

Women Workers in Town



LESSON 9—GRADE 8

LESSON TITLE

Women Workers in Town

OBJECTIVES

To have students represent, in a Role Play and Script Writing Activity, an interaction between Medieval women workers who themselves represent six different lives. It will demonstrate the complexity of the times and of women's experiences.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Explain to students that they will be working in pairs to plan and write a dialogue that could have occurred between two women from two different perspectives in life—one young, the other older in the Medieval Period. At this time, there were no formal educational institutions for women outside the church. Schools as we know them did not exist. People learned from one another—particularly from interactions with the elderly and presumably wise—in their families, neighbourhoods and working associations. What advice might an older woman have for one younger? What would a younger woman ask? Students should think of these and other questions as they write. The script will contain these two characters only. Information from the general background should make the writing of colourful but historically accurate dialogue and setting description very straightforward. Students may also use their text or a library book as additional references. The dialogue between the two characters should focus on discussion of the issues or problems or life challenges spelled out in the 'prompts.' As in a short story or a novel, a play, even a very short one, requires tension or conflict to drive the plot. Given the class-based differences between each of the characters in each pair, there are obvious "built-in" points of stress.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Student Data Sheets #1, #2, #3—pages 58–62.

Role Play Prompts

ACTIVITY

One act plays written and produced by students.

In pairs, have students use the information in the general background Student Data Sheet #3 to prepare one act play scripts of no more than 2-1/2 double spaced pages.

Each pair will choose one of the roles from the "Voices of Experience" and one of the roles from the "Voices of the Future".

After completion of the script, each pair will present or 'act it out' for the class.

EVALUATION

Create criteria to evaluate both the written work and the role play. For the former, COSM may be used, for the role play, focus on voice projection, modulation, eye contact, effective gestures, and dramatic flair.

It may be helpful to have the students make up five cards and after a class brainstorm, list on each card the four main criteria on which to evaluate each of the five elements of the role play.

ROLE PLAY PROMPTS

Voices of Experience

1. The wife of a prosperous weaver who, with her two daughters, spins the thread for her husband's loom and manages a large household.
2. A middle-aged widow who has taken over her husband's place as a goldsmith in a chartered guild. She is not welcomed by her fellow guild members.
3. An unmarried, independent woman who, with a small inheritance from her father, has set up a brewery and a horse-mill to grind corn.

Voices of the Future

1. A young, unmarried silkworker who is struggling to save enough money from her wages for a respectable dowry.
2. The unmarried daughter of a newly bankrupt craftsman, preparing unwillingly for her upcoming marriage to a young banker. She would like to be a nun.
3. A poor country girl, now in service at the home of a town grocer. She also works as a pin-maker to add to her meagre income.