

# Historical Investigation

## Introduction

The historical investigation is a problem-solving activity which enables students to demonstrate the application of their skills and knowledge to an area which interests them. The emphasis must be on a specific historical inquiry that enables the student to develop and apply the skills of an historian, such as making sense of source material and managing conflicting interpretations. The activity demands that students search for, select, evaluate and use evidence to reach a decision or solve a problem. The investigation is not a major piece of research—students are only required to evaluate two of the sources they have used. However, these must be appropriate to the investigation and evaluated critically. The account should not be written up as an essay, but in the style outlined later in this section. The historical investigation allows for flexibility and should encourage students to use their own initiative. Examples of the types of investigations students may undertake are:

- a historical topic or theme using written sources or a variety of sources
- a historical topic based on fieldwork; for example, a museum, archeological site, battlefields, churches
- a historical problem using documents (this could include newspapers)
- a local history project
- a history project based on oral interviews
- a historical investigation based on interpreting a novel, film, piece of art.

## Choice of Topic

Students should choose their own topic, with the teacher's guidance. The topic should be one that seems interesting and worthwhile to the student. The teacher must approve the investigation before work is started. Students must be aware of ethical considerations when undertaking any investigation. They must show tact and sensitivity, respect confidentiality and acknowledge all sources used.

## The Written Account

Regardless of the type of historical investigation chosen, every student must produce a written account consisting of the following six sections:

- A. Plan of the investigation
- B. Summary of evidence
- C. Evaluation of sources
- D. Analysis
- E. Conclusion
- F. List of sources

### **A. Plan of the investigation**

The plan of the investigation should include:

- The subject of the investigation, which may be formulated as a question
- The methods to be used in the investigation.

This is a relatively brief but important section. A sharply focused question and a clearly structured plan will be more likely to produce a successful investigation.

## **B. Summary of evidence**

The summary of evidence should indicate what the student has found out from the sources he or she has used. It can be in the form of either a list or continuous prose. Any illustrations, documents, or other relevant evidence should be included in an appendix and will not be included in the word count. This section should be organized and referenced and provide evidence of thorough research.

## **C. Evaluation of sources**

This section of the written account should be a critical evaluation of two important sources appropriate to the investigation and should refer to their *origin, purpose, value and limitation*. More than two sources may be evaluated but the emphasis should be on the thorough evaluation of two sources rather than a superficial evaluation of a greater number. The two sources chosen should be appropriate for the investigation and could, for example, be written, oral or archeological. The purpose of this section is to assess the usefulness of the sources but not to describe their content or nature.

## **D. Analysis**

The analysis should include:

- The importance of the investigation in its historical context
- Analysis of the evidence
- If appropriate, different interpretations.

In this section the elements of the investigation identified in section B will be broken down into key issues/points. Consideration of historical context can add weight and perspective to the study. Where appropriate (depending on the scope of the investigation) links can be made with associated events and developments to aid understanding of the historical importance of the chosen investigation.

## **E. Conclusion**

The conclusion must be clearly stated and consistent with the evidence presented.

This section is a follow-up to section D. It requires an answer or conclusion, based on the evidence presented, which either partially or fully addresses the question stated or implied in the investigation.

## **F. List of Sources**

A bibliography or list of sources must be included although this will not form part of the word count. All sources, whether written or otherwise (including interviews), should be listed. A recognized method of listing sources must be used consistently throughout the investigation. It is recommended that written sources be listed separately from non-written sources, for example, web addresses, oral interviews, etc.

**Total Word Count: 1,500–2,000 words**

**SAMPLE**

## **The Women's Army Corps during World War II**

### **Section A: Plan of Investigation**

The subject of this investigation fits into the category of "Causes, Practices, and Effects of War." This investigation will center upon the Women's Army Corps (WAC) during World War II. The essay will discuss mainly the purpose of the Women's Army Corps and what it accomplished during the Second World War, The reasons behind the formation of the Women's Army Corps will be discussed and the controversy over whether women should be allowed in the army at that time will be evaluated. Both sides of the controversy are shown as well as the historical results. Sources to be evaluated include written first hand experiences of WAC officers Catherine Ott, Genevieve Chasm, and commanding officer Barbara Gwynne. Other sources to be evaluated include opposing male and female viewpoints on the topic.

Word Count: 130

### **Section B: Summary of Evidence**

In the United States a woman's place was always at home and in constant support of her husband. But, when World War II struck, this had to change. The husbands went off the war and the best way that a wife could support her husband was to join the war effort. The average woman believed that if she could help in the war effort then the war would end sooner. (Trimmer) this began the Women's Army corps (WAC) and was a significant part of the fight in World War II. " They were a group of women that stood on their own in the absence of men and did the work of men." (Trimmer)

World War II was the first time in the United State's history that the Armed Service accepted women. Despite the original goal of 25,000 women, between 150,000 and 200,000 women served in the army during World War II, about 700 of which were decorated. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was established in May 1942. It soon became known as the Women's Army Corps. (WAC). (Goldstein 2001) Oveta Cuip Hobby was the director of the Women's Army Corps and had the duty of showing the public that a woman could be lady-like and be in the army at the same time. (Bellafaire) The majority of WACs joined because they saw it as their duty. As former WAC Commanding Officer, Barbara T. Gwynne said, "I didn't have the gall to stay out... practically every single person that I knew, who was able to walk, went in to try to help the country. I felt it was my job to help, too".

The first WAC training center was in Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Upon completing training, the WACs were sent to either the Army Air Forces, Army Ground Forces, or Army Service Forces and put to work. Many were sent abroad to places such as France and England. Some women became pilots and some became radio operators. But, about 50% were assigned to clerical duties. By 1944, WACs had been stationed in the Pacific, Mediterranean and North Africa. (Bellafaire)

The Women's Army Corps allowed woman to join who were between the ages of 21 and 45. During their service, they were provided with food, uniforms, living quarters, pay, and medical care. (Bellafaire) 7 An enlisted woman was called an "auxiliary." They received ranks of first, second, and third officers, similarly to the men's rankings of captains and lieutenants. Other WACs had ranks such as chief leaders and junior leaders. The Women's Army Corps even contained 40 black women. They were not allowed to attend events with the rest of the corps and everything was segregated.

But, issues arose as to whether women belonged in wars. WACs were not allowed near combat areas. (Goldstein, 2001) But, studies show that women performed just as well as men during the war. Women were not shown to suffer more health problems and numbers of non-battle injuries were almost equal. If a WAC got pregnant, she was immediately dismissed and sent home. (Goldstein, 2001) But, men were still uncomfortable with the idea of women in the army. So, women were not allowed to command men and a woman received less pay for doing the same duty as a man. (Bellafaire)

At the end of the war, the Army requested that the Women's Army Corps be allowed to remain in existence. In 1948, a bill passed to allow women to serve in the army in clerical positions but women could still not see combat.

Word Count: 588

### **Section C: Evaluation of Sources**

Three distinct written first hand accounts were used from women who served in the Women's Army Corps. "From the Junior League to a WAC Commanding Officer", "A Young Girl Joins the War Effort" and "A Woman in a Man's War" all show reasons behind why a woman would have wanted to become a part of the war effort and what it was like to be the center of such controversy. These sources are highly valuable due to the fact that women who experienced the Women's Army Corps wrote them. No one else would know better what she were feeling during her service in World War II than the women themselves. This thoroughly shows the viewpoint of a woman in the armed service.

But, these accounts are limited. They are biased and show only the view of women who were in the Women's Army Corps. This is why other sources were needed as well.

The book, World War II: Opposing Viewpoints was used to show what other people thought about women in the army in World War II. This book is a collection of articles, most of which are editorials about World War II. These articles, written in 1942-1944, show the Women's Army Corps from another viewpoint. While the women in the WAC said that they were thoroughly helping their country by being in the army, these authors said that they are hurting the nation by not being at home. This source is just as valuable as the WAC's first hand accounts. This author was also alive during World War II and saw exactly what was going on, just from a different viewpoint, the viewpoint of a civilian. This article is limited in the fact that it is an

editorial and is biased due to the fact that it is written on the author's point of view and opinion.

Other sources used include books such as War and Gender by Joshua Goldstein and Women and War by Jean Bethke Elshtein. These books contained substantial information about the Women's Army Corps in World War II. These sources were valuable because they were unbiased and simply stated the facts. The books were not as limited as the first-hand accounts. The books stated the facts regardless of whether they supported or went against the women's cause. But, these sources are not as reliable as the first hand accounts. A huge problem involved the numbers of women who enlisted. Each book contained a different total. So, a limitation only allowed for the discovery of a range of women who enlisted and not an exact number.

Word Count 397

#### **Section D: Analysis**

There is no doubt that women played a useful role during World War II. All sources show that the women were extremely motivated to help and that their presence and morale helped the actual combat officers as well. During World War II, there was much controversy over whether women should be allowed to serve in the army. Many people believed that a woman's place was in the home. But, many people believed that the nation needed all the help it could get. Despite the controversy over the Women's Army Corps at the time, all sources show that the presence and assistance of women in the war effort made a big difference and was indeed a great help to the nation.

Most women in the army held clerical and interpretation jobs. They worked in offices and translated hour upon hour of Morse code for the nation. Some women worked in army postage offices, sorting mail to be sent from officers to their families. Other flew planes, built in factories, and worked on bases. Their morale and presence uplifted the soldiers and sailors and helped to relieve the stress of being at war. As shown in studies, women completed the clerical work faster and had much more patience while translating the Morse code. So, overall, women benefited the war effort.

But, the controversy over whether women belong on the front lines of a war or if women should be a part of combat was not solved. Congress passed the bill to allow the Women's Army Corps (WAC) to remain in existence after the conclusion of World War II. But, women were still not allowed to participate in combat duties. Most WACs were content with going home after the war and starting a family.

The Women's Army Corps (WAC) began with women who wanted to help serve their country in any way they could. They did their job and felt content with what they did. They were ready to go home and live their old lives once again. All sources support this fact. The first hand accounts say this and statistics from other sources support this fact as well. Every source used supports that

the women who served in the armed forces in World War II did what they had to do and were a great help.

Word Count: 404

### **Section E: Conclusion**

World War II called for the recruitment of many men to become soldiers and sailors. This act left the women of the nation alone to tend to the household. But, women wanted to do more to help their nation and bring their men home as soon as possible. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was formed in May 1942 and soon became known as the Women's Army Corps (WAC). The original goal was to recruit 25,000 women for clerical and communications duties to relieve men to go to the front line combat. But, it rapidly grew to include 150,000 to 200,000 women. The role of the WACs grew to also include building in factories and flying planes in the air force. Women were included in companies and a ranking system was established to allow women to receive promotions to first, second, and third officers.

But, controversy soon arose over whether women should be allowed to work in the army. Many people saw women as distracting and some even called the WACs "tramps" who only wanted to find a husband. Many believed that the woman's place was in the home and that she were neglecting her family duties to go play in the dirt with the boys.

At the end of the war, the women's hard work was rewarded. Congress voted to allow the Women's Army Corps to remain in existence. Many were decorated and most got to return home and return to their duty of tending to the family. Only, now they had a feeling of accomplishment and a nation that accepted them more.

Word Count: 254

Word Count: 1773

### **Section F: Sources**

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