**LESSON PLAN: WOMEN AND BASEBALL IN REHOBOTH AND BEYOND**

**Lesson Duration:**

One Class-Period

**Objective:**

1. Explain the meaning of the word 'stereotype'.
2. Understand that stereotypes and unfair judgments about individuals and groups affect everyone.
3. Analyze a real situation in which female ballplayers challenged stereotypes.

**Lesson Hook/Preview:**

Do you like to play sports? Do you think there are sports that only girls or boys play? Let’s take a look at why this might be.

**Background:**

(Background information should be described to students in a way they will understand.) Despite the great American pastime being exclusively identified as a male sport, women have played baseball for over 125 years. Women’s baseball teams have been documented as early as the 1890s. In the beginning, women’s “barnstorming” teams went from town to town all over the country, challenging men’s amateur, minor league, or semi-professional teams to games. Rehoboth had its own team made up of local girls. The Rehoboth Milkmaids softball team (formally known as the Tigerettes) was formed in 1938 by a group of young women living in Rehoboth, Massachusetts and surrounding areas. With a desire to play softball and a love for the game, the Milkmaid’s set out to raise money and support for their team, eventually raising enough to buy equipment. Uniforms were hand-made by a mother of some of the players, the team practiced each day, and the Milkmaids dedicated themselves to the softball season. The Milkmaids were a successful team, but without sponsorship, could not afford to attend the national championships in Detroit, Michigan in 1939. In 1940, the team gained sponsorship from the Pawtucket Times newspaper. With financial support from the Times, the Rehoboth Milkmaids changed their name to the Darlington Milkmaids, which expanded their opportunities for leagues and tournaments. The Milkmaids played at the Boston Garden on Thursday nights, and having continued success, won the Rhode Island State Championship in 1941. Sponsored by the newspaper, the Milkmaids joined teams from all over the country at the championship in Detroit, Michigan that year. The Milkmaids made it to the semi-finals in the Tournament. This marked the end of the team’s competition, but it was only the beginning of women’s roles as successful members of publicized sports teams during WWII and onward. As men aged 18 and over were drafted into the military, Major League Baseball Parks introduced the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League in 1943. The Milkmaids launched the career of Louise “Lou” Arnold of Pawtucket. Arnold gained national fame, playing in the League that was featured in the 1992 film A League of Their Own, which she was a consultant for. Lou received her own baseball card and a spot in the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

**Materials:**

* Paper
* Pencils
* Magazines
* Glue
* Scissors
* Other materials for collage making you may like to include

**Lesson:**

1. Begin the lesson by drawing a Venn diagram on the board with the following headings: Sports That Boys Play, Sports That Girls Play, and Sports Played by Boys and Girls.
2. Have students brainstorm examples of sports for each list. Work together as a class to fill out the Venn diagram.
3. Discuss the results of the diagram.
   1. Who decides if girls or boys play a sport?
   2. Why are some sports for boys or girls only?
   3. Were these sports always only for boys or girls, or do you think there was a time when both boys and girls played them?
   4. Discuss in connection to the Rehoboth Milkmaids softball team.
4. Create two lists on the board or on two sheets of chart paper. One list should be titled "Boy Things" and the other "Girl Things." Ask students to list some activities or items that belong on each list.
5. Discuss students' ideas. Do all girls/all boys like to do these things? Could some girls like to do the “boy” things? Could some boys like to do the “girl” things?
6. Ask students where do we get these ideas—that there are “girl” things and “boy” things, instead of just “people” things?
7. Introduce the concept of stereotype—like “cookie cutter” people. Is there a cookie cutter that fits all girls? Do they all look the same and like to do the same things? How about all boys? Do all boys look alike and do they like to do the same things?
8. Explain that stereotypes are categories that people or things are placed in, that are based on one characteristic or idea, but that do not necessarily reflect all of the characteristics of those people or things. For example, students might have listed "playing with dolls" as a "girl thing." It is true that some girls like to play with dolls; however, some boys like to play with dolls too. Thinking of dolls as only "girl things" creates a false impression.

**Activity:**

1. Have students do a brief brainstorming activity. Ask them to write down a list of things that they love to do (it can be sports, crafts, hobbies, etc.).
2. Depending on how many art supplies and magazines are available, students may be divided into smaller work groups, or students may work individually.
3. Provide students with magazines, scissors, glue sticks, and construction paper. Have each student write his or her name at the top of the piece of construction paper.
4. Ask students look through the magazines to find and cut out images of the activities they listed during the brainstorm.
5. Once students have plenty of pictures to work with, remind students that a collage is a collection of images which can be arranged in many different ways. They can be organized or free form. Encourage students to experiment with different layouts of their collage before gluing anything down.
6. When students' collages are complete, students may share their collages with their classmates. You may also display students' projects on a class bulletin board labeled something like, "Everyone Is Different!"

**Conclusion:**

To conclude this lesson and check for understanding, have students pick one of the things they wrote down during the brainstorm, and ask them to write a short paragraph explaining why they love to do that particular activity. You may attach the paragraphs written by students to their collages for display.

Students should be given a tour of the “Playball! The Rehoboth Milkmaids: Pioneers of Women’s Softball” exhibit to make connections between what they have learned, and actual artifacts.

Lesson plan based on educational resources from the National Baseball Hall of Fame.