



Home Front Work Front

Film Summary: This vignette captures pieces of working life at North Vancouver's Burrard Dry Dock during WWII, when women entered the workforce in previously unheard-of numbers.

Curriculum Application:
Social Studies 10
Social Justice 12

The Essential Question: Explore the role of women in wartime industry, the effect of the wartime production on working women's lives, and make connections to images of women in wartime propaganda. Assess how women's work in the Second World War changed their role in society.

Summary of the Lesson Activities

1. Focus questions for the vignette provides a short lesson option. (15 minutes)
2. Discussion and historical analysis questions for viewing additional film and visuals of women's war work.
3. Primary source analysis activity: Photographs and discussion questions for small groups and historical analysis and discussion.
4. Primary source analysis: Wartime propaganda poster images for small group historical analysis and discussion.

Learning Standards

1. Analyze the role of women in the Second World War, particularly in regard to wartime industries and propaganda. (Significance)
2. Compare the image and reality of women's participation in war work. (Evidence)
3. Analyze primary sources about women's work in the Second World War. (Inquiry processes)
4. Evaluate the legacy of women's participation in wartime industries. (Perspective)
5. Analyze propaganda for devices, images of women/men, context, and effectiveness. (Evidence)

Materials and Resources Provided

- [Home Front, Work Front- Working People-A History of Labour in British Columbia](#)
- Home Front, Work Front Lesson
- Lesson Activity 1: Extended Viewing
- Lesson Activity 2: Images of Women Workers
- Lesson Activity 3: Historical photographs
- Lesson Activity 4: Propaganda posters
- Appendix 1: Background Information
- Appendix 2: Additional activities and Resources

Additional Suggested Materials

- On the Line: A History of the British Columbia Labour Movement. World War II, pages 106-121
- These Were The Reasons: Chapter 7, Fighting for Equity
- North Vancouver Museum and Archives <https://nvma.ca> A Riveted Community: North Vancouver's Wartime Shipbuilding

Vignette Questions

1. What kinds of work was available to women at the Burrard Dry Dock?
2. How did the experience of working in unionized wartime industry affect women?
3. What were some of the concerns around the change to post-war work?
4. Based on what you see here, images and oral history statements, what was it like to work there? What seems to be the mood from what you can see/hear?
5. Expanded Vignette questions and activity is provided in Lesson Activity 1

Lesson Activities

1. Expanded viewing activity for the vignette; Lesson Activity 1
2. Discussion guides and links to documentary films on Rosie the Riveter and Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl Lesson Activity 2
3. Historical photograph analysis activity: Lesson Activity 3
4. Brief notes for the teacher on women's war work Appendix 1
5. Activity and handouts for analyzing Second World War propaganda posters; Lesson Activity 4
6. Suggestions for extended activities and additional resources; Appendix 2

Credit: Teaching Activities and Lesson Plan developed by Sarah Purdy

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Lesson Activity 1

Lesson: Home Front, Work Front

Activity #1 – Extended Viewing activity for the Vignette “Home Front, Work Front”

Previewing:

1. What work was available to women in the first half of the century, from the pre-WW1 era to the outbreak of the Second World War? Consider the changes during wartime and the interwar period.
2. What would make a job attractive to workers in the 1940s—especially women? What needs would have to be met?

Viewing:

1. What kinds of work was available to women at the Burrard Dry Dock?
2. How did the experience of working in unionized wartime industry affect women?
3. What were some of the concerns around the change to post-war work?
4. Based on what you see here, images and oral history statements, what was it like to work there? What seems to be the mood from what you can see/hear?

Post-viewing:

1. What do you think might have been the long-term effect on women who worked in these kinds of jobs?
2. Considering the context of the Second World War, how might this portrait of women’s wartime work differ from the wartime work of other women in Canada? For example:
 - a. Japanese Canadian women.
 - b. Women working in the non-paid work force
 - c. Rural women
 - d. Indigenous women
3. The end of wartime industry had a major effect on women workers. Consider the following statement:
 - i. While the Second World War altered attitudes towards women and paid labour, these changes had little lasting effect. Daycare facilities closed, women’s corps disbanded and women in war industries were laid off. [Employment numbers] fell from 33% during wartime to 25% in 1946 and fell into more decline in the 1950s”. However, the largest lasting effect was the change in the employment of married women, which now had become as acceptable as the employment of unmarried women.¹

¹ COOK, SHARON ANNE, LORNA R. McLEAN, and KATE O’ROURKE, eds. *Framing Our Past: Constructing Canadian Women’s History in the Twentieth Century*, p. 328. McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001.

