

CLOTHES MAKE THE PERSON
Lesson Plan, Grades 6-12
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Themes:

1. Clothes make statements about ourselves
2. Clothes are influenced by Fashion, what society says is “in” for the times
3. People often change their clothes to change how people perceive them
4. Women in the 19th C had few rights & when they tried to change their status in society, they also experimented with changing their clothes

Introductory Activities:

1. Ask students to draw or list the clothing styles in their school & to label them.
2. Ask students whether there are dress rules for school & why.
3. Show students examples of dress in the 19th C. & ask them to suggest why people dressed this way. Ask students why they think Haudenosaunee women dressed differently from European-American women. Ask students to imagine what women were **not** able to do when dressed that way, especially compared to the way men dressed. Ask students to imagine the **effects** of wearing the corset on women’s bodies. Do women or men wear things today that might affect their bodies? (high heels) Why do you think some women started wearing the “Bloomer”? What do you think other people said about wearing this dress?

Historical Background:

1. List the things women could not do in the 1840s: married women’s property became the husband’s (most women married); women could not be on juries, hold office or vote; women could not attend college or earn a living (their wages belonged to the father or husband). If married, they could not make legal contracts, divorce an abusive husband or gain custody of their children. (<http://www.america.gov>). Women who were enslaved had no rights at all.
2. In the 1840s women started a movement to change their status, especially after the Seneca Falls Meeting in 1848, which publicly called for women’s suffrage (the right to vote). Three CNY women were prominent in the National Woman Suffrage Association: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, & Matilda Joslyn Gage.
3. Like many in the Women’s Rights Movement, Gage was an Abolitionist (somebody who tries to stop slavery) and her house was a site on the Underground Railroad.
4. A new, freer way of dressing was originally introduced by Elizabeth Smith Miller, daughter of the Abolitionist Gerrit Smith, in the 1850s in order for women to be able to walk & work more easily and to prevent the serious effects of the corset on childbirth and digestion. This new dress may also have been influenced by the example of Haudenosaunee women’s dress. However, the women who wore this new clothing were associated with radical

reforms & were called names like “Bloomers” or “strong-minded”, “free love”, “easy divorce”, “amalgamation” women.

Teacher Background Materials:

1. Pictures of 19th C dress
2. Excerpts from the *History of Woman Suffrage* re. the origin of the Bloomer.
3. Matilda Joslyn Gage Timeline
4. Quotes by Matilda Joslyn Gage

Additional Activities:

1. Choose a quote from Gage, or have students choose it. Discuss what they think it means. What groups need freedom today? What methods of protest are people using today? (Wall Street protest) What other people in US history have used disobedience to unjust laws? Have students **draw** a representation of a quote.
2. Show the powerpoint, “Meet Matilda Joslyn Gage” or the video, *Lost From History*, available for loan from the Gage Center, 637-9511.
3. Arrange a fieldtrip/tour of the Gage Home(see [www/matildajoslyngage.org](http://www.matildajoslyngage.org) or call 637-9511) Transportation is free for Fayetteville-Manlius Schools.
4. Invite a Living History enactor to come to your classroom, illustrating 19thC women’s clothing (Jody Luce, jody@thetailorofpeterboror.com or Denise Butler, dmbutler9@twcny.rr.com) OR Living History enactor Renee-Noelle Felice as Matilda Joslyn Gage (rnfelice@yahoo.com) & have the students ask her questions about her life.

Assessment:

1. Have students due the Gage Essay Contest
2. Have students write about the Gage quote and apply it to today.
3. Have students research a current issue & relate it to one of the areas that Gage was concerned with. For example, students might research Human Trafficking today, women’s pay equity today, Native American sovereignty & the cigarette tax or land claims, or gay marriage & the issue of separation of church & state.
4. Have students explore more of Gage’s ideas and actions by visiting the website (www.matildajoslyngage.org). Then have them create a skit reenacting a major event in Gage’s life; for example, when the local African-American leader of the Underground Railroad, Jermain Loguen, visited her house & she signed his petition to shelter freedom-seeking fugitives, risking fines & imprisonment under the Fugitive Slave Act.

