

JWA Webinar

Using JWA's "This Week in History" As A Teaching Tool

<http://jwa.org/thisweek>

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SETTING

- Yeshiva Atlanta is a Modern Orthodox high school that daily works to build in its students a commitment to their Jewish faith and to the Jewish people.
- JWA materials were used in 2 tenth grade American History classes. The first, an honors section, had 7 girls and 2 boys. The second, a “College Prep” class with 13 students, included students doing extra work to receive honors credit and those on modified programs to accommodate special learning needs.

GOALS

- ◉ My goal in using This Week in History from the JWA website was rather simple, namely, to build awareness among my students of the important and impactful influence women had on the history of our country.

GOALS

- I was motivated to do this when, at last years JWA Teachers' Institute, I for the first time learned about Ella Baker's contribution to the Civil Rights movement. Despite my undergraduate degree in political science, my Masters Degree in teaching and several state certifications to teach history, I had NEVER heard of Ella Baker.
- I was determined to keep my students from suffering from the same lack of information.

TACTICS

- Each week, students in my two American History classes must go to the JWA website and visit the This Week in History page. They are to pick one of that week's events and write a one paragraph reflection on why he/she thought that event to be meaningful or significant.
- These reflections must be e-mailed to me by Friday each week.

OUTCOMES

- As you can see from the following samples, my students have a better and deeper appreciation of the role women have played and continue to play in the history of our country. Involved women, active women, women of significance are no longer seen as the exception, but instead as integral parts of the process.

SAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK

On October 7, 1984, Madeleine Kunin was elected governor of Vermont, and she became the first Jewish and the first female governor of Vermont. She also became the first Jewish woman governor of any American state. She was born in Switzerland and immigrated to the United States as a young child in 1940 because her mother wanted to escape the increasing Nazi threat. She graduated from the University of Massachusetts and Columbia University and she proceeded to work for the *Burlington Free Press*. After she got married and had four children, Kunin started to educate her community members about pending health care legislation and number of communal safety concerns. She was elected into the state legislature in 1972 and sought to mobilize support for the ERA, the environment, education, and the welfare of families and children. Kunin was elected the lieutenant governor of Vermont in 1978 and governor in 1984. She was also the first woman to three terms as a governor of any state. She provided a strong feminist voice in state government. I thought that Kunin is extremely admirable. She became the first Jewish woman governor of any American state. This shows that she was not afraid to be the first one work for something that no one has been successful in before. I also admire her because she accomplished so much even though she was an immigrant. Usually, people that are not American feel like they cannot reach their potential because they are crippled by language or because others see them as idiots because they are not American. Kunin did not let any of this hold her back and she was able to accomplish things that had never been accomplished until then. She should be an example to everyone, especially those who think that their social status, wealth, roots, or even accent is holding them back from becoming as great as they can be.

SAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK

On October 8th 2009, The Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco began a project allowing visitors to watch one of the few soferot in the world—Julie Seltzer—complete a Torah scroll. Julie is truly an inspiration to me in many different ways. I can relate to her on a personal basis for I too have a love for writing Hebrew letters. When I was younger I aspired to one day grow up to be a soferot but was not aware that this position was even available to women. Reading about Julie has opened my eyes that modern orthodoxy is taking steps allowing women more opportunities. According to strict Halakha women are forbidden from writing a sefer Torah and if they do so the Torah should not be used. However in society nowadays, we are adapting to the role of women in society and new positions are being given to women that were not available before. This demonstrates that with persistence and perseverance any goal can be accomplished and that no job is too difficult. Julie has allowed me to see Judaism in a new light and be able to even strive to pursue a career that I once thought was impossible.

SAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK

“On December 8, 1977, Rosalyn Yalow, who was born and raised in the Bronx 1921, became the first American-born and American-trained woman to receive a Nobel Prize in science.” Rosalyn invented the radioimmunoassay, which was a technique that allows scientists to measure minute amounts of hormones and other substances in human blood. Rosalyn wanted to actually become a teacher. After having troubles with the college being that she is Jewish she B” managed to get accepted to the University of Illinois. She then married one of the 4 Jewish men there, Aaron Yalow. When she moved back to New York she partnered up with Sol Berson whose partnership ended when Sol died in 1972. But, before winning the Nobel Prize she was in fact the first woman ever to win the Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award in 1976. She was one of the more recent heroes we have seen who sadly passed away last year in May.

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SAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK

Rosalyn really inspired me this week because even though colleges were giving her a hard time, she managed to get accepted and her career just launched. Thinking she won't be going anywhere in her life she managed to win 2 huge awards and one being a Nobel Prize, that itself is an honor. Yalow teaches anyone who knows about her to never give up something this generation is forgetting. Rosalyn is indeed a true civilian hero. She is a hero morally and physically after all she did create the radioimmunoassay.

[Not that it matters, but a male student wrote this one!]

QUESTIONS?