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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

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?

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.

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Lesson Activity 3

Lesson: Home Front, Work Front

Activity #3: Historical photograph analysis

Reading wartime photographs

Students might divide into groups and use the questions to analyze each photograph. If desired, the teacher may wish to make overhead or other slides of the photographs for the whole group to discuss after.

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1. Describe what you see. What do you notice first? What people and objects are shown? How are they arranged? What is the physical setting? What, if any, words do you see? What other details can you see?
2. Why might this photograph have been taken, and when? Who probably took it, and who was the likely audience? Does it send any kind of message?
3. What do you think might have happened just before and just after the photograph was taken?
4. What can we learn about women's war work from this image? What more information would we need for a better understanding?
5. If you were to make this image into a propaganda poster, what caption would you add?
6. How does this image compare to Rosie the Riveter, or Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl?
7. If you were a woman in that time, what would be appealing to you about this job from seeing this photograph?

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Photo #1

Burrard Dry Dock - Miss Heddy Brunkel, Jitney Driver, 1943.

City of Vancouver Archives, Reference code AM1545-S3-: CVA 586-1152



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Photo #2

Burrard Dry Dock [left to right] Miss Beatrice Lockie, Shipwright helper and Verna Rennie, 1943. City of Vancouver Archives, reference code AM1545-S3-: CVA 586-1151.



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Photo #3

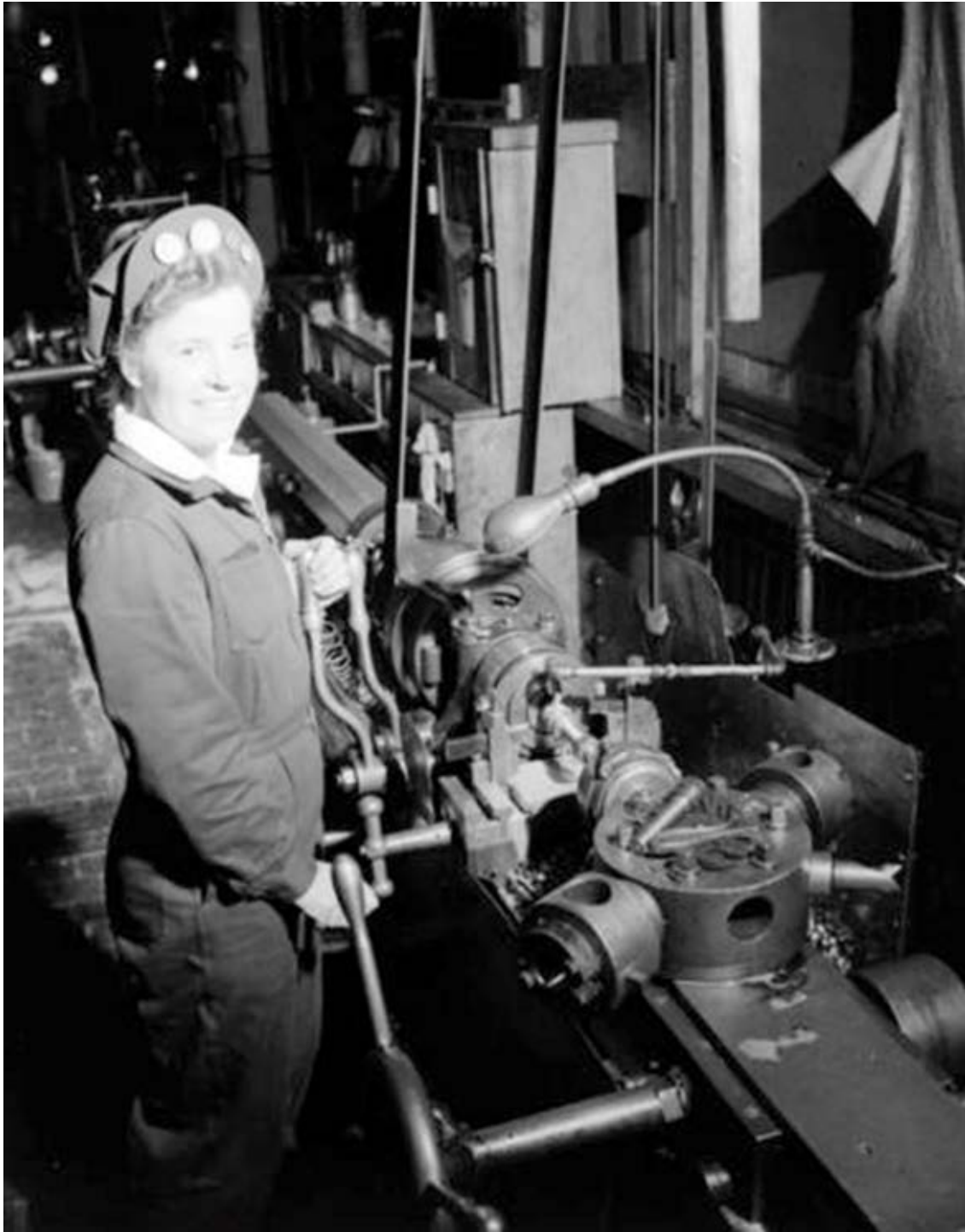
Burrard Shipyard - Mrs. Dorothy Angelick - helper painting, 1943. (City of Vancouver Archives, Reference code AM1545-S3-: CVA 586-1139)



