Wheatley, and Stone? What did they change? What has not changed?
- ◆ How did (does) writing function as a tool for effecting change?
- ◆ How does change happen?
- ◆ How does public art function as a tool for learning about history?
- ◆ What makes certain individuals better suited to effecting change?
- ◆ Can one person make the world better? How?

Note: Spelling and grammar are reprinted with period accuracy. Some discrepancies from today's style do exist.

BOSTON WOMEN'S MEMORIAL CURRICULUM STANDARDS

H/SS

Recognize the importance of individual choice, action, and character (5-8)

Understand the power of ideas behind important events (5-8)

Explain the importance of our common citizenship in the US and the imperative of the Declaration of Independence to treat all individuals as equals and with respect for their dignity and rights (5-8)

Identify the contributions of leaders and people who made a positive difference in the community, state, nation, or world (5-8)

Students identify contributions of citizens and civic groups to public policy, legal reform, justice, and public safety (9-10)

E/LA

Students will deepen their understanding of literary or non-literary work by relating to its contemporary context or historical background

Students will identify and analyze how an author's words appeal to the senses, create imagery, suggest mood, set tone, and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding

Students will gather information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the quality of the information they obtain, and use it to answer their own questions

ART

Students will demonstrate the ability to recognize and describe the visual, spatial, and tactile characteristics of work (5-8)

Students will demonstrate the ability to describe the kinds of imagery used to represent subject matter and ideas (5-8)

Students will use published sources, traditional and electronic, to research a body of work or an artist and present findings in written or oral form (9-12)

Students will critique their own work, the work of peers, and the work of professional artists and demonstrate an understanding of the formal, cultural, and historical contexts of the work (9-12)

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AND BY THE WAY IN THE
NEW CODE OF LANE
WHICH I AM NOW
IT WOULD BE A GREAT
FOR YOU TO MAKE
ETHELRED'S MONUMENT
REMEMBER THE LADIES
AND IS MOST GENEROUS
AND FAIRNESS TO THEM
THAN YOUR ANCESTORS
DO NOT PUT SUCH UNLIMITED
POWER INTO THE HANDS
OF THE HUMANS
REMEMBER THE MEN WHOSE
AS PLEASANTLY THEY COULD
IT IS A GOOD CASE AND
ATTENTION IS NOT PAID TO THE
LADIES OF ALL INDEED
TO FORM A REACTION
AND WILL NOT HOLD THEMSELVES
IMPOSED ANY LAWS IN WHICH
WE HAVE NO VOICE
OR REPRESENTATION

LETTERS TO JOHN ADAMS
MARCH 31, 1776

ABIGAIL ADAMS (1744-1818)

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Concepts:

- Equality under the law
- Women's rights
- Persuasive writing
- Letters as a vehicle to convince and change opinions
- Lens of gender affecting views
- The exercise of power
- The right to an education

Activities:

1. Have students read **Source #1~ Abigail Adams's Letter for Rights**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Letters as a method for encouraging change
- ◆ The reasonableness of Abigail Adams's request
- ◆ John Adams was not only Abigail's husband; he was also a founder of American government and a president. Who is Abigail writing to? Her husband? A leader of a new nation? A combination of both?
- ◆ The founding documents of America did not include women. Adams says in her letter "*If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion*". Has this happened?
- ◆ The tone of the letter

2. Have students read **Source #2~ John Adams's Reaction to Women's Rights.**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Women's legal rights as "laughable"
- ◆ Women compared to other disenfranchised groups
- ◆ Power dynamics between groups; dominance and subservience
- ◆ John Adams's support of women's rights
- ◆ John Adams's tone in this letter

3. Have students read **Source #3~ Abigail Adams's Beliefs About Women and Education.**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Differences between education for girls and boys—18th c. and 21st c.
- ◆ Women's connection to children's early education (particularly in 18th c.)
- ◆ Contradiction of woman/mother as early childhood educator (republican motherhood) while she is under-educated
- ◆ Connection between women's education and women's rights
- ◆ Abigail Adams as a woman ahead of her time

4. After reading and discussing Adams's letter excerpts, ask students to complete **Activity Sheet #1~ Creating a Persuasive Letter for Women's Rights** in preparation for writing their own persuasive letter. After completing **Activity Sheet 1**, break students into small groups to discuss their lists of areas of inequality.

