

## **Biographical Poems Celebrating Amazing Montana Women**

Created by Laura Ferguson for the Montana Historical Society, 2014

**Enduring Understandings:** There is no single “woman’s experience”; women’s lives are diverse. People can make a difference in their communities.

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

**Activity Description:** This lesson combines the subjects of history and poetry into a single lesson. Students will read short biographies about specific Montana women and use them to create short biographical poems.

**Objectives:** Students will

- Read and gather information on actual people important to Montana’s history, identifying significant data and inferring meaning from text.
- Review parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositional phrases)
- Use a poem template to write a poem with the biographical information as the subject.

**Time:** Two 50-minute sessions, plus a homework assignment if more time is needed to complete the assignment

### **Content Standards:**

ELA. L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

ELA. R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

ELA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

ELA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

ELA.W.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### **Materials**

Lesson Plan Materials:

- Reference list of Montana Women Biographies (below)
- Biography Poem Template (below)
- Biography Reading Guide worksheet (below)
- Completed Biography Reading Guide worksheet for Belle Fligelman Winestone (below)

### Classroom/School Library Materials:

- Shirley, Gayle Corbett. *More than Petticoats*. Helena, MT: Falcon, 1995. (book)
- Alter, Judy. *Extraordinary Women of the American West*. New York: Children's, 1999. (book)
- Cajune, Julie, Gary R. Stroutsos, Gary Lanz, Jennifer K. Greene, David Lanz, Joanne Bigcrane, Bev Swaney, Vi Trahan, Clara Charlo, and Swil Kanim. *Heart of the Bitterroot Voices of Salish & Pend D'Oreille Women*. Npustin, 2007. CD.
- Computer(s) with Internet access (optional)
- Notepaper
- Pencils

### Pre-Lesson Preparation

If your students will not have access to the Internet to read the biographies, print the biographies. Print copies of the Biography Reading Guide (worksheet) and Biography Poem Template (one per student).

Print one copy of the completed Biography Reading Guide Sample.

**Assessment/evaluation:** Successful completion of the lesson components: biography notes and biography poem. Students should be evaluated on the thoroughness of their work. Encourage creativity, and strength and precision of word choice. This lesson should elicit creativity in expression as well as attentiveness to factual details.

### Procedure

#### Day One:

- Introduce the activity to students.
- Have each student select a woman from the biographies list to study.
- Provide students with printed biographies or allow them to access information online.
- Have students research their woman and complete the biography worksheet.

#### Day Two:

- Hand out the poem template.
- Review the template as a class, including parts of speech.
- Share the completed biographical worksheet for Belle Fligelman Winestine. Read the model poem as a class.
- Have students create their own poems and share them with the class (either by reading or posting them on a bulletin board).

**Extension Activity:** Have students create a portrait of the woman they studied and/or illustrate a scene from her life. Display the portraits and poems in a classroom exhibit. Invite other classes or parents to attend your “gallery opening” and/or poetry reading.

## Biography Reading Guide

This reading guide will help you take notes on the woman you are studying while you read her biography. **You will use these notes later to complete a poem about the woman you are studying.**

1. What is your woman's name?
2. Where and when was she born?
3. Where did she live?
4. Who were her family members?
5. What are some historical events that affected her?
6. What did she look like?
7. Describe her personality and character:
8. What did she care about?
9. What were her hopes and dreams?
10. What challenges or obstacles did she face?
11. What were some of her accomplishments?
12. What did you find most interesting about this woman?
13. If you could ask her one question, what would it be?

## Biography Poem Template

First line: woman's full name

Second line: born in (year)

Third line: noun, noun (specific nouns are better)

Fourth line: verb followed by prepositional phrase (it is ok to include other words, too)

Fifth line: verb followed by prepositional phrase

Sixth line: verb followed by prepositional phrase

Seventh line: adjective, adjective, adjective

Eighth line: I think she is (adjective).

## Model

Belle Fligelman Winestine  
Born in 1891  
Writer, suffragist  
Believed in equal rights  
Spoke to people on the streets  
Lived in Helena, Montana  
Small, generous, courageous  
I think she is amazing.

## Parts of Speech

**Noun**—a person, place, object, emotion or quality. Examples: the girl (person), a mountain (place), the car (object), sadness (emotion), beauty (quality). Nouns can be general or specific. For example: a person (general) may also be a jazz musician (specific).

**Proper Noun**—a noun that is also a name of a specific person, place, or object. Examples: Jeannette Rankin (person); Helena, Montana (place); *Girls' Guide to Camping* (book title).

