



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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## **A Very American Journey: The Lives and Accomplishments of Six Notable American Women**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.03.06  
by Carol L. Penney

This unit focuses on individual American women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, studying the lives of some notable American women: Phillis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Sacagawea, and the lesser known western pioneers Ethel Waxham and Catherine Haun.

This unit is designed for drama students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. I believe this unit would be useful in the teaching of English or other subjects. The unit includes a biographical sketch of each woman. These sketches describe key events, turning points, and accomplishments in their lives. By studying and dramatizing the lives of these women, students will have an opportunity to gain a more comprehensive view of the women's lives, the times in which they lived, their hardships, and their joys. Students will gain insight into the social conditions, conventions, and barriers to advancement that confronted these women and to some extent, confront women even today. Many students continue to see racial and other barriers in their own futures.

I chose Wheatley, Truth, Tubman, and Sacagawea because I already have some knowledge of them, and I wanted to learn more about them. Students may have heard of the three African-American women, and perhaps Sacagawea. They will, through dramatization, become more deeply involved with the study of their lives. Catherine Haun and Ethel Waxham are unknown to my students. I chose them for that reason, and also because they typify the white women who went West during the mid-nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

(Recommended for Drama, English, Poetry, and History, grades 6-9)

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