Discussion Points:

- ◆ What categories do the inequalities fall under (e.g.- work, home, social)?
- ◆ Which inequalities are most prevalent?
- ◆ In what areas of inequality do students believe they can effect change?

5. Thinking about Adams's feelings about girls' education, ask students to complete **Activity Sheet #2~ The Importance of School for All Children**. This is an opportunity for students to write about why school is important for them and people in general. After students have filled in their sheet, have a group discussion about their ideas.

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Why is school important?
- ◆ How would life be different if all children couldn't go to school?

Optional Activity Extenders:

Building on the **Persuasive Letter for Women's Rights Activity**, have students write a persuasive letter to an individual with whom they have a personal relationship. Perhaps it is a family member, group leader, teacher, or coach. Subjects could include: household rules, homework, practice activities, etc.

Discussion Points:

- ◆ How is it different to write a letter to someone you know personally as opposed to a stranger?
- ◆ Did you think about how this person would react while you were writing your letter? Did this change what you wrote?

Letters to Abigail

Abigail Adams was concerned with many issues that affected women. Have students write letters to Abigail updating her on the progress that has been made on the issues that were important to her. In addition to the update, students can also make suggestions about what change still needs to happen.



PHILLIS WHEATLEY (1753?-1784)

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PHILLIS WHEATLEY (1753?-1784)



Concepts:

- The right to be free
- Symbolism in poetry
- Poetry as a vehicle for change
- Imagery in poetry
- The power of individual words to convey meaning

Activities:

1. Have students read **Source #4~ Excerpt from “To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for North America, &c.”**.

Discussion Points:

- ◆ How Wheatley’s concern is expressed in this poem
- ◆ Word choice as a vehicle for emotion and change
- ◆ Biographical information present in the poem
- ◆ Wheatley’s feeling at the close of the excerpt: *And can I then but pray*
- ◆ Tone and emotion of the poem

2. Have students read **Source #5~ Excerpt from “To S.M., A Young African Painter, On Seeing His Works”**.

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Elements of the poem
- ◆ Wheatley’s view of herself in reference to Moorhead, particularly in terms of age/experience
- ◆ Poetry as a tool for experiencing art and the artistic process
- ◆ Imagery in poetry
- ◆ Art and writing as means to “freedom”

3. Have students complete **Activity Sheet #3~ Writing Poetry**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Motivations for writing poetry
- ◆ Steps for writing a poem
- ◆ Poetic devices

4. Have students read **Source #6~ “Something Like A Sonnet for Phillis Miracle Wheatley” by June Jordan**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Jordan’s choice to call Phillis Wheatley “miracle”
- ◆ Differentiation between Wheatley as slave and poet
- ◆ Analysis of second stanza metaphor
- ◆ Wheatley’s feelings towards being literate
- ◆ The tone of the two stanzas and the impact that word choice has on them
- ◆ Poetry as a vehicle for change
- ◆ Choice between being educated and a slave or being illiterate and free

5. Have students complete **Activity Sheet #4~ Picturing Words**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ How do words create images in your mind?
- ◆ Are there particular words that seem to make images come alive?
- ◆ Non-representational art and symbolism
- ◆ How images can broaden the meaning of a poem

Optional Activity Extenders:

Have students read the biography of Phillis Wheatley and have each choose one of her poems to read (see resource section). Each student should choose a different poem—or break into groups of two with each group focusing on one poem. After reading the poem, have the students make a list of connections they see between Wheatley's life and the subject/message of the poem. Come together as a group and create a master list of the thematic connections between her life and her work.

