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

**GRADE LEVEL:**

Elementary: Grades 9-12

**SUBJECT:**

History and Social Science

**STANDARDS FOR HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE PRACTICE,**

**PRE-K—12**

1. Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

2. Develop focused questions or problem statements and conduct inquiries.

3. Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources.

4. Analyze the purpose and point of view of each source; distinguish opinion from fact.

5. Evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of each source.

6. Argue or explain conclusions, using valid reasoning and evidence.

7. Determine next steps and take informed action, as appropriate.

**Lesson Duration:**

One to Two Class-Periods

**Objective:**

1. Learn about the experiences of women who played with the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League.
2. Recognize the role of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League in changing public opinion about female athletes.
3. Analyze and evaluate primary and secondary source documents.
4. Compare a fictional film depiction of the AAGPBL with facts learned from primary and secondary source analysis.
5. Explain, in their own words, Title IX (of the Educational Amendments of 1972 to the 1964 Civil Rights Act).

**Lesson Hook/Preview:**

Begin the lesson with a discussion about women in baseball. Gauge students' familiarity with women's baseball history by asking questions such as:

• Have you ever heard of women or girls playing baseball in the past?

• Have you ever heard of any women's baseball teams?

**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 100 years. Early 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:**

* The film A League of Their Own (PG)
* A copy of "A Guide for All-American Girls" for each student (included)
* Internet access for student research— A variety of books and other sources (See the "Potential Sources for Title IX Research" sheet included with this lesson)

**Lesson and Activity:**

1. Discuss that for modern women who want to play baseball, there are several different options: playing on all-female baseball teams, playing on otherwise all-male teams, or playing softball. While women-only baseball clubs first appeared in the 1800s, the trend was most popular during the era of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League.
2. Discuss the Rehoboth Milkmaid team and how their experience helped to lead up to women’s participation in baseball during World War II.
3. Briefly discuss how World War II influenced the experiences of many American women. Assess students' prior knowledge by asking, "What types of roles did women take on during World War II?" Students should understand that women were called on to fill many roles on the home front. Millions of men were fighting in Europe or in the Pacific creating the need for workers on farms and in factories.
4. Briefly discuss how World War II influenced the experiences of many American women. Mind map what the students already know about women’s roles during World War II. Students should understand that women were called on to fill many roles on the home front to help meet war needs.
5. Explain that new roles and opportunities for women applied not only to the world of work, but also to the world of sports.
6. Screen the film A League of Their Own.
7. Hold a post-viewing class discussion. Use the following questions to help guide the discussion:
   1. How does the AAGPBL as portrayed in the movie compare to the real AAGPBL students read about in the document packet?
   2. What additional questions does the movie raise?
   3. How would you go about finding answers to those questions? (Brainstorm a list of potential sources.)
   4. How does the movie’s portrayal of the AAGPBL compare to what a player’s experience was on a hometown team in Rehoboth, Massachusetts in the 1930s, like the Milkmaids?
8. Continue lesson by telling students that on June 23, 1972, President Richard Nixon signed the following into law:

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. . .” – Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972

1. Explain that schools receiving federal funding cannot discriminate against girls and women in educational programs including sports. The majority of schools in the United States, including elementary schools, high schools, and colleges, receive some federal funding. Not only do schools provide money to pay for competitive sport programs for girls and women, Title IX also requires schools to provide equal scholarships, sporting equipment, and coaching for girls' sports.
2. Ask students to share their thoughts on Title IX. How did women's opportunities for sport participation differ from men's opportunities for sport participation before Title IX was passed?
3. Have students consider the Rehoboth Milkmaids and All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. How have opportunities for women in baseball changed since Title IX was passed?
   1. You also have the option to divide students into two or four groups. Explain that one/two groups will research and develop arguments in favor of Title IX, and the other one/two groups will research and develop arguments against Title IX. The groups can debate their viewpoints in front of the class.

**Conclusion:**

To conclude this lesson and check for understanding, have students complete a writing assignment or brainstorming session in which they express how the AAGPBL both challenged and reinforced traditional women’s roles in connection to the early softball teams formed, like the Rehoboth Milkmaids, as well as explaining Title IX in their own words, and stating their personal position on the law.

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.

**ONLINE RESOURCES FOR TITLE IX**

Department of Education:Title IX and Sex Discrimination

**<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html>**

United States Department of Justice: Title IX

<https://www.justice.gov/crt/overview-title-ix-education-amendments-1972-20-usc-1681-et-seq>

NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association: Title IX

<http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/title-ix-frequently-asked-questions>