**Adjective**—a word that describes or tells more about a noun, such as the noun's color, shape, texture, age, feelings, and so on. Examples (adjectives in *italics*): the *brown* horse, the *selfish* giant, the *tired* grandmother, the *ancient* city, the *worried* teacher.

**Verb**—a word that expresses the action taken by a noun. Verbs change form according to when the action took place or will take place. For example: She *walks*. She *walked*.

**Prepositional Phrases**—Prepositions are words that help locate a noun or relate one noun to another. Examples: on, in, under, from, across, beside, between, behind, over, next to, from, about, with, without, by, to, and away. **Prepositional phrases** are a grouping of words that starts with a preposition and ends with a noun, such as *under* the couch, *beside* the waterfall, *from* a lost city, *without* her friends. They come after nouns or verbs.

Use this information as you follow the model to write your own poem.

## Biography Reading Guide Sample: Belle Fligelman Winestine

This reading guide is to help you take notes on the woman you are studying while you read her biography. **You will use these notes later to complete a poem about the woman you are studying.**

1. What is your woman's name? *Belle Fligelman Winestine*
2. Where and when was she born? *Born 1891 in Helena, Montana*
3. Where did she live? *Helena, Montana; went to school in Madison, Wisconsin*
4. Who were her family members? *Herman and Minnie Fligelman (father and mother), Getty Vogelmann (stepmother), Frieda (sister), Norman Winestine (husband), Mina, Judy, and Henry (children)*
5. What are some historical events that affected her? *Women's suffrage (1914), Jeannette Rankin being elected to Congress (1916)*
6. What did she look like? *Small (5 feet tall), dark hair, feminine features*
7. Describe her personality and character: *Generous, determined, had a sense of humor, strong, outspoken, caring*
8. What did she care about? *Encouraging women to seek public employment and to pursue professional lives. She believed in pay equity for women and civil service reform.*
9. What were her hopes and dreams? *Women's rights, journalism, labor law, politics*
10. What challenges or obstacles did she face? *Discrimination of women's roles, balancing the duties of family life with her activism and journalism career*
11. What were some of her accomplishments? *State president of the League of Women Voters (1920), lobbied for Child Labor Amendment and Equal Rights Amendment, creation of a state Children's Bureau, worked for Jeannette Rankin*
12. What did you find most interesting about this woman? *Her courage to stand up for what she believed in and continue working for causes that were truly important to her and future generations*
13. If you could ask her one question, what would it be? *Was there ever a point where you felt or thought that women's suffrage was not going to happen? If so, when and why?*

## Montana Women Biographies Reference List

**Alice Greenough Orr (1902–1995)**—rodeo star

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers3/alicegreenoughorr.html>

New York Times Archives

<http://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/24/obituaries/alice-orr-93-top-bronc-rider-and-rodeo-star.html>

**Alma Jacobs (1916–1997)**—librarian and civil rights activist

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers2/jacobs.html>

The Best of Great Falls

<http://www.bestofgreatfalls.com/content/2012/11/alma-smith-jacobs-2/>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/alma-smith-jacobs-beloved-librarian-tireless-activist/>

**Belle Fligelman Winestine (1891–1985)**—suffragist, women's rights advocate

Jewish Women's Archives

<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/winestine-belle>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/the-lifelong-quest-of-frieda-fligelman-and-belle-fligelman-winestine/>

Montana The Magazine of Western History

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Winestine-Belle-Fligelman-Mother-Was-Shocked.pdf>

**B. M. Bower (1871–1940)**—author of Western novels

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers1/bower.html>

University Libraries: The University of Oklahoma

<http://libraries.ou.edu/locations/docs/westhist/bower/images/bower2b.jpg> (image)

Pulpflakes

<http://pulpflakes.blogspot.com/2012/05/bm-bower-author-biography.html>

**Caroline McGill (1879–1959)**—doctor, conservationist, and museum benefactor

Bozeman Daily Chronicle

[http://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/article\\_f0632839-9c0a-5cf6-acab-fd588e23bff3.html](http://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/article_f0632839-9c0a-5cf6-acab-fd588e23bff3.html)

Montana History Wiki

<http://montanahistorywiki.pbworks.com/w/page/38490975/Outstanding%20Montanans#mcgill>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/a-compassionate-heart-and-keen-mind-the-life-of-doctor-caroline-mcgill/>

**Denise Juneau (1967–present)**—State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers5/juneau.html>

The Nation: Questions for Montana State Superintendent Denise Juneau

<http://www.thenation.com/article/166024/questions-montana-superintendent-denise-juneau>

**Dolly Smith Cusker Akers (Eagle Day Woman) (1901–1986)**—legislator and tribal council member

SNAC: Social Networks and Archival Content

<http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=akers-dolly-smith-cusker-cr.xml>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/dolly-smith-cusker-akers-champion-to-some-foe-to-others/>

