

## Working People: A History of Labour in BC

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Lesson Activity 2

Lesson: Home Front, Work Front

### **Activity #2 The Image of the Woman War Worker in the United States and Canada**

This activity provides an opportunity to learn about and analyze the famous image of Rosie the Riveter and the less famous Ronnie the Bren Gun girl. After a brief class analysis and discussion of the visuals, students view and discuss two short online documentaries about the construction of the wartime propaganda for women's work, the role of women in both the United States and Canada in the home front, and the effects on those women.

## Image of the Woman War Worker in the United States: Student Handout



1. Who is this?
2. Where have you seen her, and what is the purpose of this image?
3. What message is this poster sending?
4. What do we actually know about her?

View Library of Congress Documentary "[Rosie the Riveter: Real Women Workers in World War II](#)" (published 2009) at

[https://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature\\_wdesc.php?rec=3350](https://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=3350)

Answer the following questions:

1. How did the "Rosie Myth" develop?
2. What is a riveter?
3. Why did Rosie become so famous?
4. Doing a picture reading: identify some of the ways Norman Rockwell portrays the woman wartime worker.
5. Make notes on the experiences of actual women defense workers in the oral histories section of the film.
6. By 1942: what groups of women were working in the factories?
7. Why was it such a big deal at the time for women to work in these industries?
8. What was the role of the government and the media in recruitment of women workers?
9. According to this film, how did the experience of war and wartime labour change life for women in the United States?

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## Image of the Woman War Worker in Canada: Student Handout



1. Who is this?
  2. Where have you seen her, and what is the purpose of this image?
  3. What message is this image sending?
4. How does this photograph compare to the American Rosie the Riveter (identify similarities and/or differences)?

View the CBC Documentary segment from Love, Hate, and Propaganda on Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-E0KvWve-9g> and take notes on the creation of the image of the Woman War Worker: Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl.

1. Who was she?
2. How did the NFB create the image of Ronnie?
3. What was the purpose of creating the image of Ronnie?
4. Compare/contrast the image construction of Ronnie with Rosie.

### Summary discussion

1. How do these media portrayals of women during the Second World War both change and maintain 'traditional' ideas of women in the 1940s?
2. How might you have felt seeing these images as a woman in 1940s Canada?
3. Based on what you have viewed, craft a summary statement about the contributions of women to the war effort in the Second World War and the effect it had on women.