PICTURES OF 19TH C DRESS



Two Haudenosaunee girls in traditional dress, “Haudenosaunee Clothing”, Iroquois Indian Museum, <http://www.iroquoismuseum.org>



19th C. clothing from
www.1860garmentsbyglenda.com



americaninsuranceagency.com/tory.htm



1860 women's corset, <http://www.originals-by-kay.com>



1850s fashion bloomers, wikipedia

EXCERPTS DESCRIBING THE ORIGIN OF THE “BLOOMER”

Excerpt from Chapter 13, “Reminiscences” by E.C.S. *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. I by Eliabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Susan B. Anthony, P. 469-71:

Quite an agitation occurred in 1852, on woman's costume. In demanding a place in the world of work, the unfitness of her dress seemed to some, an insurmountable obstacle. How can you, it was said, ever compete with man for equal place and pay, with garments of such frail fabrics and so cumbrously fashioned, and how can you ever hope to enjoy the same health and vigor with man, so long as the waist is pressed into the smallest compass, pounds of clothing hung on the hips, the limbs cramped with skirts, and with high heels the whole woman thrown out of her true equilibrium. Wise men, physicians, and sensible women, made their appeals, year after year; physiologists lectured on the subject; the press commented, until it seemed as if there were a serious demand for some decided steps, in the direction of a rational costume for women. The most casual observer could see how many pleasures young girls were continually sacrificing to their dress: In walking, running, rowing, skating, dancing, going up and down stairs, climbing trees and fences, the airy fabrics and flowing skirts were a continual impediment and vexation. We can not estimate how large a share of the ill-health and temper among women is the result of the crippling, cribbing influence of her costume. Fathers, husbands, and brothers, all joined in protest against the small waist, and stiff distended petticoats, which were always themes for unbounded ridicule. But no sooner did a few brave conscientious women adopt the bifurcated costume, an imitation in part of the Turkish style, than the press at once turned its guns on "The Bloomer," and the same fathers, husbands, and brothers, with streaming eyes and pathetic tones, conjured the women of their households to cling to the prevailing fashions. The object of those who donned the new attire, was primarily health and freedom; but as the daughter of Gerrit Smith introduced it just at the time of the early conventions, it was supposed to be an inherent element in the demand for political equality. As some of those who advocated the right of suffrage, wore the dress, and had been identified with all the unpopular reforms, in the reports of our conventions, the press rung the changes on

"strong-minded," "Bloomer," "free love," "easy divorce," "amalgamation." I wore the dress two years and found it a great blessing. What a sense of liberty I felt, in running up and down stairs with my hands free to carry whatsoever I would, to trip through the rain or snow with no skirts to hold or brush, ready at any moment to climb a hill-top to see the sun go down, or the moon rise, with no ruffles or trails to be limped by the dew, or soiled by the grass. What an emancipation from little petty vexatious trammels and annoyances every hour of the day. Yet such is the tyranny of custom, that to escape constant observation, criticism, ridicule, per sedition, mobs, one after another gladly went back to the old slavery and sacrificed freedom to repose. I have never wondered since that the Chinese women allow their daughters' feet to be encased in iron shoes, nor that the Hindoo widows walk calmly to the funeral pyre. I suppose no act of my life ever gave my cousin, Gerrit Smith, such deep sorrow, as my abandonment of the Bloomer costume. He published an open letter to me on the subject, and when his daughter, Mrs. Miller, three years after, followed my example, he felt that women had so little courage and persistence, that for a time he almost despaired of the success of the suffrage movement; of such vital consequence in woman's mental and physical development did he feel the dress to be.

Gerrit Smith, Samuel J. May, J. C. Jackson, C. D. Miller and D. C. Bloomer, sustained the women who lead in this reform, unflinchingly, during the trying experiment. Let the names of those who made this protest be remembered. We knew the Bloomer costume never could be generally becoming, as it required a perfection of form, limbs, and feet, such as few possessed, and we who wore it also knew that it was not artistic. Though the martyrdom proved too much for us who had so many other measures to press on the public conscience, yet no experiment is lost, however evanescent, that rouses thought to the injurious consequences of the present style of dress, sacrificing to its absurdities so many of the most promising girls of this generation.

MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE TIMELINE

March 24, 1826 – Born in Cicero, New York, to Hezekiah and Helen Leslie Joslyn. *I am indebted to my father for something better than a collegiate education. He taught me to think for myself, and not to accept the word of any man, or society, or human being, but to fully examine for myself.*

1841 – Studies formally at Liberal Institute, Clinton, NY.

January 1845 – Marries Henry Hill Gage (born Sept. 7, 1817) and settles in Syracuse.

Nov. 3, 1845 – Helen Leslie Gage born

1846-47 – The Gages move to Manlius.

July 18, 1848 – Thomas Clarkson Gage born

Dec. 7, 1849 – Jan. 8, 1850 – Charles Henry Gage born and died

Sept., 1850 – Fugitive Slave Law passed

Oct., 4, 1850 – Gage signs a petition stating that she would face a six-month prison term and \$2,000 fine rather than obey the Fugitive Slave Law.

April 21, 1851 – Julia Louise Gage born

September, 1852 – First public address at the third national women’s rights convention in Syracuse.

1854 – The Gages move from Manlius to Fayetteville. Henry opens up a dry goods store in the newly rebuilt Beard Block in Limestone Plaza (where the bridge is now).

