

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussions, library programs, or classroom activities.

Meet Ohio author Brandon Marie Miller and learn about her books.

Select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading *Women of the Frontier*.

Discover informational websites, texts, and documentaries to explore topics and themes in depth.

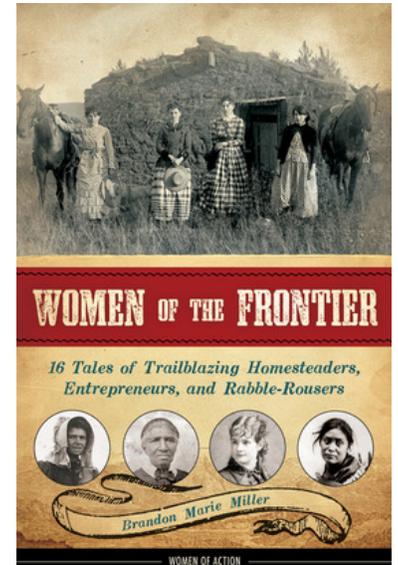
Women of the Frontier: 16 Tales of Trailblazing Homesteaders, Entrepreneurs, and Rabble-Rousers By Brandon Marie Miller



About the Book

In 1849, Luzena Wilson set out for California in a covered wagon with her husband and two little boys, hungry to join the tide of gold seekers. Like thousands of others, Luzena undertook the nearly 2,000 mile journey to an unknown land, where she'd rise from flood and fire, a survivor of the wild frontier. From months on the trail to life in a sod hut, western women adapted to their new lives and found beauty in the rugged, often dangerous landscape. They helped tame the Wild West as they farmed, ranched, kept shops, founded libraries and churches, staffed schools, and won the right to vote.

Using journal entries and letters home, author Brandon Marie Miller lets the women speak for themselves in tales of courage, enduring spirit, and adventure. Meet homesteader Miriam Colt, entrepreneur Clara Brown, army wife Frances Grummond, naturalist Martha Maxwell, missionary Narcissa Whitman, and political rabble-rouser Mary Lease. *Women of the Frontier* also recounts the impact pioneers had on those who were already living in the region. As white settlers gobbled up the lands of Native Americans and people of Spanish descent, the clash of cultures brought pain to many, including Rachel Plummer and Cynthia Ann Parker, and spearheaded the work of Susette la Flesche and Sarah Winnemucca, who fought the government's treatment of American Indians. Readers will come away with a deeper understanding of this unique period in our nation's history.



Book jacket image and book description
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Book Details

Women of the Frontier: 16 Tales of Trailblazing Homesteaders, Entrepreneurs, and Rabble-Rousers by Brandon Marie Miller.

Chicago Review Press, 2013, ISBN 9781883052973. Ages 12 up. 1160L Lexile.

<http://www.chicagoreviewpress.com/>

Available as an ebook through the Ohio Digital Library:

<http://ohdbks.lib.overdrive.com>

Parts of this work were originally published as *Buffalo Gals: Women of the Old West* (Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publishing, 1995). They have been substantially revised, updated, and expanded.



Author photo and biography
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**“Most of the
women here
were not famous;
they led ordinary
lives as
daughters, sisters,
wives, and
mothers.
Thousands more
shared these
same stories but
left no written
record and today
are nameless
and forgotten.
I pay tribute to
every one
of them.”**

About the Author

Brandon Marie Miller earned her degree in American History from Purdue University. She writes about famous people and common folk, about great events and everyday life. Her award-winning books for young people have been honored by the International Reading Association, the National Council for the Social Studies, the Society of School Librarians International, *Voice of Youth Advocates*, Bank Street College, the Junior Library Guild, the New York Public Library and the Chicago Public Library, among others.

