

Background This episode will tell the story of Dr. Mary Walker, physician, and heroine of the Civil War, who is the only woman to ever be awarded the Medal of Honor.

NYS Social Studies Standards 7.8 A NATION DIVIDED: Westward expansion, the industrialization of the North, and the increase of slavery in the South contributed to the growth of sectionalism. Constitutional conflicts between advocates of states' rights and supporters of federal power increased tensions in the nation; attempts to compromise ultimately failed to keep the nation together, leading to the Civil War. 7.8e The Civil War affected human lives, physical infrastructure, economic capacity, and governance of the United States. Students will examine the roles of women, civilians, and free African Americans during the Civil War.

8.2 A CHANGING SOCIETY: Industrialization and immigration contributed to the urbanization of America. Problems resulting from these changes sparked the Progressive movement and increased calls for reform. 8.2e Progressive reformers sought to address political and social issues at the local, state, and federal levels of government between 1890 and 1920. These efforts brought renewed attention to women's rights and the suffrage movement and spurred the creation of government reform policies. Students will explore leaders and activities of the temperance and woman's suffrage movements.

A New York Minute in History Podcast- The Persistence of Dr. Mary Walker



The Persistence of Dr. Mary Walker. *A New York Minute in History*. podcast episode. <https://wamcpodcasts.org/a-new-york-minute-in-history/>

Warm Up: Dress Reform using Visual thinking Strategies

When examining images, encourage students to use Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). Students should ask themselves for each image:

- What is going on in this image?
- What do you see that makes you think that?
- What more can we find?

As students explore the images using the VTS questions, begin to focus on who the wearer was, why she would wear this item, and what possible messages it gave about the wearer. Once students are comfortable with the visual elements, ask them:

- Who would wear this outfit or an outfit like it?
- Why might they wear this outfit?
- What messages do you think they intended to send with this outfit?
- How do you think others viewed this outfit?

Illustration of Mary E. Walker, M.D. ca. 1871



Walker, Mary Edwards. "Illustration." In *Hit*, seq 5. New York: American News, 1871. <https://nyst.sirsi.net/uhtbin/cgisirsi/?ps=ek8G7iQauX/NYSL/X/9>

Photograph of Dr. Mary E. Walker



Weible, Robert, Jennifer A. Lemak, and Aaron Noble. "The Civil War, 1861-1865." Essay. In *An Irrepressible Conflict: The Empire State in the Civil War*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014. (Photograph Dr. Mary E. Walker New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections)

To deepen class discussion about Dress Reform, have students explore excerpts from Dr. Mary Walker's 1871 book, *Hit*. Students can reference [Podcast Clip \(06:53-07:44\)](#).

Again we assert that, from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, women are dressed in an unhygienic manner, while men assume all the comforts and conveniences of Dress that they desire, without any one saying unto them, why do ye thus? (Walker, Mary Edwards. *Hit*, 68)

It is a fact that all of the vital organs of women are so compressed by stays or corsets that health is impaired and life shortened... (Walker, Mary Edwards. *Hit*, 69)

1. The first great principle in the clothing of the body is, that there shall be perfect freedom of motion.
2. The second, that there should be an equal distribution of the clothing.
3. The third, that the arrangement should be such that as little vitality should be expended in carrying it about, as is possible. (Walker, Mary Edwards. *Hit*, 71)

Walker, Mary Edwards. *Hit*, pages 58-71. New York: American News, 1871. <https://nyst.sirsi.net/uhtbin/cgisirsi/?ps=ek8G7iQauX/NYSL/X/9>

Guided Instruction: Civil War Service

Oswego native Mary Edwards Walker was the first female surgeon in the U.S. Army. A graduate of Syracuse Medical College, Walker practiced medicine in Rome, Oneida County, before the war. When hostilities broke out, she served as a nurse and volunteer surgeon at Bull Run and other battles. She was captured in 1864 and imprisoned in Richmond for four months. Upon her release, she was commissioned as an acting assistant surgeon. After the war, Walker became a leading advocate for women's rights.