Have students create a third stanza to June Jordan's poem.

Building on the discussions about Wheatley's poetry and how poetry can tell a story about someone's life, have students choose a woman from history and capture her life through poetry. Students should consider how the subject connects to word choice and structure.



LUCY STONE (1818-1893)

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💡 Concepts:

Equality under the law
Women's rights
The right to speak in public
Theory and practice of American Democracy with regard to women's rights
Voting as a vehicle for change
Consideration of multiple sides of an issue
The power of the written word

Activities: 📖

1. Have students read **Source #7~ Lucy Stone's Desire for Rights.**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Lucy Stone's request in her letter
- ◆ Taxation without representation
- ◆ Letters as a means for change
- ◆ How this situation differs from the request of the American colonists (men) in the 18th century
- ◆ How long it took for women to gain the right to vote (1920)
- ◆ Compare Stone's concerns in 1858 to the present

2. Have students read **Source #8~ Lucy Stone's Speech at the National Women's Rights Convention, Cincinnati 1855.**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Status of women's education in the mid 19th century
- ◆ Women's legal status in marriage in the mid 19th century
- ◆ Lucy Stone's commitment to make women recognize disappointment as a means to bring about change
- ◆ Comparison to women's status in the 18th century—the time of Abigail Adams and Phillis Wheatley
- ◆ Women's current status in education and marriage

3. Have students complete **Activity Sheet #5~ Debating the Importance of Words.**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ How a debate works
- ◆ Speaking in public
- ◆ Backing up arguments and refuting others' positions
- ◆ Freedom of speech

4. Have students complete **Activity Sheet #6~ Why Vote?**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Importance of voting

- ◆ Women's suffrage
 - ❖ Language as a method of change
 - ❖ Speech
 - ❖ Article
 - ❖ Is one format better suited for making change than the other? Why or why not?
 - ❖ Importance of using facts *and* opinions to send a message

5. Have Students view **Source #9- Cartoon “The Anti and the Snowball—Then and Now”**.

Discussion Points:

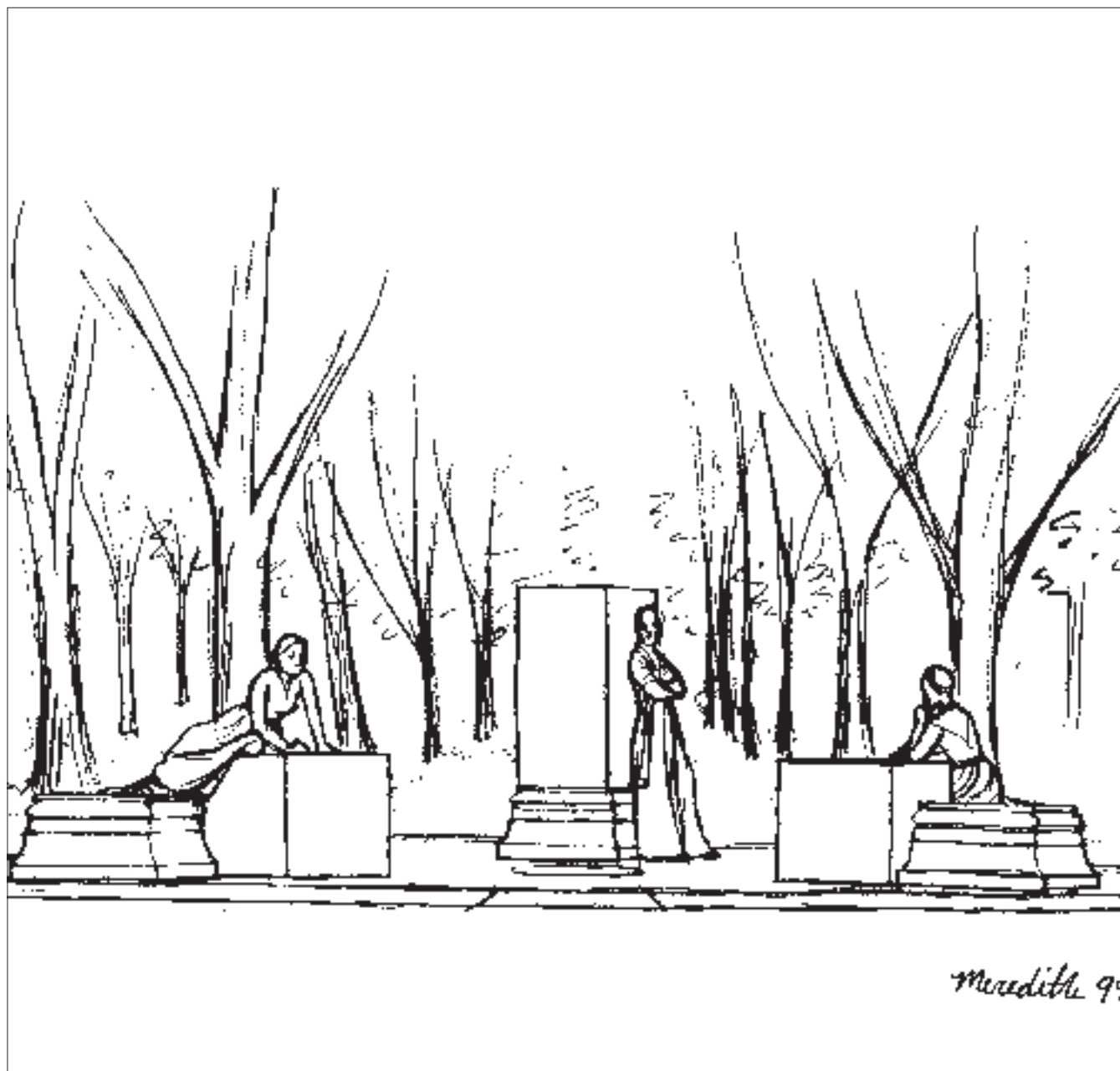
- ◆ Main idea of the image
- ◆ What has made the women's rights cause more powerful?
- ◆ How can this message apply to today's social causes?

Optional Activity Extenders:

Role-play for “Why Vote?” Activity~ Building on the **Why Vote?** activity, have students read their speeches/articles to the class. Have students with similar ideas work together to hone their arguments. Students with differing views should prepare questions to ask the speakers. This can be an opportunity for students to work on public speaking skills.

The press plays an important role in making people aware of different issues and their importance. In the 1800's the press was a male dominated industry. An exception to the male dominated press was Lucy Stone's *Woman's Journal*. This publication, located on Park Street in Boston, MA, was founded in 1870 and led by Lucy Stone. Later her daughter, Alice Stone Blackwell, took over leading the publication until its merger with another women's publication in 1917. The *Woman's Journal* was dedicated to advancing the causes and interests of women, including educational, industrial, legal and political equality—particularly women's suffrage.

- ◆ Have students research women-run publications. How many publications exist today that were founded by women and are led by women (at all levels)? What challenges do women-run publications face that those run by men may not?
- ◆ The *Woman's Journal* added a new perspective to the publishing world. Have students create a class newspaper/newsletter. Have students research newspapers from the 1800's to get ideas about layout and style. This newspaper/newsletter does not have to be fancy. Lucy Stone's message was by far the most important part of her paper.



BOSTON WOMEN'S MEMORIAL

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Concepts:

Art as a method of communicating ideas
Symbolism
Process and purpose of public art

Activities:

1. Have students read **Source #10~ Text from the Boston Women's Memorial.**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ What can you learn about the women from the words they wrote?
- ◆ Excerpt choices as reflective of women's lives
- ◆ Main theme of the choices for each woman; for the three as a whole

2. Have students read **Source #11~ The Creative Process of the Boston Women's Memorial.**

Discussion Points:

- ◆ Symbols in the world and their impact
- ◆ Modifying traditional symbols and styles for new subjects
- ◆ Does removing women from their pedestals make a strong statement?