**Dorothy Johnson (1905–1984)**—author

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers3/johnson.html>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/a-witty-gritty-little-bobcat-of-a-woman-the-western-writings-of-dorothy-m-johnson/>

**Elizabeth Lochrie (1910–1975)**—artist/painter/muralist

Amazing Montanans

[http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/AM\\_Lochrie.pdf](http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/AM_Lochrie.pdf)

Doane Hoag

<http://lochrie.doanehoag.com/html/biography.html>

**Ella Knowles Haskell (1860–1911)**—first female lawyer in Montana

Encyclopedia of the Great Plains: “Haskell, Ella Knowles (1860-1911)”

<http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.law.019>

Ella Knowles Haskell, pp. 126–28, in *Extraordinary Women of the American West*

Ella Knowles Haskell, pp. 67–73, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/ella-knowles-portia-of-the-people/>

**Elouise Cobell (1946–2012)**—accountant, tribal treasurer, and advocate

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers6/cobell.html>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/elouise-pepion-cobell-banker-warrior/>

**Esther Vance (1903–1983)**—pilot

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers1/vance.html>

SNAC: The Social Networks and Archival Context Project

<http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=vance-esther-combes-1903-1983-cr.xml>

**Evelyn Cameron (1868–1928)**—photographer

Encyclopedia of the Great Plains

<http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.art.011>

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers1/cameron.html>

Evelyn Cameron, pp. 129–32, in *Extraordinary Women of the American West*

Evelyn Cameron, pp. 74–83, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

**Fanny Cory Cooney (1877–1972)**—cartoonist and illustrator

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers2/cooney.html>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/drawing-on-motherhood-the-cartoons-and-illustrations-of-fanny-cory-cooney/>

Montana Magazine

[http://fycory.com/montmag/montmag\\_1988.htm](http://fycory.com/montmag/montmag_1988.htm)

Fanny Cory Cooney, pp. 90–97, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

**Fanny Sperry Steele (1887–1983)**—champion bronc rider

Fannie Sperry Steele, pp. 108–16, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

Amazing Women in History

<http://www.amazingwomeninhistory.com/fannie-sperry-steele-rodeo-performer-cowgirl/>

Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame

<http://www.montanacowboyfame.com/151001/212901.html>

**Idora Guthrie (1871–1937)**—homesteader and teacher

Northwest Digital Archives

<http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv15053>

Amazing Montanans

[http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/AM\\_IdoraGuthrie.pdf](http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/AM_IdoraGuthrie.pdf)

**Janine Pease (1949–present)**—educator and tribal college president

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers5/pease.html>

World Wisdom

<http://www.worldwisdom.com/public/authors/Janine-Pease.aspx>

**Jean Wrobel (1920–2004)**—jazz pianist

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers3/wrobel.html>

Missoulian

[http://missoulian.com/news/local/obituaries/thursday-august-jean-fileff-wrobel-eugene-john-gene-schmidt-loyd/article\\_b9fcc310-f413-55f7-ad33-e519719292e4.html](http://missoulian.com/news/local/obituaries/thursday-august-jean-fileff-wrobel-eugene-john-gene-schmidt-loyd/article_b9fcc310-f413-55f7-ad33-e519719292e4.html)

**Jeannette Rankin (1880–1973)**—suffragist, congresswoman, and peace activist

Jeanette Rankin, pp. 153–57, in *Extraordinary Women of the American West*

Jeannette Rankin, pp. 117–28, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers6/rankin.html>

Rankin Timeline

<http://svcalt.mt.gov/education/textbook/Chapter15/teaching%20materials%20on%20Rankin.pdf>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/jeannette-rankin-suffragist-congresswoman-pacifist/>

**Juliet Minser Gregory (1896–1990)**—mayor

Northwest Digital Archives

<http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv76952> (see Biographical Sketch)

City of Missoula

<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/8156>

**Maggie Smith Hathaway (1867–1965)**—suffragist and legislator

Gallery of Outstanding Montanans

<http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/hathaway.pdf>

National Women's History Museum

<http://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/legislators/Montana.html>

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers2/hathaway.html>

**Maria Dean (1856?–1919)**—doctor, suffragist, and women's rights advocate

Maria Dean, pp. 62–66, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

Helena As She Was

<http://www.helenahistory.org/ywca.htm> (scroll down to article on the YWCA)

**Mary Fields\* (1836?–1914)**—gardener, postal carrier, and former slave

Mary Fields, pp. 55–57, in *Extraordinary Women of the American West*

Mary Fields, pp. 56–61, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

History Net

<http://www.historynet.com/mary-fields-female-pioneer-in-montana.htm>

Encyclopedia of the Great Plains

<http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.afam.019>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/the-life-and-legend-of-mary-fields/>

**\*Please Note:** There are some very inaccurate accounts of Mary Fields on the Internet.

Please **do not** direct your students to them, especially those accounts on

blackcowboys.com and cowboysofcolor.org. These accounts contain inaccuracies as well as overtly racist content.