Born and raised in Illinois, Miller lives in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Author Resources

Brandon Marie Miller's Official Website

<http://www.brandonmariemiller.com/>

Author Page on Chicago Review Press Website

<http://www.chicagoreviewpress.com/miller--brandon-marie-contributor-201268.php>

Brandon Marie Miller's Blog:

HANDS-ON-BOOKS: Nonfiction for Kids with Fun Activities

<http://hands-on-books.blogspot.com/>

A joint blog by authors Kerrie Hollihan, Mary Kay Carson, and Miller.

Video: Brandon Marie Miller discusses *Ben Franklin, American Genius*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PiAj0PsuCY>

Miller describes her book *Ben Franklin, American Genius* in this video created for the Books by the Banks Festival.

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

Contact Brandon Marie Miller at brandonmariemiller@gmail.com. She is available to give presentations for youth or adults at schools, libraries, clubs, and other organizations. Programs are centered around American history and writing, and can be tailored to your specific needs and preferences. For more information, see:

<http://www.brandonmariemiller.com/SchoolVisits.html>.

Talk About It

Topics to share when discussing *Women of the Frontier* with teens.

How is *Women of the Frontier* organized? Does the way the stories are grouped together make sense, or can you suggest any improvements? (RI.9-12.3; RH.9-10.5; Social Studies: High School – American History: Historical Thinking and Skills)

Why does the author focus on stories of individual frontier women, while writing from a third-person perspective? What are the advantages of this “narrative anthology” approach? What are the disadvantages? (W.7-12.3; RI.11-12.5)

Do any of the accounts of events given in *Women of the Frontier* show prejudice? (RI.7-10.6; Social Studies: 8th Grade—Geography: Human Systems; Social Studies: High School – American History: Historical Thinking and Skills)

Go Further

Ideas for extending the experience of reading **Women of the Frontier**.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's New Learning Standards (Common Core) English Language Arts (ELA) reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Examples are listed below; other standards also apply. **Women of the Frontier** may also support ELA Literacy in History/Social Studies standards, and standards in Social Studies (e.g. Grade 8 – History: Expansion; Grade 8 – Geography: Human Systems; High School – Economics and Financial Literacy; High School – American History: Industrialization and Progressivism).

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. They are included for teachers who want to use this book in school. For more information, see the Ohio Dept. of Education website, <http://education.ohio.gov>. Click on "Ohio's New Learning Standards" in the Teacher Resources section.

To connect with frontier history, you might visit one of Ohio's reconstructed historic forts, like Fort Meigs (<http://www.fortmeigs.org/>) or Fort Steuben (<http://www.oldfortsteuben.com>). What was daily life like in a frontier fort? How would it have been different from living in a sod house on the open prairie? What about a cabin in the California? What factors make us choose how to structure our homes, and what materials to use? (Social Studies: 8th Grade—Geography: Human Systems; Social Studies: High School – World Geography: Environment and Society)

Frontier taxidermist Martha Maxwell once said "Which is the more cruel? To kill to eat, or to kill to immortalize?" Do you agree with Maxwell's defense of taxidermy? Now, consider the humorous take on prairie taxidermy shown in the Gopher Hole Museum in Torrington, Alberta (<http://gopherholemuseum.ca/>). Do you think Maxwell would have been supportive of the museum, or do you think she may have found the humorous presentation objectionable? Defend your answer with information presented in **Women of the Frontier**. (SL.7-12.1; Social Studies: 8th Grade—Geography: Human Systems)

Ree Drummond, also known as The Pioneer Woman, makes a living in part off of contemporary fascination with frontier life. Click through her website (<http://thepioneerwoman.com/>) and compare her recipes with the descriptions of cooking given in **Women of the Frontier** and authentic 19th-century recipes from *Chronicle of the Old West* (<http://www.chronicleoftheoldwest.com/chuckwagon.shtml>) or similar sites. Speaking broadly, how has frontier life changed? What things are still the same? Is there still such a thing as a "pioneer" today? Is there still a "frontier?" (SL.9-12.1; Social Studies: High School – Contemporary World Issues: Technology; Social Studies: High School – American History: Industrialization and Progressivism; 10; Social Studies: 8th Grade—History: Expansion)

