



Yale-New Haven  
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1997 Volume III: American Maid: Growing Up Female in Life and Literature

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## **Keeping the Homefires: The Lives of Western Women**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.03.04  
by Christine Y. House

In elementary schools, children are exposed to only the most basic facts about the history of the United States. This exposure usually includes studying the presidents, some explorers, and a few other people who played a role in the formation of this nation. With very few exceptions, those people are all men. This unit of study will focus on the lives of some of the women who helped to establish settlements in the West. This unit will be used with third and fourth grade students and will concentrate on the period of 1840 to 1880. It will be necessary, however, to provide a background for both students and teachers in the historical paths that led to this Westward expansion. Upon completion of the introductory material on the history of the West, this unit will emphasize three main areas: the routes which brought many of the settlers to the West; the women who left their mark as well as those unknowns who helped to build families, settlements and towns which molded the West that exists today; and the Indians who lived throughout the West and the lives that they lived. We will explore these areas to develop an understanding of the roles that women have played in the formation of this country.

(Recommended for Elementary Social Studies, grades 3-4)

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