1856-57 – The Greek Revival sections of the Gage Home are built onto the original one-story house, built sometime before 1820.

1858 – The Gages buy 210 E. Genesee St. from B. [Beach] C. Beard.

March 27, 1861 – Maud Gage born

1862 – Gage presents a flag to Co. C. of the 122nd N. Y. Volunteers on behalf of the Ladies of Fayetteville.

1869 – Helped found National Woman Suffrage Association. Helped found New York State Woman Suffrage Association and served as president for nine years.

1869 – 1890 – Holds various executive offices in the NWSA, often trading the top three positions with Anthony and Stanton.

1870 – Writes “Woman as Inventor” pamphlet.

1870’s – Writes a series of articles about the Haudenosaunee.

1871 – Writes “Woman’s Rights Catechism.” Encourages women to vote and tries to do so herself.

1873 – Gage is the only suffrage leader to support Susan B. Anthony at her trial for voting.

1873 – Tax protest campaign begun on Centennial of Boston tea party. Made several major speeches in New York City. *Oh, wise men, can you tell why **he** means **she**, when taxes are to be assessed, and does not mean **she**, when taxes are to be voted upon*

1874 - Supreme Court decision *Minor v. Happersett* declares that voting is not a natural right of citizens of the United States, but one which is granted by the states.

1875-1876 – Gage is President of the NWSA

July 4, 1876 - Gage is with Anthony when she presented the Women's Declaration of Rights to Vice President Ferry at the Centennial ceremony, facing the possibility of arrest. . . . *place on record for the daughters of 1976, the fact that their mothers of 1876 had thus asserted their equality of rights, and thus impeached the government of today for its injustice towards women*

1876 – 1886 - Gage, Stanton, and Anthony compile the first three volumes of *History of Women's Suffrage*.

1877 – Gage petitions Congress to grant her “relief from her political liabilities”.

1878 – Addresses a Freethought convention in Watkin's Glen. Writes a series of anti-church resolutions for the NWSA convention.

1878-1881 – Edits and publishes *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, the official paper of the NWSA.

1879 – Reads an address to President Hayes.

1880 – Writes “Who Planned the Tennessee Campaign of 1862?” about Anna Ella Carroll.

Oct., 1880 – Organizes the women of Fayetteville to elect a woman to the school board with Gage being the first woman to cast a ballot.

1881 – Helen marries Charles H. Gage, a distant cousin.

Feb, 1882 – Julia marries James D. Carpenter

Nov. 9, 1882 – Maud marries L. Frank Baum in the parlor of the Gage home.

September 16, 1884 – Henry Gage dies after a long illness.

June 1885 – T. C. marries Sophie Taylor Jewel in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

1886 – NYSWSA protests the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty.

1888 – Gage helps organize the meeting of the International Congress of Women; gives speech on the feminine divine; is elected as Chair of the Executive Committee.

1890 – Leaves NWSA after its merger with the American Woman Suffrage Association and starts the Woman's National Liberal Union.

1893 – Only full-length book, *Woman, Church, and State* is published.

1893 - Adopted into the Wolf Clan of the Mohawk Nation and given the name Ka-ron-ien-ha-wi, or “Sky Carrier”. Considered for right to vote for chief in her adopted nation.

1893 - Gage’s registering to vote for school commissioner becomes a test case for constitutionality of the 1880 law allowing women to vote for school boards.

1895 – Collaborates with Elizabeth Cady Stanton on *The Woman’s Bible*, a major Bible criticism from a radical feminist point of view.

March 18, 1898 – dies in Chicago at Maud and Frank Baum’s house.

QUOTES by M.J. GAGE

“Woman is a living growing organism as much as is a tree, and like that tree, she needs room and freedom.”

"Until liberty is attained--the broadest, the deepest, the highest liberty for all--not one set alone, one clique alone, but for men and women, black and white, Irish, Germans, Americans, and Negroes, there can be no permanent peace."

Civil War Flag Presentation Speech, 1862

And now, at the close of a hundred years... We ask of our rulers, at this hour, no special favors, no special privileges, no special legislation. We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all the civil and political rights that belong to citizens of the United States be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever.

Declaration of Rights of Women, 1876

We...must not forget that this country owes its birth to disobedience to law.

Protest, petition, write, speak, use all your powers and free yourselves and your daughters from the slavery you are under, for women are neither more nor less than SLAVES. If you do not thus work, you are criminals in the sight of your Maker.

In order to accomplish any reform or work in life the way is to be "up and at 'em," and that is what we intend to do and still to preserve love and respect for our father, our husband, our son and all good men.

“What the Press Say of Us” NCBB, July 1878

Ah, women, I wish I could fill your hearts with a desire for liberty like that which boils in my heart.

Protest at the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty, 1886