

LESSON PLAN VII – FEMALE DORRITES

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GRADE LEVEL: 10-12

TIME PERIOD: 75-80 minutes



Fig. 1: Catharine R. Williams

Subject Areas:

- History and Social Studies > U.S. > AP U.S. History
- History and Social Studies > Themes > Politics and Citizenship
- History and Social Studies > Themes > Reform
- History and Social Studies > Themes > Slavery
- History and Social Studies > Themes > U.S. Constitution

Rhode Island GSEs:

- HP 1-1; HP 1-2; HP 1-3; HP 2-1; HP 2-2; HP 2-3
- C&G 1-1; C&G 1-2; C&G 3-2

Skills:

- Critical analysis
- Critical thinking
- Discussion
- Evaluating arguments
- Historical analysis
- Interpretation
- Making inferences and drawing conclusions
- Online research
- Representing ideas and information orally, graphically and in writing
- Using primary sources
- Writing skills

Preparation Instructions:

- Students should be instructed to read and take notes on the introduction to the digital edition of the Female Dorrite correspondence with Thomas Wilson Dorr authored by Erik J. Chaput. Students should also watch the short documentary on the Dorr Rebellion Project site in order to familiarize themselves with the events in Rhode Island in 1841-42.

Lesson Activities (75-80 minutes):

Activity #1 (35-40 minutes):

Critical Reading and Analysis. Laptops or access to a computer lab is required. Divide students into groups of 5. Students should read the following 5 letters from the Dorr Rebellion Project website (all the letters date from the fall of 1842):

1. Letter from TWD to Suffrage Ladies of Providence, August 24, 1842
 2. Letter from Young Ladies of Providence to TWD, September 5, 1842.
 3. Letter from Catharine R. Williams to TWD, September 6, 1842
 4. Letter from Mary Jane Campbell to TWD, October 4, 1842
 5. Letter from Abby Lord to TWD, November 25, 1842
- Students should work in groups to first summarize their assigned letter (10-15 minutes). Next, students should discuss as a whole class how their assigned letter sheds light on the aftermath of Dorr's short-lived rebellion. Guide Questions for Teachers To Help Lead Discussion: What activities were the female Dorrites engaged in? What did you learn about Thomas Dorr from these letters? Where is Dorr located? Why was he there? How were the women trying to help Dorr? Were the women optimistic about implementing the People's Constitution? Did the women advocate for the right to vote? If they did not, why do you think they did not push for suffrage?

ACTIVITY #2 (35-40 minutes):

- The whole class should come back together to read Ann Parlin's speech in New York City: <https://www.libertarianism.org/publications/essays/woman-spunk-ann-parlins-vision-revolution>. Teachers should take volunteers to read aloud for a few minutes. Then students should get back into their groups to read the letter from Ann Parlin to TWD, November 6, 1842. Guide Questions: What tone do students perceive in Parlin's speech and letter? Is there a difference in terms of Parlin's views or tone and those expressed by the other female Dorrites students examined in the first half of the class?

EXTEND THE LESSON:

- For homework students should engage with the chapter in their U.S. History textbook that deals with antebellum reform, especially antebellum female activism. Students should read these pages and then compare the discussion of female reform in the textbook with the work in the classroom with Dorrite women. Were the Dorrite women operating in line with women who were generally aligned with the Whig party in antebellum America? Why or why not?

