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

**GRADE LEVEL:**

Elementary: Grades 6-8

**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:**

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.

**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:

• Can you think of any female baseball players that play today?

• 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)

**Lesson:**

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. Explain that these new roles and opportunities applied not only to the world of work, but also to the world of sports. Chicago Cubs owner Philip Wrigley became concerned that professional baseball might lose its players to the armed services. He came up with the idea for an all-women’s baseball league in 1943.
5. Provide students with copies of “A Guide for All-American Girls” included with this lesson. Explain that all players in the AAGPBL received a copy of this guide when they joined a team.
6. Allow students time to read the excerpt. Then discuss the AAGPBL Guide with students using the following questions to help guide discussion:
   1. What was the ideal for the All-American girl baseball player?
   2. What did the league managers want from their players, in terms of traditional feminine qualities, appearance or behavior?
   3. Why did the league give this guide to its players?
   4. Why does the Guide emphasize beauty and make-up?
   5. Do any parts of this guide sound strange to us today? Why?
7. Discuss how these guides and standards differed from the experience of the Milkmaids.

**Activity:**

1. Screen the film A League of Their Own.
2. Hold a post-viewing class discussion. Use the following questions to help guide the discussion:
   1. Who are the main characters in the film?
   2. What is the story about? Encourage students to summarize using as much detail as possible.
   3. 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?

**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.

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.

“A Guide for All American Girls”

*Excerpts from the All-American Girls Charm School Guide*

When you become a player in the All-American Girls Baseball League you have reached the highest position that a girl can attain in this sport. The All-American Girls Baseball League is getting great public attention because it is pioneering a new sport for women.

You have certain responsibilities because you, too, are in the limelight...

The girls in our League are rapidly becoming the heroines of youngsters as well as grownups all over the world. People want to be able to respect their heroines at all times. The All-American Girls Baseball League is attempting to establish a high standard that will make you proud that you are a player in the years to come.

We hand you this manual to help guide you in your personal appearance. We ask you to follow the rules of behavior for your own good as well as that of the future success of girls’ baseball.

**YOUR ALL-AMERICAN GIRLS BASEBALL LEAGUE BEAUTY KIT**

Should always contain the following:

* Cleansing Cream
* Lipstick
* Rouge–Medium
* Cream-Deodorant
* Mild Astringent
* Face Powder for Brunette
* Hand Lotion
* Hair Remover

Extra precaution [should be taken] to assure all the niceties of toilette and personality. Take time to observe the necessary beauty ritual, to protect both health and appearance.

**Beauty Routine**

In the morning, when you have more time to attend to your beauty needs, you will undoubtedly be enabled to perform a more thorough job. Use your cleansing cream around your neck as well as over the face. Remove it completely and apply a second time to be sure that you remove all dust, grease and grime. Wipe off thoroughly with cleansing tissue. Apply hand lotion to keep your hands as lovely as possible. Use your manicure set to preserve your nails in a presentable condition.

Teeth – There are many good tooth cleansing preparations on the market and they should be used regularly to keep the teeth and gums clean and healthy.

Deodorants – The most important feature of some of these products is the fact that the fragrance stays perspiration-proof all day. Deodorants keep you fresh and give you assurance and confidence in your social contacts.

Eyes – Perhaps no other feature of your face has more to do with the impression of beauty, sparkle and personality which you portray. A simple little exercise for the eyes can do much to strengthen your eyes and add sparkle and allure.

Hair – Hair is a woman’s crowning glory. Brushing the hair will help a great deal more than is realized. It helps to stimulate the scalp which is the source of healthful hair growth. It develops the natural beauty and luster of the hair. And it will not spoil the hair-do. When brushing, bend over and let your head hang down. Then brush your hair downward until the scalp tingles. Just a few minutes of this treatment each day will tend to keep your scalp in fine condition and enhance the beauty of your “crowning glory.”

Mouth – Every woman wants to have an attractive and pleasing mouth. Your beauty aids should, of course, include the appropriate type of lipstick. Caution – be sure that the lipstick has not smeared your teeth. Your mirror will tell the tale – and it is those little final touches that really count.

Hands – Cleanliness and neatness again come to the fore. Your hands should be thoroughly cleaned and washed as frequently as seems desirable or necessary. Soap and water and pumice will do this job to perfection. Then a protective cream should be applied to keep hands soft and pliable and to avoid cracking and over-dryness. Your nails should be gone over lightly each day, filing to prevent cracks and splits, oiling for the cuticle.

**Clothes**

Here are some suggestions for the type of wardrobe which still prove most useful and practical for you during the ball playing season:

* A dark suit.
* Skirts, blouses, and sweaters.
* Sports jackets and sports coats.
* A dress or two.
* Slacks are not permitted but you may want to include shorts or sportswear
* for tennis, golf, or swimming.
* Sport shoes, and at least one pair of dress shoes.
* Socks and stockings.
* A raincoat.
* Your beauty kit.

**Rules of Conduct**

1. Always appear in feminine attire when not actively engaged in practice or playing ball. This regulation continues through the playoffs for all, even though your team is not participating. AT NO TIME MAY A PLAYER APPEAR IN THE STANDS IN HER UNIFORM, OR WEAR SLACKS IN PUBLIC.

2. Boyish bobs are not permissible and in general your hair should be well groomed at all times with longer hair being preferable to short hair cuts. Lipstick should always be on.

3. One of the cardinal rules is not to talk too loudly. The All-American girl should avoid making personal remarks that might be overheard by others. Do not stare at people, do not knock into people, and do not argue in public.

4. Sportsmanship on the field and off is important. Win gracefully and modestly and lose gracefully too, if you can. Above all, avoid the showoff attitude in front of your opponents and the public. Play the game hard and fair and you will earn the recognition and respect of teammates, opponents, and the public.

5. Do not let the remarks of any fans make you angry to the point where you make a scene or display poor sportsmanship.

6. Obscene language will not be allowed at any time.

7. All social engagements must be approved by a chaperone.

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