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Photo #4

Burrard Shipyard - Mrs. Edna Pearce - Tool Room Specialist, 1943. (City of Vancouver Archives, Reference code AM1545-S3-: CVA 586-1135)



Activity #4: Propaganda Poster Analysis

This activity is a propaganda poster analysis activity, with particular focus on women in the home front.

Teaching Strategy

1. Go over the propaganda analysis handout with students. Perhaps show one of the included posters and model, with the class, how to analyze propaganda.
2. Divide students into groups based on the number of posters, with one per group. You may wish to make doubles depending on group size.
3. Students work through analysis questions for each poster.
4. It is effective to examine all posters together after as a group. For instance, after groups have generally finished, you may wish to have either an overhead copy of each poster or put them into a slides presentation.
5. Show each poster and have the group(s) responsible for that poster work share their findings with the class. Consider during discussion how the posters are similar to or different from each other. Alternatively, provide each group with all the posters and have them work through all of them and hand in for credit.

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Propaganda Analysis: Student Handout

Propaganda is essentially *persuasive communication*. The idea is that the propaganda maker wants to persuade you to *think or feel* something, usually in order to convince you to *do* something (but believing your decision to be entirely your own). Propaganda creators make messages out of symbols, words, images, or commonly understood devices. The idea is that by looking at, hearing, or experiencing the communication you will be inspired to act out of feelings of, for example, fear, love, patriotism, duty, or other value or emotion.

Wartime propaganda serves a military or other national purpose and will often make use of understood or perceived social values. For example, images of Rosie the Riveter make use of both ideas of man and womanhood (duty, support, strength, beauty, etc.) and also patriotism in order to encourage women to support the war effort through wartime production.

Women were also encouraged through propaganda to contribute the war effort in other ways, and in fact this was women's primary contribution: through volunteer labour. Women grew gardens, planned ration meals, made and sent supplies to soldiers, and organized numerous other supports for the war effort. This was total war, and women were overwhelmingly engaged in the unpaid home front. This was the same for most nations involved in the war. In order to encourage regular citizens to join the war effort, governments made use of poster campaigns, as they did in the First World War.

What follows are some commonly used devices in the construction of propaganda:

Bandwagon: this is the method by which the propaganda maker wants you to 'jump on the bandwagon', or join in with what everyone else is doing. Be one of the crowd!

Fear: In this case, the propagandist shows you some horrible event or situation, and you need to take some kind of action to prevent that from happening.

Protection: the enemy is threatening your loved ones or other helpless/defenseless victim, usually women and children. If you don't do something, you fail to protect them.

Glory: if one joins the war effort, they can expect to be celebrated for their achievements.

Patriotism: may use commonly understood symbols of the nation to encourage one to support the war effort. One is motivated by simple 'love of country'.

Demonization of the enemy: in these cases, the propagandist may make use of real or 'fake' atrocities committed by the enemy to make them seem less 'human'. This technique also taps into emotions. They may also make use of generally understood negative stereotypes of the enemy.

Guilt: in these cases, the viewer is meant to ask themselves why they are not doing more.