Wilderness survival skills often came in handy, as is shown in the experience of the Reed family and the Donner Party. Imagine you are dropped into a remote location with limited supplies. What are some of the resources you would need to survive? What are some strategies you would use to protect yourself from strangers or animals? (SL.7-12.1; Social Studies: High School – World Geography: Environment and Society)

Women had their own particular challenges and struggles on the frontier, both in the Old West and in Ohio. Read about the lives and struggles of Ohio's frontier women at http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Frontier_Women. What challenges did women on the Ohio frontier face that matched those found in the Old West? Were any challenges unique to either frontier? Give specific examples from the texts. (RI.7-12.1; Social Studies: 8th Grade—Geography: Human Systems)

Talk About it (Continued)

Most frontier women didn't have the right to vote, but that didn't stop women like Mary Lease, Carry Nation, and Sarah Winnemucca from making their voices heard. What political issues were pioneer women concerned about? What methods did they use to engage in politics? Were they successful? (SL.7-12.1; Social Studies: 8th Grade—Government: Civic Participation and Skills; Social Studies: High School – American Government: Civic Involvement)

Frontier life was full of both opportunity and uncertainty, as the story of Luzena Stanley Wilson clearly shows. How is Luzena's story similar to modern entrepreneurs? How is it different? (SL.7-12.1; Social Studies: High School – Economics and Financial Literacy: Fundamentals of Economics; Saving and Investing)

Wide open spaces. Seas of prairie grass. Redwood forests. The iconic natural features of the 19th century American West shape many of the stories told in **Women of the Frontier**. How has the landscape of the West changed since frontier days? (SL.9-10.2; RI.11-12.7; Social Studies: High School – World Geography: Environment and Society)

Check It Out

Companion books for **Women of the Frontier**.

For an closer look at the diaries and reminisces of women on the frontier:

Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey by Lillian Schlissel. (ISBN 9780805211764)

For more on the lives of frontier women: **The Women's West** by Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson. (ISBN 9780806120430)

For more on Populist Mary Elizabeth Lease: **Queen of Populists: The Story of Mary Elizabeth Lease** by Fern Henry. (ISBN 9780690662528)

For more on taxidermist Martha Maxwell: **Martha Maxwell: Rocky Mountain Naturalist** by Maxine Benson. (ISBN 9780803261556)

For more on hatchet-wielding Carry A. Nation: **Carry A. Nation: Retelling the Life** by Fran Grace. (ISBN 9780253338464)

For more on cross-cultural Cynthia Ann Parker: **Frontier Blood: The Saga of the Parker Family** by Jo Ella Powell Exley. (ISBN 9781585441365)

For more on the ill-fated Donner Party: **Desperate Passage: The Donner Party's Perilous Journey West** by Ethan Rarick. (ISBN 9780195383317)

Explore More

Additional ideas and resources to use with **Women of the Frontier**.

The Bibliography on pp. 235-238 of **Women of the Frontier** includes dozens of books for further exploration, and a selection of primary sources available online. Some additional resources include:

Bureau of Land Management: Basic Facts about the Oregon Trail

<http://www.blm.gov/or/oregontrail/history-basics.php>

The Foremothers Tell of Olden Times

<http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist5/foremoms.html>

from *The Chronicle*, San Francisco, September 9, 1900; curated by the Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco.

Ohio History Connection

<http://www.ohiohistory.org>

The Ohio History Connection administers museums and historical sites around Ohio, including a museum, library/archives, and a re-created 19th century town (Ohio Village) at its headquarters in Columbus. Its website features digital collections and online exhibits on all aspects of Ohio history.

Pioneer Woman Museum

<http://www.okhistory.org/sites/pioneerwoman.php>

A museum operated by the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Profile Ohio: Women in Ohio

<http://www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/ProfileOhio/WomeninOhio.aspx>

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits:

<http://library.ohio.gov/ctro>.

This toolkit revised July 2015.