

RECLAIMING (IN)VISIBLE WOMEN IN THE HISTORY CURRICULUM

JUDY KING

Judy King suggests that a woman's place is everywhere, including the NSW History Syllabuses: HSIE K-6, History Years 7-10, History Elective Years 9-10, Modern History Years 11-12, Ancient History Years 11-12 and Extension History Year 12...

Ensuring that the achievements of women are included in the History curriculum cannot be left to a happy accident. It requires systematic planning and programming. It does not require extensive lists of content, but it does require some fresh approaches to programming and the framing of challenging enquiry questions which will engage students K-12.

The scope and sequence for each year or stage will depend on the time allocated for History lessons in each school. The hours in each school vary and are not always the same number of hours prescribed in the NESA syllabuses. The scope and sequence for a Year 8 class allocated 80 hours of History per year will be different from that of a Year 8 class allocated 100 hours or 120 hours.

The planning does not have to cover pages and pages. For mandatory History years 7-10, schools often allocate one major area/unit of work per term, a total of 4 each year, or 6-8 per year if some units are allocated half terms of 5 weeks instead of a whole term of 10 weeks.

Hours allocated for excursions, tests/exams, school assemblies and events should be factored into the planning page so as the ELT (engaged learning time) is the planning focus rather than the TLT (theoretical timetabled learning time)

The planning for each topic or area of enquiry can be outlined on a single A3 page, which includes brief notes on

- **Essential knowledge and understanding** (what will students know and understand?)
- **Big enquiry questions** which will stimulate debate, research, discussion
- **Historical concepts** from the syllabus (including

cause and effect, continuity and change, contestability, heritage, empathy)

- **Evidence of learning** (what am I going to see, read, view, assess as a result of the work completed by the students? formal/informal assessment)
- **Skills** relevant to the chosen area of study (these will vary from topic to topic and will not necessarily be the same each time (recall, summarise, explain/account for, define, argue, interpret, compare and contrast, deconstruct sources/evidence, draw inferences, investigate, research)
- **Essential vocabulary** (all key terms associated with the new area of study)
- **Resources** (including written, film and visual sources, graphs, maps, sites, websites, photographs, monuments)
- **Extension activities or modifications** for mixed ability classes

Years 7-10 students should be exposed to all the skills listed in the syllabus over a four year period and this requires keeping records especially if Mandatory History and Geography courses are semesterised in the timetable and are not taught by the same teachers over each of the four years.

We do not have to lift large slabs of content straight from the syllabus. We do not have to outline every lesson over the 5 or 10 weeks per unit. Lesson outlines can be part of a support document rather than the streamlined teaching program itself. It is essential that students are issued with a unit of work outline before each unit of work begins. The essentials will fit on one page. Expectations of what students will come to know and understand and be able to do as a result of the unit should be clearly identified. Evidence of learning should

also be clearly indicated and then followed up and recorded in each unit.

Thematic programming gives teachers the opportunity to teach more than one area of the syllabus in the same unit of work. In Stage 5 students are required to study seven focus areas in 100 hours, including **three core depth studies Australia: Making a Nation, Australia at War and Human Rights and Freedoms** via the choice of two options a case study and a site study.

Why not list the big enquiry questions up front and then use the content from all three or some of the Stage 5 depth studies to answer them. If half the population of any given period is to be included in the academic discourse, some key questions will need to refer specifically to women and women's achievements.

Some of the questions could include

1. In what ways has the history of women and women's voices been silenced over millennia/the last 200 years/until post-World War Two?
2. Why is the image of a "green faced witch with a pointed hat, large nose and broomstick" constantly used in the 21st century to denigrate women politicians and leaders (e.g. Thatcher, Gillard, Merkel, Clinton)?
3. What ten items would you select to represent the history of women in Australia in an exhibition covering the period of World War 1/World War Two /post-World War Two?
4. What are the opportunities available in 2025 for us to hear the voices of Aboriginal women and/or migrant women in our 21st century Australia? What rights and freedoms have been gained, and which ones have been denied?
5. Why were women in France granted the vote in 1944 while Australian women were granted the vote and the right to stand for public office in 1901 at Federation?
6. Did militancy hinder or assist the campaigns by the suffragettes in the UK, USA and Australia to secure the franchise for women? What was the difference between a suffragist and a suffragette? Why is the distinction important?
7. Why and how were convict women, transported to

Australia 1788-1867, demonized as "*damned whores and obstreperous strumpets*" in 18th and 19th century Australia?

It doesn't matter which areas of the syllabus are being taught, the questions really matter

When studying **Ancient Greece and Rome in Stage 4** we need to ask questions similar to these

1. Why were women excluded from the Agora and from the Forum in Ancient Greece and Rome?
2. Can Athens really be regarded as the "*birthplace of democracy*" if only 35% of the population could vote, women, slaves and metics were excluded from voting and engaging in popular discourse?
3. How has the fact that most of what is taught about Roman history includes military campaigns and "big events" led to the ignoring of the significant contribution of Roman women?

