Biographical Poems Celebrating Amazing Montana Women

Enduring Understandings: There is no single “woman’s experience”; women’s lives are diverse. People can make a difference in their communities.

Grade Level: 4th-6th

Activity Description: This lesson combines the subjects of history and poetry into a single lesson. Students will read short biographies about specific Montana women and use them to create short biographical poems.

Objectives: Students will
- Read and gather information on actual people important to Montana’s history, identifying significant data and inferring meaning from text.
- Review parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositional phrases)
- Use a poem template to write a poem using the biographical information they collected.

Time: Two 50-minute sessions, plus a homework assignment if more time is needed to complete the assignment.

Content Standards:
ELA.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
ELA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
ELA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
ELA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.
ELA.W.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Social Studies Standards:
SS.K12.3 Compare and evaluate sources for relevance, perspective, and accuracy.
SS.K12.4 Use sources to gather evidence to develop and refine claims.
SS.K12.5 Communicate conclusions.
SS.H.4.3 Explain how Montana has changed over time given its cultural diversity and how this history impacts the present.
SS.H.5.3 Identify roles of individuals and groups and their impact on United States and tribal historical events.
SS.H.6-8.5 Explain how Montana has changed over time and how this history impacts the present.
SS.H.6-8.6 Understand that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events.

Materials
Lesson Plan Materials:
- Reference list of Montana Women Biographies (below)
- Biography Poem Template (below)
- Biography Reading Guide Worksheet (below)
- Completed Biography Reading Guide sample for Belle Fligelman Winestine (below)

Classroom/School Library Materials:
- Computer(s) with Internet access (optional)
- Notepaper and Pencils
**Pre-Lesson Preparation**

- If your students will not have access to the Internet to read the biographies, print the biographies.
- Print copies of the Biography Reading Guide (worksheet) and Biography Poem Template (one per student).
- Print one copy of the completed Biography Reading Guide Sample.

**Assessment/evaluation:** Successful completion of the lesson components: biography notes and biography poem. Students should be evaluated on the thoroughness of their work. Encourage creativity, and strength and precision of word choice. This lesson should elicit creativity in expression as well as attentiveness to factual details.

**Procedure**

**Day One:**
- Introduce the activity to students.
- Have each student select a woman from the biographies list to study.
- Provide students with printed biographies or allow them to access information online.
- Have students research their woman and complete the biography worksheet.

**Day Two:**
- Hand out the poem template.
- Review the template as a class, including parts of speech.
- Share the completed biographical worksheet for Belle Fligelman Winestine. Read the model poem as a class.
- Have students create their own poems and share them with the class (either by reading or posting them on a bulletin board).

**Extension Activity:** Have students create a portrait of the woman they studied and/or illustrate a scene from her life. Display the portraits and poems in a classroom exhibit. Invite other classes or parents to attend your “gallery opening” and/or poetry reading.
**Biography Reading Guide**

This reading guide will help you take notes on the woman you are studying while you read her biography. **You will use these notes later to complete a poem about the woman you are studying.**

1. What is your woman’s name? __________________________________________________
2. Where and when was she born? ________________________________________________
3. Where did she live? _________________________________________________________
4. Who were her family members? ________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
5. What are some historical events that affected her? _____________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
6. What did she look like? ______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
7. Describe her personality and character. __________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
8. What did she care about? _____________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
9. What were her hopes and dreams? _______________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
10. What challenges or obstacles did she face? __________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
11. What were some of her accomplishments? ________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
12. What did you find most interesting about this woman? _________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
13. If you could ask her one question, what would it be? ________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
**Biography Poem Template**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First line:</th>
<th>woman's full name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second line:</td>
<td>born in (year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third line:</td>
<td>noun, noun (specific nouns are better)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth line:</td>
<td>verb followed by prepositional phrase (it is ok to include other words, too)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth line:</td>
<td>verb followed by prepositional phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth line:</td>
<td>verb followed by prepositional phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh line:</td>
<td>adjective, adjective, adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth line:</td>
<td>I think she is (adjective).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Model**

Belle Fligelman Winestine  
Born in 1891  
Writer, suffragist  
Believed in equal rights  
Spoke to people on the streets  
Lived in Helena, Montana  
Small, generous, courageous  
I think she is amazing.

**Parts of Speech**

**Noun**—a person, place, object, emotion or quality. Examples: the girl (person), a mountain (place), the car (object), sadness (emotion), beauty (quality). Nouns can be general or specific. For example: a person (general) may also be a jazz musician (specific).