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Analyzing Propaganda Posters: Student Handout

Examine the following propaganda images from Canada in the Second World War. In small groups, analyze the propaganda poster provided and answer the attached questions. When complete, share your analysis with the class. You may wish to select a speaker for the group or divide the elements/questions amongst yourselves to share with the class.

1. Identify what exactly is happening in the poster. Do not yet attempt to interpret, but instead simply identify what images, words, or settings are present. What language is the poster in?
2. Referring to the handout on analyzing propaganda posters, try to identify the use or presence of common propaganda techniques.
3. Who is the likely intended audience?
4. How is the image presented? Are there, for example, parts that are bigger/smaller, darker/lighter, scary/protective, etc.?
5. What words are used?
6. How are women and men portrayed?
7. Are there ways in which traditional images of men and women are different? For example, is there a different model of womanhood shown as opposed to expectations of childcare, family, beauty, and weakness for example?
8. What is the overall message of the poster? What does the government want the viewer to feel, and do?
9. What must be happening in the war that the government felt it was necessary to make this poster?
10. Do you think this poster would have been effective in that era? Why or why not?

Poster #1: The Spirit of Canada's Women



<https://canadianhistoryworkshop.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/canada-women.jpg>

Poster #2: Attack on all Fronts



Attack on All Fronts - Canadian World War II Poster. Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1987-72-105 The Hubert Rogers Collection

Poster #3: Shoulder to Shoulder



Canadian Women's Army Corps: A recruiting poster for the Canadian Women's Army Corps, 1944. LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA, E003900663

Poster #4: I'm Making Bombs and Buying Bonds!



Library and Archives Canada / Bibliothèque et Archives Canada
www.collectionscanada.gc.ca

Poster #5: Dig in and Dig out the Scrap



Dig In and Dig Out the Scrap - Canadian World War II Poster. Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1983-30-62

Poster #6: Canada's New Army Needs Men Like You



Canada's New Army - Canadian World War II Poster. Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1983-30-303

Poster #7: The Men Are Ready...Only You Can Give Them Wings



Only You Can Give Them Wings - Canadian World War II Poster. Library and Archives Canada, Acc. No. 1983-30-106

Poster #8: For Sale: Canada's Children

FOR SALE **Canada's Children**

Will you outbid the Axis?

MAKE NO MISTAKE if the Axis should win this war your children would be doomed to a life of slavery and moral degradation. To control their future the enemy is bidding all the power built up through years of totalitarian scheming and preparation.

But you can outbid the enemy . . . it's up to you! No power in this world can equal that of a free people, provided that each is determined to contribute to the last ounce of his or her strength. Canada asks you to invest every dollar you possibly can in the new Victory Bonds as an essential duty of the freedom-loving citizen.

Every bond you buy will be a bid for your children's future. Every bond will help to make victory *sure*. And victory will open up a glorious destiny for the youth of Canada — in a land singularly blessed by Providence and in a new world at peace.

How to Buy — Give your order to the Victory Loan salesman who calls on you. Or place it in the hands of any branch of any bank, or give it to any trust company. Or send it to your local Victory Loan Headquarters, or you can authorize your employer to start a regular payroll savings plan for you. Bonds may be bought in denominations of \$50, \$100, \$500, \$1,000 and larger. Salesman, bank, trust company or your local Victory Loan Headquarters will be glad to give you every assistance in making out your order form.

Come on Canada

BUY the new VICTORY BONDS

(LOCAL VICTORY LOAN HEADQUARTERS)

A18

National War Finance Committee, Ottawa, Canada.

It is important to remember some key facts about women's participation in the paid labour force in modern Canada. The entry of women into paid industrial and other work in the 20th century was a significant change in Canadian society. "Until the last third of the twentieth century, most adult women were not part of the paid labour force." In 1901, 86% were not in the paid labour force. In addition, most adult women were married, and until the 1950s women in the paid labour force usually left upon marriage. By the end of the 20th century, most women were working for pay for most of their married life. Even so, in general, most work was 'traditional women's work': child care, domestic labour and related jobs unless in rural labour where work was in the home plus outdoor work.

Immigrant and Indigenous women worked in resource processing (Japanese, Chinese, and indigenous women in fish canneries, for example.) During the Great Depression, work relief programs and camps were closed to women. The only program for women was domestic service training, which was a job that offered long hours, low wages, and a lack of freedom.