If teachers have programmed a unit of work on **Heroes and Villains** for Elective History Years 9-10 there is perfect opportunity to ensure that the achievements of women and girls are included as part of the focus on "good/bad" deeds of individuals and groups of both men and women. Lots of possible organizing themes comes to mind, including:

ORGANIZING THEME	KEY INDIVIDUAL WOMEN	IMPORTANT QUESTIONS
Women warriors and leaders	Joan of Arc, Boudicca, Cartimandua Queen of the Brigantes Nancy Wake and the SOE women spies of World War 11, Soviet Women's Airforce and Sniper Brigades of World War 11, Cleopatra V11, Zenobia of Palmyra, Margaret of Anjou	How were they viewed by their contemporaries? How were they viewed by later historians? Have the views changed over time? If so, why? Who opposed the women leaders or groups of women at the time?
Women as social justice agents, reformers in UK, USA and Australia	Coretta King and the civil rights activists in the USA, Mary Wollstonecraft, Emily Davison, Emmeline Pankhurst, Vida Goldstein, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Malala Yusofzai, Rachel Perkins, Oogeroo Noonuccal, Chartists, Abolitionists, Convict radicals, Suffragists	How did the women withstand the criticism and vilification? How did they lose/retain their power? Why were women scientists excluded from the Royal Society 1662-1946? Why are so few women awarded the Nobel Prize?
Scientists and Mathematicians	Laura Bassi Italy, Marie Curie Poland and France, Caroline Herschel UK, Fiona Wood Aus, Elizabeth Blackwell USA, Rosalind Franklin UK	Did the women leave any documents, art works, publications? What is their legacy in 2025?
Women with "Dangerous Ideas"	Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, Afra Behn, Margaret Cavendish (Duchess of Newcastle), Louisa Lawson, Gloria Steinem, Malala Yusofzai, Greta Thunberg, Taylor Swift, Artemisia Gentileschi, "Witches" 14th- 19th centuries	Which women with a book, an opinion and an ambition to be heard or included in public discourse have been silenced over the centuries and how? Why were women forbidden to run the Marathon in the Olympics until 1984 ?
Women in the dock and executed	Mary Queen of Scots 1587, Ruth Ellis 1955, Sophie Scholl 1944, Mata Hari 1917, Edith Cavell 1916, Ethel Rosenberg 1953, Martha Corey 1692, Marie Antoinette 1793, Mary Surratt 1865, Dora Kaplan 1924, Charlotte Corday 1793	Why were Sophie Scholl and fellow members of the White Rose Resistance to Nazi Germany guillotined in 1944? How widespread was the resistance to Hitler inside Germany during World War Two?

<p>Early Colonial History of Australia</p>	<p>Mary Bligh, Elizabeth Macarthur, Mary Reiby, Barangaroo, Truganini, Elizabeth Macquarie, Anna King, 25,000 women convicts transported to Australia 1788-1867, Emancipated, ticket of leave women</p>	<p>In what ways did Aboriginal men and women resist the British colonial government and armed forces 1788-1850s?</p> <p>Why has the AWM consistently resisted pleas to include the Frontier Wars in its displays within the War Memorial?</p> <p>Who were the radical women who were transported to Australia after the Peterloo Massacre 1819 in Manchester and the Irish rebellion in 1799? Why are they regarded as some of the “<i>first teachers in the new colonies of NSW and Tasmania</i>”?</p>
---	---	---

It is essential that, as History teachers, we inspire students to

- Ask further questions
- Make connections
- Interrogate sources and determine ones which provide us with evidence
- Extend their vocabulary
- Understand our political, social and cultural heritage
- Construct arguments based on the evidence available

We cannot meet any of those challenges in our History classrooms if we omit half the population from our steely gaze and from our historical enquiry questions.

No matter what the unit of work and no matter what the age and experience of the student we should be asking students to think about

- Who has the power?
- How did they achieve that power?
- Who has been prevented from sharing that power?
- How did they keep/lose that power?
- What terms and concepts have we inherited from ancient civilisations?
- What were the consequences of a narrow power

base in the short/longer term?

- Which websites speak with authority? How do we know?
- Are historical facts different from scientific facts? if so, in what ways?
- What photos or images have changed the world?
- In what ways can false images be created in the 21st century?
- What are the challenges for the next generation of historians?

If you make a deliberate decision to include women in all aspects of your History teaching, after a few years it will be so usual to see them there, that CPL would not need to run any courses about “Reclaiming (In)Visible Women in the History Curriculum.

Women would be right there as you prepared of your units of work, your big questions, your formative and summative assessment strategies.

They would appear in the source materials and written and visual stimulus materials you provided for the students.

They would pop up in verbal quizzes and games.

If you have your own classroom, their pictures would be on the wall and on the noticeboards alongside the men being studied.

Do give it some thought and good luck!

REFERENCES

What is History Teaching Now ? A Practical Handbook for All History Teachers and Educators (John Catt 2023) Alex Fairlamb and Rachel Ball

History Thinking For History Teachers, A New Approach to Engaging Students and Developing Historical Consciousness (Routledge 2020) ed. Tim Allender, Anna Clark and Robert Parkes

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judy King OAM MA Dip Ed

Former high school principal

Life Member of the NSW Teachers federation, AEU and SPC

Judy King retired from Riverside Girls High School in 2010 after 19 years as a secondary principal

Since retirement Judy has worked part time at Chifley College Mt Druitt campus, Northmead High and Georges River College in an executive support role with a strong focus on teaching and learning, assessment and reporting, especially in the areas of reading for meaning and writing for purpose.

She currently teaches History and Politics at WEA , the oldest adult education foundation in the CBD of Sydney

Judy represented secondary principals on the Board of Studies (now NESA) from 1998-2004 and was History Inspector at the Board in 1991. Judy was deputy president of the SPC from 1998-2006

In 2018 she researched and wrote a history of the NSW Teachers Federation 1918-2018 as part of its centenary celebrations. The articles were published throughout each edition of Education in 2018 and were featured as part of a three week exhibition in the Federation building.

In 2007 Judy was awarded the Meritorious Service in Public Education medal by the Department of Education.

Judy has an abiding interest in all aspects of Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern History as well as archaeology, politics and film. In 2014 and 2019 she attended the Cambridge University History Summer School for international students and hopes to return in 2025.

In 2024, Judy was awarded an OAM for “services to secondary education”