**Proper Noun**—a noun that is also a name of a specific person, place, or object. Examples: Jeannette Rankin (person); Helena, Montana (place); Girls’ Guide to Camping (book title).

**Adjective**—a word that describes or tells more about a noun, such as the noun’s color, shape, texture, age, feelings, and so on. Examples (adjectives in italics): the brown horse, the selfish giant, the tired grandmother, the ancient city, the worried teacher.

**Verb**—a word that expresses the action taken by a noun. Verbs change form according to when the action took place or will take place. For example: She walks. She walked.

**Prepositional Phrases**—Prepositions are words that help locate a noun or relate one noun to another. Examples: on, in, under, from, across, beside, between, behind, over, next to, from, about, with, without, by, to, and away. **Prepositional phrases** are a grouping of words that starts with a preposition and ends with a noun, such as under the couch, beside the waterfall, from a lost city, without her friends. They come after nouns or verbs.

Use this information as you follow the model to write your own poem.
Biography Reading Guide Sample: Belle Fligelman Winestine

This reading guide is to help you take notes on the woman you are studying while you read her biography. You will use these notes later to complete a poem about the woman you are studying.

1. What is your woman's name? __________________________________________________
   **Belle Fligelman Winestine**

2. Where and when was she born? _______________________________________________
   **Born 1891 in Helena, Montana**

3. Where did she live? _________________________________________________________
   **Helena, Montana; went to school in Madison, Wisconsin**

4. Who were her family members? ________________________________________________
   Herman and Minnie Fligelman (father and mother),
   Getty Vogelman (stepmother), Frieda (sister), Norman Winestine (husband), Mina, Judy,
   and Henry (children)

5. What are some historical events that affected her? _____________________________
   Women's suffrage (1914), Jeannette Rankin being elected to Congress (1916)

6. What did she look like? ______________________________________________________
   Small (5 feet tall), dark hair, feminine features

7. Describe her personality and character. _______________________________________
   Generous, determined, had a sense of humor, strong, outspoken, caring

8. What did she care about? _____________________________________________________
   Encouraging women to seek public employment and to pursue professional lives. She believed in pay equity for women and civil service reform.

9. What were her hopes and dreams? ____________________________________________
   Women's rights, journalism, labor law, politics

10. What challenges or obstacles did she face? _____________________________________
    Discrimination of women's roles, balancing the duties of family life with her activism and journalism career

11. What were some of her accomplishments? _______________________________________
    State president of the League of Women Voters (1920), lobbied for Child Labor Amendment and Equal Rights Amendment, creation of a state Children's Bureau, worked for Jeannette Rankin

12. What did you find most interesting about this woman? ____________________________
    Her courage to stand up for what she believed in and continue working for causes that were truly important to her and future generations

13. If you could ask her one question, what would it be? ____________________________
    Was there ever a point where you felt or thought that women's suffrage was not going to happen? If so, when and why?
### Montana Women Biographies Reference List

**Alice Greenough Orr (1902–1995)—rodeo star**

National Rodeo Hall of Fame  

New York Times Archives  

**Alma Jacobs (1916–1997)—librarian and civil rights activist**

BlackPast.org  

Women's History Matters  

**Belle Fligelman Winestine (1891–1985)—suffragist, women's rights advocate**

Jewish Women's Archives  

Women's History Matters  

Montana The Magazine of Western History  

**B. M. Bower (1871–1940)—author of Western novels**

Britannica.com  
[https://www.britannica.com/biography/B-M-Bower](https://www.britannica.com/biography/B-M-Bower)

University Libraries: The University of Oklahoma  
[http://libraries.ou.edu/locations/docs/westhist/bower/images/bower2b.jpg](http://libraries.ou.edu/locations/docs/westhist/bower/images/bower2b.jpg)

Pulpflakes  
[http://pulpflakes.blogspot.com/2012/05/bm-bower-author-biography.html](http://pulpflakes.blogspot.com/2012/05/bm-bower-author-biography.html)

**Caroline McGill (1879–1959)—doctor, conservationist, and museum benefactor**

Bozeman Daily Chronicle  
[http://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/article_f0632839-9c0a-5cf6-acab-fd588e23b9f3.html](http://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/article_f0632839-9c0a-5cf6-acab-fd588e23b9f3.html)

Montana State University - Extraordinary Women of MSU  
[https://www.montana.edu/president/universitywomen/extraordinary/eow_profiles/mcgill.html](https://www.montana.edu/president/universitywomen/extraordinary/eow_profiles/mcgill.html)