Using the [Podcast Clip \(08:03-16:38\)](#) and Civil War Surgeon Kit, have students think about how Dr. Mary Walker's medical training gave her unique opportunities to support the Union cause. In what ways did her being a woman impact these opportunities to treat soldiers and gather information?

Civil War Surgeon Kit



Civil War Surgeon Kit. H-1931.18.1. New York State Museum. Albany, NY

Using the excerpt below from Dr. Mary Walker's book *Hit*, ask students how Dr. Mary Walker's Civil War service impacted her advocacy work for women's rights.

As a last reason urged against the Ballot for women, we hear that they cannot be warriors, and defend a country, and therefore have no right to take part in a government. Such reasoners are always found to be either ignorant of the histories of past and present ages, or are selfish tricksters, who well know that they would never succeed in their plans if women were enfranchised. The instances of bravery, starvation, suffering, wounds and death of women both North and south during our late war, ought to forever close the mouths of such reasoners, even if wholly ignorant of the thousands of instances in all ages, of the never by man excelled courage, bravery, endurance and patriotism, of the women of the past. (Walker, Mary Edwards. *Hit*, 128)

Independent Practice: Political Cartoon Analysis

Have students work independently to analyze the illustration below from the April 3, 1901, issue of Puck magazine, titled *A Suggestion to the Buffalo Exposition; - Let us Have a Chamber of Female Horrors*.



Dalrymple, Louis, Artist. *A suggestion to the Buffalo Exposition; - Let us have a chamber of female horrors* / Dalrymple. United States New York Buffalo, 1901. N.Y.: J. Ottmann Lith. Co., Puck Bldg., April 3. Illustration. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2010651394/>

Have students analyze the cartoon by looking for people, objects, backgrounds, and clues to identify the purpose of the cartoon. Students should also look for text and captions used in the cartoon. Based on analysis, have students summarize the main idea or overall message of this political cartoon. Discuss as a group.

- Political Cartoon Analysis Worksheet from New York State Archives Partnership Trust: https://www.nysarchivestrust.org/application/files/9915/6053/8994/Political_Cartoon_Analysis.pdf

Classroom Discussion: Equality & Suffrage

Have your students listen to the [Podcast Clip \(16:38-19:21\)](#) and analyze the following quote from Dr. Mary Walker's 1878 book *Unmasked*.

Nothing less than perfect equality of rights will ever result in the greatest happiness, and the grandest possibilities. Enlightened women look upon any interference with human rights of women, whether as regards a failure to pass a law to protect woman in her clearly expressed right of suffrage in the Constitution, or any human rights, as being as great a barbaric wrong, as men can possibly deem the mutilation wrongs of men. (Walker, Mary Edwards. *Unmasked*, 14)

Walker, Mary Edwards. *Unmasked, or The Science of Immorality to Gentlemen*, page 14. Philadelphia, Wm. H. Boyd, 1878.

<https://nyst.sirsi.net/uhtbin/cgiirsi/?ps=ri3CXCLbc6/NYSL/X/9>

Use the following questions as a guide for classroom discussion:

- What right did Dr. Mary Walker believe was clearly expressed in the Constitution?
- What tactics did Dr. Mary Walker use to advocate for Women's Rights?
- What non-conformist views caused a rift between Dr. Mary Walker and other prominent Women's Rights leaders?

Wrap Up: Persistence

As a group, discuss the ways in which Dr. Mary Walker showed persistence throughout her life.

Additional Resources:

- Dress Reform- New York State Museum *Votes for Women* Educator Guide Lesson 2 "Express Yourself! Using Clothing to Send a Message" http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/common/nysm/files/votes-for-women-educator-guide_0.pdf
- Civil War- New York State Museum *An Irrepressible Conflict: The Empire State in the Civil War*
 - Catalogue: <https://sunypress.edu/Books/A/An-Irrepressible-Conflict>
 - Online Exhibit: <https://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov/civilwar/index.html>
- Dr. Mary Walker- Oswego County Historical Society Dr. Mary Walker <https://www.rbhousemuseum.org/education/dr-mary-walker/>
- Medal Of Honor- Association of the United States Army Medal of Honor Graphic Novels <https://www.ausa.org/medal-honor-graphic-novels>