Women also had to consider childcare. In some cases, government provided subsidies and childcare spaces as married women increasingly entered the paid labour force. Therefore, jobs for women would need to have adequate pay and like today, would need to recognize that women often provide/arrange childcare. Any job that offered the opposite of domestic labour would likely be considered attractive.

Experience(s) of women and role(s) of women on the home front

While much attention is often focused on wartime industries, it is important to note that most women during the war were not working in munitions factories or shipbuilding. Many women would be barred from such work, and more were engaged in traditional paid and unpaid labour. They cared for children, they tended the farms and animals, and they did practical work in the home to feed, clothe, and care for families. "During the First and Second World Wars, women who entered the paid labour force in non-traditional jobs attracted public recognition but by far the largest contribution made by Canadian women to the war effort was through their unpaid labour in the home and their volunteer work"¹

Legacy

While it may be true that the participation of women in wartime industry did not immediately result in a permanent place for women in the paid workforce and that the postwar period was a setback for women's economic equality, there was an effect on women workers, especially if they were in a unionized environment. This vignette shows how the experience of participation in labour activity led to many women using tools and making change later. It did, in many cases, allow women's voices to be heard.

¹ COOK, SHARON ANNE, LORNA R. McLEAN, and KATE O'ROURKE, eds. *Framing Our Past: Constructing Canadian Women's History in the Twentieth Century*, p. 327. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.

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Appendix 2: Extended Learning Activities Lesson: Home Front, Work Front

Suggestions and ideas to extend learning on subject of women's war labour

1. Students might write a series of journal entries from the perspective of a woman worker (married or unmarried) from different stages of her life (before the war, during and after)
2. Using the photos from the Burrard Dry Docks, create a WW2 era propaganda campaign to recruit women into the factories for wartime production.
3. Research the lives and experiences of Japanese Canadian imprisoned or relocated women. Students might conduct a comparative enquiry on the working lives of women in wartime concentration camps to compare to women in wartime industries.
4. Research social expectations for women in Canada in the 1950s and compare to the lives of women in the Second World War. How might women who contributed to the war effort have felt after being expected to conform to the strict social norms of the 1950s?
5. Projects: Write a letter from a mother to her grandchildren to answer the question: Grandma, what did you do during the war?
6. Research the work of women in the Second World War in factories or other paid/unpaid jobs on the home front. Create a propaganda poster to recruit women into war labour as munitions workers or in a volunteer capacity.
7. Research and present the ways that the image of Rosie the Riveter has been used to sell modern pop culture products. What does this say about the legacy of women workers in the Second World War for us today? Why is this image still so popular?
8. Research women's participation in the war from some of the other belligerent nations of the Second World War such as the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, or Japan. Were the roles similar or different? Consider comparing wartime propaganda from one or more countries in the Second World War.

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Suggested resources:

Campbell, Moriah. 2017. "The Bren Gun Girl", *Canada's History*, June 18, 2017.
<http://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/military-war/the-bren-gun-girl>

Canada War Museum, *Canadian Wartime Propaganda*.
https://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/propaganda/second_e.shtml

CBC Television and Radio-Canada, the Hour's George Stroumboulopoulos. 2009. *Love, Hate, and Propaganda: World War II for a New Generation*.

CBC Documentary segment from Love, Hate, and Propaganda on Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-E0KvWve-9g>

The Canadian Encyclopedia. "Canadian Women and War",
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/women-and-war/>

The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Internment of Japanese Canadians".
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/internment-of-japanese-canadians/>

Cook, Sharon Anne, Lorna R. McLean, and Kate O'Rourke, eds. 2001. *Framing Our Past: Constructing Canadian Women's History in the Twentieth Century*, p. 328. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Library of Congress. 2009. "Rosie the Riveter: Real Women Workers in World War II" at https://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=3350

Mickleburgh, Rod. 2018. *On the Line: A History of the British Columbia Labour Movement*. Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park.

[North Vancouver Museum and Archives. "A Riveted Community: North Vancouver's Wartime Shipbuilding" https://www.nvma.ca/north-vancouvers-wartime-shipbuilding-women-workers-burrard-drydock-co-ltd/](https://www.nvma.ca/north-vancouvers-wartime-shipbuilding-women-workers-burrard-drydock-co-ltd/)

Thomas, Derrick. 2017. "The census and the evolution of gender roles in early 20th century Canada". Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-008-x/2010001/article/11125-eng.htm>