Women's History Matters  
Denise Juneau (1967–present)—State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Harvard Graduate School of Education - 100 Stories of Impact - A commitment to Education Justice
https://www.gse.harvard.edu/hgse100/story/commitment-education-justice

The Nation: Questions for Montana State Superintendent Denise Juneau
http://www.thenation.com/article/166024/questions-montana-superintendent-denise-juneau

Dolly Smith Cusker Akers (Eagle Day Woman) (1901–1986)—legislator and tribal council member
SNAC: Social Networks and Archival Content
https://snaccooperative.org/view/5315305

Women's History Matters
http://montanawomenshistory.org/dolly-smith-cusker-akers-champion-to-some-foe-to-others/

Gallery of Outstanding Montanans
https://mhs.mt.gov/education/Montanans/DAkers.pdf

Dorothy Johnson (1905–1984)—author
Dorothy M. Johnson Papers - Archives West
https://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv35229

Women's History Matters

Elizabeth Lochrie (1910–1975)—artist/painter/muralist
Amazing Montanans
https://mhs.mt.gov/education/bios/AM_Lochrie.pdf

Elizabeth Lochrie - The Holter Museum of Art
https://holtermuseum.org/exhibitions/elizabeth-lochrie

Ella Knowles Haskell (1860–1911)—first female lawyer in Montana
http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.law.019

Ella Knowles Haskell, pp. 126–28, in Extraordinary Women of the American West

Ella Knowles Haskell, pp. 67–73, in More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women

Women's History Matters
http://montanawomenshistory.org/ella-knowles-portia-of-the-people/

Elouise Cobell (1946–2012)—accountant, tribal treasurer, and advocate
Elouise Cobell (“Yellow Bird Woman”) - National Women's History Museum
https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/elouise-cobell-yellow-bird-woman

Women's History Matters
http://montanawomenshistory.org/elouise-pepion-cobell-banker-warrior/
**Esther Vance (1903–1983)—pilot**
Esther Combes Vance Papers - Archives West
https://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:80444/xv63616

The Life and Lure of Aviator Esther Combes Vance - 406 Woman
https://issuu.com/406woman/docs/406_woman_vol_14_no_4_business/32

**Evelyn Cameron (1868–1928)—photographer**
Encyclopedia of the Great Plains
http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.art.011

Lady Evelyn Cameron - Montana Woman
https://montanawoman.com/blog/lady-evelyn-cameron

Evelyn Cameron, pp. 129–32, in *Extraordinary Women of the American West*

Evelyn Cameron, pp. 74–83, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

**Fanny Cory Cooney (1877–1972)—cartoonist and illustrator**
Fanny Cory Cooney - Montana Mother and Artist - Montana-The Magazine of Western History

Women's History Matters

Fanny Young (Cooney) Cory - askART
https://www.askart.com/artist/Fanny_Young_Cooney_Cory/10011537/Fanny_Young_Cooney_Cory.aspx

Fanny Cory Cooney, pp. 90–97, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

**Fanny Sperry Steele (1887–1983)—champion bronc rider**
Fannie Sperry Steele, pp. 108–16, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

Amazing Women in History
http://www.amazingwomeninhistory.com/fannie-sperry-steele-rodeo-performer-cowgirl/

Fannie Sperry Steele - National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum
https://nationalcowboymuseum.org/collections/awards/rodeo-hall-of-fame/inductees/5089/

**Idora Guthrie (1871–1937)—homesteader and teacher**
Northwest Digital Archives
http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv15053

Amazing Montanans
https://mhs.mt.gov/education/bios/AM_IdoraGuthrie.pdf
Janine Pease (1949–present)—educator and tribal college president
Communicating Tribal Values: The Leadership of Janine Pease - Tribal College
https://tribalcollegejournal.org/communicating-tribal-values-the-leadership-of-janine-pease/
World Wisdom

Jean Wrobel (1920–2004)—jazz pianist
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OCHP62eP48&t=1225s
Missoulian

Jeannette Rankin (1880–1973)—suffragist, congresswoman, and peace activist
Jeanette Rankin, pp. 153–57, in Extraordinary Women of the American West
Jeannette Rankin, pp. 117–28, in More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women
Rankin Timeline
Women's History Matters
http://montanawomenshistory.org/jeannette-rankin-suffragist-congresswoman-pacifist/

Juliet Minser Gregory (1896–1990)—mayor
Northwest Digital Archives
http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xy76952 (see Biographical Sketch)
City of Missoula
http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/8156