**Mattie Bell Castner (1848–1920)**—former slave and hotel owner

Gallery of Outstanding Montanans

<http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/castner.pdf>

Mattie Castner, pp. 29–34, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

Mattie Castner, pp. 82–84, in *Extraordinary Women of the American West*

**Mildred Walker (1905–1998)**—novelist

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers6/walker.html>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/writing-our-lives-novelist-mildred-walkers-illumination-of-montana-women/>

**Minerva Allen (1932–present)**—Assiniboine & A'Aninin poet and historian

Amazing Montanans

[http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/AM\\_Allen.pdf](http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/AM_Allen.pdf)

Montana The Magazine of Western History

[http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/MinervaAllen\\_mag.pdf](http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/MinervaAllen_mag.pdf)

**Minnie Spotted Wolf (1923–1988)**—first Native American woman to join the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (Blackfeet)

Great Falls Tribune: Montanacana

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/Stories/spottedwolf.html>

Overdrive

<http://www.overdriveonline.com/on-memorial-day-a-trucker-to-remember/>

Department of Defense

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOWPu3pXKUw> (video)

**Myrna Loy (1905–1993)**—actress/movie star

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers1/loy.html>

Travel Montana: MontanaKids.com

[http://montanakids.com/cool\\_stories/famous\\_montanans/loy.htm](http://montanakids.com/cool_stories/famous_montanans/loy.htm)

**Nancy Cooper Russell (1878–1940)**—promoter and agent for husband-artist Charlie Russell

Nancy Cooper Russell, pp. 149–52, in *Extraordinary Women of the American West*

Nancy Cooper Russell, pp. 98–107, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/behind-every-man-nancy-cooper-russell/>

**Pretty Shield (1856–1954)**—Apsáalooke healer

Pretty Shield, pp. 85–87, in *Extraordinary Women of the American West*

Pretty Shield, pp. 11–19, in *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Montana Women*

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/pretty-shields-success-raising-grandmothers-grandchild/>

**Providencia Tolan (1909–1989)**—nun, sociologist, and anti-poverty activist

Great Falls Tribune: 125 Montana Newsmakers

<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/multimedia/125newsmakers2/tolan.html>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/sister-providencia-advocate-for-landless-indians/>

**Quilqix (Red Dress) (dates unknown, alive in 1872)**—Pend d'Oreille woman warrior

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/nineteenth-century-indigenous-women-warriors/>

Lifeways of Montana's First Peoples (p. 38)

<http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/docs/footlocker/FirstPeople.pdf>

“Kwilqs’, A Warrior,” by Jennifer Greene, *Heart of the Bitterroot: Voices of Salish and Pend d'Oreille Women* [cd]. Npustin, 2007. (See also “The Story of Kwilqs’” in liner notes.)

**Running Eagle (Pi'tamaka) (c. 1820–1850)**—Blackfeet woman warrior

Historical Fort Benton

<http://fortbenton.blogspot.com/2011/04/saga-of-pitamakan-pikuni-blackfeet-joan.html>

Amazing Montanans

[http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/AM\\_RunningEagle.pdf](http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/AM_RunningEagle.pdf)

**Sarah Bickford (1855–1931)**—businesswoman and former slave

Gallery of Outstanding Montanans

<http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/SarahBickford.pdf>

Black Past

<http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aaw/bickford-sarah-gammon-1855-1931>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/celebrating-sarah-gammon-bickford/>

**Shannon Cate Schweyen (1970–present)**—Lady Griz basketball star and coach

[www.gogriz.com/sports/w-baskbl/mtt/schweyen\\_shannon00.html](http://www.gogriz.com/sports/w-baskbl/mtt/schweyen_shannon00.html)

Make It Missoula

<http://www.makeitmissoula.com/2011/11/all-things-lady-griz-reintroducing-shannon-cate/>

**Susie Yellowtail (1903–1981)**—Indian healthcare advocate

American Society of Registered Nurses

<http://www.asrn.org/journal-chronicle-nursing/205-big-heart.html>

Gallery of Outstanding Montanans

<http://mhs.mt.gov/Portals/11/education/bios/yellowtail.pdf>

Women's History Matters

<http://montanawomenshistory.org/susie-walking-bear-yellowtail-our-bright-morning-star/>