



Primary Source Lesson Plan - Women in the Gold Rush

Name of Primary Source

- A Gold Rush Woman, from the Diary of Ellen E. Hunt
- <http://www.goldenhistorymuseums.org/astorhousemuseum.php> This will provide background information about the Astor House in Golden, CO which was a boarding/rooming house built in 1867.

How primary source ties into text

- **Qualifies:** The primary source is an actual diary entry by Ellen E. Hunt and gives a firsthand account of daily life during the gold rush.
- **Elaborates:** This primary source gives detailed information about daily life and survival from a women's point of view during the time of the gold rush. Specific information surrounding job duties and wages are given.
- **Raises questions:** Through this primary source students will be able to complete an inference activity answering questions about Mrs. Hunt's life.
- **Correlating Lesson:** Use as a motivation/Engagement activity for Lessons 18 & 19, Pikes Peak or Bust to peak interest and to create a desire to learn more about the big idea.

Colorado Standards

- Social Studies Standard 1 History: History develops moral understanding, defines identity, and creates and appreciation of how things change while building skills in judgment and decision making. History enhances the ability to read varied sources and develop the skills to analyze, interpret, and communicate.
 - Grade level expectation: People in the past influence the development and interaction of different communities or regions.
- Reading and Writing 1: Read and understand a variety of materials
- Reading and Writing 3: Write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

Big Idea

- Literacy - Inference
- History - Women contributed in important ways to a family's income during in the Gold Rush. Most Gold Rush prospectors were single men or men who left their family behind, but those who brought their wives had distinct economic advantages.
- Read and respond to the A Gold Rush Woman primary source and complete the Inference graphic organizer.

Critical thinking

- How might the job duties of a woman be different from the job duties of a man during the gold rush?
- Why do you think men valued the work of women in a mining camp?

Mini-Lesson

Teaching

Begin by discussing with students what they think a "boarding house" was/is. Build some background knowledge for students about boarding houses and why there was a need for them during the gold rush. Refer to the web link above for information on boarding houses. "Boarding" means cooking meals for a fee (the "board" refers to the dining table), not providing overnight lodging. A boarding or eating house was not a lodging house. When combined, the charge was said to include "room and board." Read aloud the primary source A Gold Rush Woman from the Diary of Ellen E. Hunt

stopping along the way to discuss unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases (such as eating house).

Active Engagement

Give a copy of the primary source to each student. Have students re-read the primary source and then work independently to complete the Inference Practice worksheet answering each of the questions. Remind students to think about the discussions about boarding houses and use the clues in the primary source to help them answer the questions.

Sharing/Closing

Bring students back together to share their Inference Practice answers.

A Gold Rush Woman by Ellen E. Hunt

Feel tired out. Could not make my work go off well at all and did not get through till late; stewed peaches, cooked beans and rice, made eight loaves of bread and Dutch cheese. Bertie very unwell with his teeth [?] and exceedingly fretful, [Written crosswise on page]: Bad news from the mountains, fire and Indians destroying mines.

First Week of July. Cam and John have bought an eating house, will open next week. Have been very busy preparing fruit to make pies.

I was homesick and could have cried [sic], but Cam feels so sadly when I get discouraged that I try hard to be cheerful when he is about. He helps me all he can about my work, but there is much to do with so many boarders, and all being out of money we cannot get rid of them. Board is \$12.00 per week here in advance and almost all lodge on the ground in the open air.

I have made some \$30.00 out of the butter and cheese smearcase [cottage cheese] I have made since we arrived, in fact have made all the money Cam and John have had, as their last copper was spent at Council Grove in Eastern Kansas, but the work made me sick and now I sell the milk at 10cts per quart and make \$2.75 a day. My butter brought \$1.00 per lb and balls of smearcase 40cts per doz.

Second third and fourth weeks. Weary days of labor and pain. Have made 175 loaves of bread and 450 pies. Taken all the care of the children and done all the house work but the washing. Ho hum[?]

Source: Hafen, LeRoy. "Diary of Mrs. A C. Hunt," *Colorado Magazine*, 21 (September 1944): 161-170

Name: _____ Date: _____

INFERENCE PRACTICE
A GOLD RUSH WOMAN

After reading the selection from Ellen E. Hunt's diary, answer the following questions about women's work during the gold rush. Use the clues from the diary and your background knowledge to help you answer the questions.

1. Where was Ellen Hunt when she wrote in her diary?

2. How did she contribute to her family's income?

3. What were her feelings about this work?