

Decoding the Past: Women in World War II Activity

Relevant NYS Highschool Curriculum Standards:

US History Framework 10.5: UNRESOLVED GLOBAL CONFLICT (1914–1945):

World War I and World War II led to geopolitical changes, human and environmental devastation, and attempts to bring stability and peace

10.5a Students will compare and contrast the long term effects of World War I and World War II

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify new job opportunities for women during World War II.
- Students will begin to make connections between the progress of the suffrage movement and women's role in the armed forces during World War II.

Instructions:

Teacher can optionally direct students to view the Putnam History Museum Virtual Exhibition *HerStory: Putnam County Women and the Vote* before playing the video presentation.

Instruct students to add facts they learn about Gertrude Cassetta and women's role in the US military during World War II to the web on their worksheet and then play the video presentation.

After the video, explain that students will have a chance to experience what Gertrude Cassetta's work as a cryptographer would have been like by decoding a fact about women in World War II.

Divide students into groups (either in person or through Zoom break out rooms) and assign each group one of the sentences below. Explain that each letter in the coded message represents a different letter in the alphabet. Students will find the coded letter on the bottom of the key and its matching alphabet letter directly above it. Encourage each group to divide the sentence between them. After 15-20 minutes bring the class back together and ask one member of each group to share their fact with the rest of the class. Students will add these facts to their web and have a chance to ask questions about anything they've learned so far. To gauge understanding, instruct students to independently answer the closing questions at the bottom of the worksheet.

ALPHABET

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C

CODE

ANSWER KEY FOR DECODING ACTIVITY

1 Women Airforce Service Pilots flew planes from factories to military bases.

1. **Zrphq Dluirufh Vhuylfh Slorwv iohz sodkhp iurp idfwrulhv wr plolwdub edvhv**

2 Women worked on the Manhattan Project as chemists and engineers

2. **Zrphq zrnhg rq wkh Pdqkwwdq Surmhfw dv fkhplvww dgg hqjlqhhuv**

3 Over sixteen hundred female nurses received service awards

3. **Ryhu viawhhq kxqguhgh ihpdoh uhfhlyhg vhuylfh dzdugv**

4 Over six million women joined the American workforce during the war.

4. **Ryhu via poolrq zrphq mrlqhg wkh Dphulfdq zrurirufh gxulqj wkh zdu**

Putnam History Museum

Decoding the Past: Women in World War II Worksheet

Name:

Date:

Instructions: As you listen to the presentation on Gertrude Cassetta, add any facts you hear about women in World War II to the web below.



Women Serving in
World War II

Decoding the Past: Women in World War II

Instructions:

Working together as a group, decode your message by finding the coded letter on the bottom of the key and its matching alphabet letter directly above it. For example, if the first letter of your coded sentence is **Z**, then the first letter of your decoded message will be **W**.

KEY:

ALPHABET	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
CODE	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C

Code 1: **Zrphq Dluirufh Vhuylfh Slorwv iohz sodkhp iurp idfwrulhv wr plolwdub edvhv**

Decode _____

Code 2: **Zrphq zrnhg rq wkh Pdqkwwdq Surmhfw dv fkhplvww dgg hqjlqhhuv**

Decode _____

Code 3: **Ryhu viawhhq kxqguhg ihpdoh ufhlyhg vhuylfh dzdugv**

Decode _____

Code 4: **Ryhu via ploolrq zrphq mrlqhg wkh Dphulfdq zrunicufh gxulqj wkh zdu**

Decode _____

Closing question:

What effect did World War II have on women's work? Use **at least** two facts from your web to support your answer.

Gertrude Cassetta said that her unit was treated as equals by men. Were all women who served in World War II treated this way? Support your answer with **at least** two facts you learned today.