3. **Activity plan for visit to the Boston Women's Memorial**

Optional Activity Extender:

A "Roundtable Discussion" with Abigail Adams, Phillis Wheatley, and Lucy Stone~ After students have viewed the Memorial and read the short biographies of the women, have them use the included primary sources to learn more about the goals and philosophies of the women. This activity asks students to use primary and secondary sources, take on the persona of a historic character, and use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and group skills. In addition to further learning about the three women, students will gain a stronger understanding of the differences between primary and secondary sources and the purposes they serve. Students begin by reading the biographies of the three women (and potentially conducting further library or internet research) and completing **Activity Sheet #7~ Biographical Data Sheet**. After completing this sheet, students will analyze a primary source or sources from the woman and fill in **Activity Sheet #8~Primary Source Analysis Sheet**. This sheet has two parts, part one involves careful reading of the primary source, and part two asks the students to take on the persona of the woman and answers question from other students. During part two, students can use **Activity Sheet #9~ Listening Sheet** to take notes.

ABIGAIL ADAMS RESOURCES

Abigail Adams: A Writing Life, Edith B. Gelles, Routledge, 2002.

The Adams Papers: Adams Family Correspondence Vol. 1, L.H. Butterfield, Atheneum, 1965.

The Adams Papers: Adams Family Correspondence Vol. 2, L.H. Butterfield, Atheneum, 1965.

Dearest Friend: The Life of Abigail Adams, Lynne Withey, Simon & Schuster, 2001.

John Adams, David McCullough, Touchstone Books, 2002.

First Thoughts: Abigail Adams, Edith Belle Gelles, MacMillan Publishing Company, 1998

Children and Young Adults

Abigail Adams, Alexandra Wallner, Holiday House, 2001.

Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution, Natalie S. Bober, Pocket Books, 1998.

John and Abigail Adams: An American Love Story, Judith St. George, Judith St George, Holiday House, 2001.

Outrageous Women of Colonial America, Mary Rodd Furbee, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001.

Portia: The World of Abigail Adams, Edith B. Gelles, Indiana University Press, 1995.

Remember the Ladies: A Story About Abigail Adams, Jeri Chase Ferris, Ellen Beier (Illustrator), Carolrhoda Books, 2000.

Woman of Independence: The Life of Abigail Adams, Susan Provost Beller, iUniverse.com, 2000.

Young Abigail Adams (Easy Biographies), Francene Sabin, Yoshi Miyake (Illustrator), Troll Assoc., 1992.

PHILLIS WHEATLEY RESOURCES

Complete Writings (Penguin Classics), Phillis Wheatley, Vincent Carretta (Ed.), Penguin USA, 2001.

“The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America or Something Like a Sonnet for Phillis Wheatley.” June Jordan, *By Herself: Women Reclaim Poetry*. Ed. Molly McQuade Graywolf Press, 2000. 61-73.

Phillis Wheatley and Her Writings, William Robinson, Garland Press, 1984.

Phillis Wheatley: Legendary African-American Poet (Historical American Biographies), Cynthia Salisbury, Enslow Publishers, Inc., 2001.

The Poems of Phillis Wheatley, Julian D. Mason Jr., Ed., UNC Press, 1989.

The Trials of Phillis Wheatley: America’s First Black Poet and Encounters with the Founding Fathers, Henry Louis Gates, BasicCivitas Books, 2003.

Children and Young Adults

A Voice of Her Own: The Story of Phillis Wheatly, Slave Poet, Kathryn Lasky, Paul Lee (Illustrator), Candlewick Press, 2003.

Hang a Thousand Trees With Ribbons: The Story of Phillis Wheatley (Great Episodes), Ann Rinaldi, Gulliver Books, 1996. (Fiction)

Outrageous Women of Colonial America, Mary Rodd Furbee, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001.

Phillis Wheatley (American Women of Achievement), Merle Richmond, Chelsea House Publishers, 1988.

Phillis Wheatley, Victoria Sherrow, Chelsea Junior, 1992.

Revolutionary Poet, Maryann Weidt, Carolrhoda, 1997

LUCY STONE RESOURCES

Five for Freedom: Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt, Constance Buel Burnett, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1968.

Friends and Sisters: Letters Between Lucy Stone and Antoinette Brown Blackwell, 1846-93 (Women in American History), Carol Lasser (Editor), Marlene Deahl Merrill (Editor), Lucy Stone, Univ of Illinois Press, 1987.

Loving Warriors: Selected Letters of Lucy Stone and Henry B. Blackwell, 1853 to 1893, Lucy Stone, Doubleday, 1981.

Lucy Stone: Pioneer of Woman's Rights, Alice Stone Blackwell, Randolph Hollingsworth (Introduction), University Press of Virginia, 2001.

Lucy Stone: Speaking Out for Equality, Andrea Moore Kerr, Rutgers University Press, 1992.

Morning Star: A Biography of Lucy Stone, Elinor R. Hays, Octagon Books, 1978.

Woman's Voice, Woman's Place : Lucy Stone and the Birth of the Woman's Rights Movement, Joelle Million, Praeger Publishers, 2003.

Children and Young Adults

America in the Time of Susan B., Sally Anthony Isaacs, Heinemann, 2000.

I Speak for the Women, Stephanie McPherson, Carolrhoda, 1992

The Ballot Box Battle, Emily McCully, Knopf, 1996.

You Forgot Your Skirt, Amelia Bloomer! Shana Corey, Scholastic, 2000.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Adams National Historic Park (National Park Service)- <http://www.nps.gov/adam/>

This site provides information on the Park's events and programs, including those focusing on Abigail Adams.

American Women's History: A Research Guide (Middle Tennessee State University)-

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonrepro/lessonplans/womenhist.htm>

This site is maintained by a librarian at Middle Tennessee State University and provides citations to print and Internet reference sources, as well as to selected large primary source collections. The guide also provides information about the tools researchers can use to find additional books, articles, dissertations, and primary sources.

Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America-

<http://www.radcliffe.edu/schles/>

The Schlesinger Library is a great resource for researching with primary and secondary sources. The web site provides information on what collections are held at the library and how to access materials.

Boston Women's Heritage Trail- <http://www.bwht.org>

A website dedicated to providing information about Boston women's history. Provides links to student developed walking tours of Boston neighborhoods and materials related to the Boston Women's Memorial.

City of Boston Women's Commission- <http://www.cityofboston.gov/women/memorial.asp>

This site provides information about the Boston Women's Memorial, its dedication, and information about the sculptor.

National Women's History Project- <http://www.nwhp.org>

This site provides information about history, current events, and links connected to women's history. It also has an online catalogue of women's history materials.

Old South Meeting House <http://www.oldsouthmeetinghouse.org/>

This site provides information on exhibits and events at the Meeting Hall. Also, educational materials are available. Old South was the church Phillis Wheatley attended and programs are offered that cover her life and poetry.

Primary Source- <http://www.primarysource.org>

The website of a non-profit organization that provides curriculum resources, information on their research library, and professional development opportunities.

Scholastic- <http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonrepro/lessonplans/womenhist.htm>

This site provides a variety of lesson ideas and activities about women's history for K-12 classroom use.

State House Women's Leadership Project (Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities)-

<http://www.mfh.org/specialprojects/shwlp/site/index.html>

Developed as part of a project honoring the contributions of women to public life in Massachusetts, this "site-within-a-site" includes information about the seven women selected (including Lucy Stone), the art work created for the Massachusetts State House, and a downloadable curriculum unit, "Making the World Better: The Struggle for Equality in 19th Century America," that focuses on Stone and the black abolitionist Sarah Parker Redmond.

Women's History on the Web- http://www.britannica.com/women/ind_womenweb.html

This site provides an annotated list of websites dedicated to women's history.

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