

"A VISIT WITH MADAM CJ WALKER"

STUDY GUIDE

Written by Joanna Maddox

ARTIST BACKGROUND

Joanna Maddox a professional actress, singer, storyteller writes and performs dramatic portrayals of historical American women. She received a BFA in Drama from the University of Georgia. She has toured throughout the US and is an approved Touring Artist of the National Women's History Project and Fulton County Arts Council's School Arts Program. She has appeared in numerous national television and radio commercials, corporate videos and is a member of Screen Actor's Guild and AFTRA.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

This program introduces women's history and social studies. It fits in with the units covering the late 19th century after the civil war. This program is adapted from the novel, "On Her Own Ground," by the great-great grand-daughter of Madame CJ Walker, A'lelia Bundles.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- To learn about a woman who was a pioneer entrepreneur at a time when women were not business owners.
- To show that perseverance can be the key to success when faced with challenges of major proportions.
- To present a positive female role who affected the lives of numerous other impoverished women.
- To present a "Live history lesson."
- To encourage and inspire others by telling the story of a woman who was industrious, dedicated and determined to change her lot in life.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Madame CJ Walker was a woman who rose from the cotton fields to the washtub and went on to become the first black female millionaire. She made her fortune by developing and marketing hair and skin care products for black women around the world. She was born Sarah Breedlove on a cotton plantation in Louisiana in 1867, the first member of her family to be born free. As a child she worked with her parents who were sharecroppers. By the time she was seven years old she was an orphan. She and her sister supported themselves by taking in laundry. When her daughter was born she found herself a widow determined to give her daughter a better life. After countless sleepless nights and hard work, her efforts paid off when she developed a product that worked. Because of her thousands of working-class black women became economically self-sufficient. She spent the end of her life in a 34 room mansion she had built by a black architect on the Hudson River in 1917. She died at the age of 51.

Program length is 35 minutes with an optional 10 minute question and answer period.

VOCABULARY

Plantation – an agricultural estate usually worked by resident laborers

Emancipation proclamation – document President Lincoln signed that freed the slaves

Sharecroppers – a tenant farmer in the southern US who is provided with credit for seed, tools, living quarters, and food who works the land, and receives an agreed share of the value of the crop minus charges

Cholera – disease marked by gastrointestinal symptoms

Washerwoman – laundress, woman who washes clothes for a living

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Endeavor – to strive, to achieve, to reach

Perseverance – to persist in spite of opposition or discouragement

OVERVIEW OF ART FORM

The art forms demonstrated in this program are storytelling, dramatic art and music. Information presented in the narrative form is the information that will be remembered. Before television and radio people told stories and the ancient art of storytelling is making a comeback. Storytelling can be used to entertain, inspire, encourage, heal and to pass down cultural history and information from generation to generation. Through stories people can connect, learn about and appreciate each other's differences.

PRE & POST ACTIVITIES

What do you think were some of the challenges faced by Madame CJ Walker in starting her business?

Discuss what it may have been like to have such a positive affect on the lives of so many other women?

After the program for a language arts exercise students may ask questions about Madame CJ Walker and write the responses for a class report.

Discuss how women's daily lives are different today from Madame CJ Walker's.

Brainstorm with your class to develop a list of questions to ask their mother, grandmother or aunt about their life.

Practice conducting an oral history interview and record the answers.

Have the students write a short biography of the woman interviewed and read to class.

Use the stories to discuss the differences and similarities between the women's life experiences.

RESOURCES

Madame CJ Walker: Pioneer Business Woman	by Marlene Toby
Madame CJ Walker: Self-Made Millionaire	by Pat McKissack
On her own Ground	by A'lelia Bundles
The Black Rose	by Tananarive Due
Madame CJ Walker: Her Dream of dreams	by Beverly Lowry
(The rise and triumph of Madame CJ Walker	
Madame CJ Walker	by Deborah Stone

Video Recording

Black Americans of Achievement by Rhonda Fabian

Website

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory>