

Lesson Title: Women Serve Too: The Women's Army Corps (WAC) in WWII



Author: The National Museum of Military Vehicles

Mission:

This Lesson Plan has been developed by the National Museum of Military Vehicles (NMMV) to facilitate scholastic visits to our institution. This Lesson Plan provides instructors with the framework to develop a detailed lesson plan for a field trip to the NMMV, by providing references to Wyoming State educational standards. This Lesson Plan is intended to serve as a starting point, recognizing that every School District has different standards and formats for their Lesson Plans.

Description:

This lesson introduces elementary students to the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and the important jobs women performed during World War II. Through a kid-friendly article, a 1943 recruiting film, and hands-on job-role activities, students explore how women supported the Army, the challenges they faced, and how their service helped change the U.S. military. Students compare past and present ideas about gender roles and reflect on why women's contributions mattered.

Grade Level: 3-5

Theme: Women in the WAC proved that they could do essential military jobs and helped change what people believed women could do.

Lesson Duration: 1 class period (60 minutes)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Describe who the Women's Army Corps (WAC) were and why they were created.
 - Explain the types of jobs women performed during WWII and why their work mattered.
 - Compare a historical video (primary source) with a modern article (secondary source).
 - Identify challenges WAC members faced, including stereotypes and unequal treatment.
 - Recognize how women's service helped change the U.S. military permanently.
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Key Words/Vocabulary

WAC / WAAC: A group of women who helped the U.S. Army during World War II by doing important jobs.

Army: Today this part of the military that protects our country on land. During WWII the Army was also in charge of the Air Force until 1947 when it became it's own branch.

World War II (WWII): A big war that involved the United States, as well as many other countries, from 1941-1945.

Uniform: Special clothing worn by people in the military.

Recruiting Film: A video made to encourage people to join the Army.

Primary Source: Something created *during* the event you are studying, like an interview, video or photo.

Secondary Source: Information written *after* the event, like an article or summary.

Job / Role: The work someone does to help the Army, such as driving, fixing trucks, or sorting mail.

WAC Job Words

Switchboard Operator: A person who connects phone calls so messages can be sent quickly.

Mechanic: A person who fixes trucks, jeeps, and other machines.

Driver: A person who drives Army vehicles to move people and supplies.

Postal Clerk: A person who sorts and delivers mail for soldiers.

Typist: A person who types reports and important papers.

Radio Operator: A person who sends and receives messages using a radio.

Understanding the Story

Discrimination: Treating someone unfairly because of who they are.

Stereotype: An idea about a group of people that is not always true.

Teamwork: Working together to get something done.

Patriotism: Showing love and support for your country.

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Challenge: Something that is hard to do or overcome.

Materials

- Projector/speakers
 - Chart paper or whiteboard
 - Student notebooks
 - Access to the video: [“We’re in the Army Now”](#) (1943 WAAC Recruiting Film)
 - Excerpts/summaries from the [National WWII Museum WAC article](#) (teacher-facing only; do not distribute copyrighted text)
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Teacher Background (for your prep)

Use this to ground your instruction.

What the article tells us

- Before WWII, women could only serve as nurses.
- Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers pushed for women to serve in more roles.
- In 1942, the **Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC)** was created; in 1943 it became the **Women’s Army Corps (WAC)** with full Army status.
- More than **150,000 women served** in roles like switchboard operators, mechanics, drivers, postal clerks, and technicians.
- WACs faced **discrimination**, stereotypes, and even slander campaigns.
- Black women served too, including the famous **6888th Postal Battalion**.
- Their service helped prove women belonged in the military permanently.

What the video shows (primary source)

- A 1943 recruiting film encouraging women to join the WAAC.

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- Scenes of women applying, taking the oath, receiving uniforms, training, eating in the mess hall, and learning Army procedures.
- The film presents the WAAC as organized, patriotic, and essential.

4. Lesson Procedure

A. Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Teacher Script:

“Today we’re learning about a group of women who helped win World War II, not by fighting in battles, but by doing important jobs that kept the Army running.”

Activity:

Show students three images (you may select from public-domain WAC photos or describe them):

- Women in uniform



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- Women operating switchboards



- Women marching in formation



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Ask:

- “What do you notice?”
- “What jobs do you think these women might be doing?”
- “Why would the Army need help from women during a war?”

Record student ideas.

B. Mini-Lecture: Who Were the WAC? (10 minutes)

Use student-friendly language:

- “During WWII, the U.S. Army needed more people than ever before.”
- “Women wanted to help, but the Army didn’t let them do most jobs.”
- “A leader named Edith Nourse Rogers said, ‘Women should be able to serve too.’”
- “So the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was created in 1942, and later became the Women’s Army Corps (WAC)”
- “More than 150,000 women joined. They fixed trucks, ran telephones, sorted mail, typed reports, and helped soldiers all over the world.”
- “Some people didn’t think women should be in the Army. But the WAC proved them wrong.”

Secondary Source Analysis: Article Summary (10 minutes)

- Students read a teacher-created summary (not copyrighted text).
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Women’s Army Corps (WAC)

During World War II, the United States needed many more people to help the Army. At that time, women were not allowed to do most Army jobs. Many people believed only men should work in the military.

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A leader named Edith Nourse Rogers thought women should be able to help. Because of her work, the government created a group in 1942 called the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). These women wore uniforms and trained like soldiers, but they were not treated the same as men and did not get full Army benefits.

In 1943, the group became the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Now women were officially part of the Army.

More than 150,000 women joined the WAC. They worked in many different jobs, such as:

- Fixing trucks and jeeps
- Driving Army vehicles
- Operating telephones and radios
- Sorting and delivering mail
- Typing reports and important papers
- Helping doctors and nurses

Their work was important because it helped the Army run smoothly and allowed more men to fight in battles.

Even though WAC members were helpful, they still faced unfair treatment. Some people said women didn't belong in the Army. Black women faced even more challenges because of racism. One famous group, the 6888th Battalion, was made up of Black women who sorted huge amounts of mail for soldiers overseas.

By the end of the war, the WAC had shown that women could do many important military jobs. Their service helped open the door for women to serve in the U.S. military in the future.

C. Primary Source Viewing: 1943 Recruiting Film (15 minutes)

Play **minutes 0:00-5:00** of the video.

(You may continue longer if time allows.)

Viewing Focus Questions:

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- “How does the film make Army life look?”
- “What kinds of jobs do you see women doing?”
- “Why do you think the Army made this film?”

Teacher Notes:

Students may notice:

- Clean, orderly spaces
- Friendly officers
- Women smiling
- Patriotic music
- Emphasis on training and teamwork

Explain that recruiting films were designed to **persuade** people to join.

D. Compare Sources: Film vs. Article (10 minutes)

Create a T-chart:

Film Shows...	Article Explains...
Women smiling, training, marching	Women faced discrimination and stereotypes
Everything looks organized and positive	Many people doubted women’s abilities
Jobs look exciting and important	Women often did clerical or technical work
Encourages women to join	Some families disapproved or spread rumors

Discussion Prompt:

“Why might the film show only the positive parts of being in the WAAC?”

Guide students toward understanding **propaganda** and **persuasion** at an age-appropriate level.

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E. Hands-On Activity: “WAC Job Cards” (10 minutes) or Army Jobs Practice Handout (attachments to the PDF- Click the paperclip icon in Adobe to open attachments)



WAC Student Task
Cards.pdf



WAC Jobs Practice
Sheet.pdf

F. Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

Ask:

- “How did the WAC help the United States during WWII?”
- “What challenges did they face?”
- “How did their service change the military?”

Reinforce:

Women’s service helped open the door for women to serve permanently in all branches of the military.

Optional Extensions

A. Writing Prompt

“Imagine you are a WAC in 1943. Write a journal entry about your first day.”

B. STEM Connection

Explore communication technology: telephones, switchboards, radios.

C. Social-Emotional Learning

Discuss courage, teamwork, and breaking stereotypes.

Wyoming Standards

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Grades 3-5 Standards Alignment

English Language Arts (ELA)

Reading Informational Text

- RI.3.1 / RI.4.1 / RI.5.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding; refer to details in a text. *Students answer questions using details from the WAC article summary.*
- RI.3.6 / RI.4.6 / RI.5.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author. *Students compare the film’s message with the article’s explanation.*
- RI.3.7 / RI.4.7 / RI.5.7 Use information from illustrations, videos, and text to understand a topic. *Students integrate film observations with article content.*

Writing

- W.3.2 / W.4.2 / W.5.2 Write informative/explanatory texts. *Students write sentences explaining why their WAC job mattered.*
- W.3.8 / W.4.8 / W.5.8 Recall or gather information from sources. *Students use information from the film and article to complete worksheets.*

Speaking & Listening

- SL.3.1 / SL.4.1 / SL.5.1 Engage in collaborative discussions. *Warm-up, share-outs, and job-card presentations.*
- SL.3.2 / SL.4.2 / SL.5.2 Interpret information presented in diverse media. *Students interpret the 1943 recruiting film.*

Social Studies

Citizenship, Government & Democracy

- SS5.CG.1 Identify rights and responsibilities of people in a community. *Students explore how women took on new responsibilities during WWII.*

Culture & Cultural Diversity

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- SS5.CD.1 Describe how cultural groups contribute to society. *Students learn how women and Black women contributed to the war effort.*

Time, Continuity & Change (History)

- SS5.TC.1 Explain cause and effect in historical events. *Why the WAC was created and how it changed the military.*
- SS5.TC.2 – Use primary and secondary sources to understand history. *Film + article comparison.*

People, Places & Environments

- SS5.PE.1 Describe how people adapt to meet needs. *Women adapted to new roles to support the war.*

Technology, Literacy & Global Connections

- SS5.TL.1 Explain how technology affects communication and society. *Switchboards, radios, and wartime communication roles.*

Critical Thinking & Problem Solving (Cross-Curricular)

- CT.3-5.1 Ask questions, gather information, and draw conclusions. *Students analyze what the film shows vs. what it leaves out.*
- CT.3-5.3 Compare different viewpoints. *Film (propaganda) vs. article (historical explanation).*

Communication

- COM.3-5.1 Communicate ideas clearly in speaking and writing. *Students share observations and write job-explanation sentences.*
- COM.3-5.2 Adapt communication to purpose. *Students explain their WAC job in simple, clear language.*

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Collaboration

- COL.3-5.1 Work with others to complete tasks. *T-chart comparison, partner discussions, share-outs.*
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Media & Technology Literacy

- MTL.3-5.1 Identify the purpose of media messages. *Students learn that the film was made to persuade women to join the WAAC.*
 - MTL.3-5.2 Evaluate information from different media. *Students compare film images with article facts.*
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Cultural & Global Awareness

- CGA.3-5.1 Describe how people from different backgrounds contribute to society. *Students learn about the 6888th Battalion and diverse WAC roles.*
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Personal & Social Responsibility

- PSR.3-5.1 Show respect for others and recognize fairness/unfairness. *Students identify discrimination and stereotypes faced by WAC members.*
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Resources- Works Cited

Haley Guepet, JD, PhD. “The Women’s Army Corps (WAC).” The National WWII Museum. Published December 23, 2024. Accessed April 9, 2026.

YouTube: “1943 WAAC Recruiting Film: *We’re in the Army Now.*” WWIIPublicDomain. Accessed April 9, 2026.

Group Portrait of WAC Members (first image)

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U.S. Army Signal Corps. "Women's Army Corps members in group portrait." 1943–1945. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Public Domain.

Switchboard Operator (second image)

U.S. Army Signal Corps. "Women's Army Corps switchboard operator at communications station." 1943–1945. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Public Domain.

WACs Marching in Formation (third image)

U.S. Army Signal Corps. "Women's Army Corps recruits marching in formation during training." 1943–1945. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Public Domain.