

#5 FREEDOM PROJECT LESSON PLAN  
“Mother Jones, the Most Dangerous Women in America”

This lesson plan was sent to us. We don't know the author, L. Johnson, but it is from District 205 Elmhurst Illinois. While it uses materials that are specific, such as the Knowledge Cards and specific textbooks other teachers may not have, it can be easily adaptable to other materials and resources.

**Grade 8**

**L. Johnson**

“Mother Jones, the Most Dangerous Women in America”

1. **Set Induction:** Using the deck of Library of Congress Knowledge Cards that is entitled “Women Who Dare” randomly distribute one card per student. Instruct the students to examine the picture of the women on the front and then read the brief biography of that historical figure found on the reverse side. Students are told they will be asked to report to the rest of the class the significant achievements of their person. After the class sharing, point out the fact that this group of women distinguished themselves in every field. Yet, it is likely that most women are unknown to the average person. While the women were just as noteworthy as a man in their respective fields they simply did not get the same recognition. Present the picture on the last card to the class that of Mary Harris Jones and explain that she will be featured in today's lesson.
2. **Objectives and Standards:** The objective of the lesson is to highlight women's role in effecting important social change specifically in the labor movement. The unlikely “heroine” Mother Jones' activities will be the vehicle used to do that. Eighth Grade Power Standard #10 Important Individuals will be addressed. In addition, the culminating writing activity will support ISAT readiness.
3. **Procedures, Assessments and Materials:**
  - A. Have students predict why they think Mary Harris Jones a.k.a. Mother Jones was considered to be the most dangerous women in America while they view the photo of this nicely garbed grandmotherly-looking women.
  - B. Read Chapter 19 *The Industrial Age* Section 4 “Industrial Workers” of the District 205 text The American Journey. Mary Harris is introduced briefly in context with the period.
  - C. Play the 23 min. DVD Mother Jones: America's Most Dangerous Woman. (available in many libraries and at [www.motherjonesmuseum.org](http://www.motherjonesmuseum.org)) The video will inform the viewer about her background and commitment

to the labor movement. Included is a “music video” segment that features the 1914 Ludlow Massacre and her role in those events. While viewing this piece student should be gathering information regarding why she is considered the most dangerous women in America. A four square graphic organizer will be utilized (*Appendix A*).

- D. Distribute a copy of the letter written by Mother Jones in 1907 to a Mrs. Potter Palmer of Chicago, IL (*Appendix B*). Ask students what insights into Mary Harris Jones this primary source document provides and how it helps students determine why she is considered so dangerous.
- E. Also, share with students an article from the May 23, 1914 issue of the New York Times where coverage is given to a speech Mother Jones gave shortly after the events in Ludlow, CO. (*Appendix C*). Have students reflect on any differences noted in the coverage because it was a woman giving the speech and what the ramifications those differences might have in the analysis being conducted by the students.
- F. Assessment comes when the students write an extended response essay that answers the initial question posed, “Why was Mother Jones considered the most dangerous women in America?” Students will follow the established ISAT format for extended response writing that asks students to restate the interrogative prompt and turn it into a declarative statement that responds to the prompt. That is then followed by specific text-references, which could come from the text, the video, and the documents. Next, real life connections are made and finally the wrap-up deals with the big picture and the importance of the issue. Students are assessed on a four-point scale following, again, the district ISAT formula.

#### **4. Resources and Scholarship:**

The American Journey. Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill, 2009.

Women Who Dare. Knowledge Cards Volume II. Library of Congress. Petaluma, CA: Pomegranate Communications, Inc.

Feurer, Rosemary. Freedom Project History Grant and Northern IL University Symposium on Women, 2009.

The following resources are available at [www.motherjonesmuseum.org](http://www.motherjonesmuseum.org) education resources section

Gorn, Elliott J. Mother Jones. New York: Hill and Wang, 2001.

Jones, Mother. "Letter to Mrs. Potter Palmer." Miners Magazine 24, January 1907.  
Mother Jones America's Most Dangerous Women. DVD. Feurer, R and Vazquez, L  
2007. 23min.

"500 Women Cheer for Mother Jones." New York Times 23 May 1914.

5. **Conclusion / Lesson Wrap-up:** Students share their Extended Response Essays in a group of four. The group chooses one of the four to present to the whole class. Discussion is held on historically relevant content and ISAT format adherence.