Maggie Smith Hathaway (1867–1965)—suffragist and legislator
Montana Biographies
https://mhs.mt.gov/education/Montanans/hathaway2.pdf
National Women's History Museum
http://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/legislators/Montana.html
Maggie Smith Hathaway Collection - Archives West
https://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv62588/pdf

Maria Dean (1856?–1919)—doctor, suffragist, and women’s rights advocate
Maria Dean, pp. 62–66, in More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women
Helena As She Was
http://www.helenahistory.org/ywca.htm (scroll down to article on the YWCA)
Mary Fields* (1836?–1914)—gardener, postal carrier, and former slave

Mary Fields, pp. 55–57, in Extraordinary Women of the American West

Mary Fields, pp. 56–61, in More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women

History Net

Encyclopedia of the Great Plains
http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.afam.019

Women's History Matters

*Please Note: There are some very inaccurate accounts of Mary Fields on the Internet. Please do not direct your students to them, especially those accounts on blackcowboys.com and cowboysofcolor.org. These accounts contain inaccuracies as well as overtly racist content.

Mattie Bell Castner (1848–1920)—former slave and hotel owner

Montana Biographies

Mattie Castner, pp. 29–34, in More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women

Mattie Castner, pp. 82–84, in Extraordinary Women of the American West

Mildred Walker (1905–1998)—novelist

Exquisite Solitude - The Life and Writing of Mildred Walker Schemm ’26

Women’s History Matters

Minerva Allen (1932–present)—Assiniboine & A’Aninin poet and historian

Amazing Montanans
https://mhs.mt.gov/education/bios/AM_Allen.pdf

Montana The Magazine of Western History

Minnie Spotted Wolf (1923–1988)—first Native American woman to join the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve (Blackfeet)

Minnie Spotted Wolf Comic Strip, 1944
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnmG9zpc_x4

Overdrive
http://www.overdriveonline.com/on-memorial-day-a-trucker-to-remember/

National Native American Heritage Month: Minnie Spotted-Wolf, USMC- Transportation History
Myrna Loy (1905–1993)—actress/movie star

Myrna Loy - Britannica  
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Myrna-Loy

Travel Montana: MontanaKids.com  
http://montanakids.com/cool_stories/famous_montanans/loy.htm

Nancy Cooper Russell (1878–1940)—promoter and agent for husband-artist Charlie Russell

Nancy Cooper Russell, pp. 149–52, in Extraordinary Women of the American West

Nancy Cooper Russell, pp. 98–107, in More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women

Women's History Matters  
http://montanawomenshistory.org/behind-every-man-nancy-cooper-russell/

Pretty Shield (1856–1954)—Apsáalooke healer

Pretty Shield, pp. 85–87, in Extraordinary Women of the American West

Pretty Shield, pp.11–19, in More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women

Women's History Matters  
http://montanawomenshistory.org/pretty-shields-success-raising-grandmothers-grandchild/

Providencia Tolan (1909–1989)—nun, sociologist, and anti-poverty activist

Tolan, Providencia, Sister. - Social Networks and Archival Context  
https://snaccooperative.org/view/8002083

Women's History Matters  
http://montanawomenshistory.org/sister-providencia-advocate-for-landless-indians/

Quilqix (Red Dress) (dates unknown, alive in 1872)—Pend d’Oreille woman warrior

Women's History Matters  
http://montanawomenshistory.org/nineteenth-century-indigenous-women-warriors/

Lifeways of Montana's First Peoples (p. 38)  
https://mhs.mt.gov/education/docs/Footlocker/FirstPeople.pdf


Running Eagle (Pi’tamaka) (c. 1820–1850)—Blackfeet woman warrior

Historical Fort Benton  

Amazing Montanans  
Sarah Bickford (1855–1931)—businesswoman and former slave

Gallery of Outstanding Montanans

Black Past

Women's History Matters
http://montanawomenshistory.org/celebrating-sarah-gammon-bickford/

Shannon Cate Schweyen (1970–present)—Lady Griz basketball star and coach


Make It Missoula

Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail (1903–1981)—Indian healthcare advocate

American Society of Registered Nurses
http://www.asrn.org/journal-chronicle-nursing/205-big-heart.html

Gallery of Outstanding Montanans
https://mhs.mt.gov/education/Montanans/yellowtail2.pdf

Women’s History Matters
http://montanawomenshistory.org/susie-walking-bear-yellowtail-our-bright-morning-star/