



## TITLE

# THREE EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN: UNCOVERING THE LIVES OF ANNA MAY WONG, MABEL PING HUA LEE, GRACE LEE BOGGS



GRADE LEVEL: MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL

**SUBJECT:** Social Studies, History, Art

**THEME:** Activism, Bias and Stereotype, Civil Rights, Identity and Culture, Immigration, International Affairs, Labor, Mental Health, and Performance

**STANDARDS:** Educating for American Democracy: Theme: Civic Participation: How have Americans come together in groups, made decisions, and affected their communities, the country, and the world? How can that history inform our civic participation today?  
UCLA Public History Initiative: Era 7(1890–1930): The Emergence of Modern America; Era 9: Postwar U.S. (1945–1970); Standard 4: The struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties.

## OBJECTIVES:

### Students will be able to:

- Identify who each of these women is and what each is known for.
- Assess the impact each had in the field for which she is known.
- Provide one or more reasons as to why each of them is little known despite their significant achievements

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

Why is it that women and Asian women in particular are overlooked in their fields and in American history?

## CLASSROOM TIME:

1 to 2 Periods



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## INTRODUCTION:

This lesson is intended to introduce to students three Asian American women who led extraordinary lives but, despite their accomplishments, they remain virtually unknown to most Americans. The lesson only touches the surface of their lives. With that knowledge, though, students can learn a great deal about the times they lived in, the fields in which they worked, and the impact they left on others. The lesson and its resources leave it up to the teacher to encourage students to dig more deeply into the experiences of Anna May Wong, an acclaimed film actress; Mabel Ping Hua Lee, an activist for women’s suffrage; and Grace Lee Boggs, an advocate for civil rights. In this introductory lesson, students will find purpose and meaning that can be drawn from each of their lives and how purpose and meaning can be used to inspire all Americans. The “Resources” section at the end of the lesson has links to more lesson plans that can be used for further study of each of these extraordinary women.

## ACTIVITIES:

1. As a hook, ask students to think about the topics of film, women’s suffrage, and civil rights and name women who played important roles in each of these areas. Write down names of those they mention; see if any of the three who are the subject of this lesson are named (not likely).
2. Assign groups of 4 or 5 students to read and learn about one of the women using these resources:  
**Anna May Wong:**  
<https://wams.nyhistory.org/confidence-and-crises/jazz-age/anna-may-wong/>  
**Mabel Ping Hua Lee:**  
<https://www.history.com/news/chinese-american-womens-suffrage-mabel-ping-hua-lee>  
**Grace Lee Boggs:**  
<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/06/27/417175523/grace-lee-boggs-activist-and-american-revolutionary-turns-100>  
Have the groups compile the most significant achievements about each woman. Constructing a timeline for each is a helpful way to identify the key events of their lives. Another approach would be to draw cartoon frames or images to highlight significant events or achievements. Allow sufficient time depending on the age and grade level for groups to put together the information needed (20 to 30 minutes).”
3. Groups share their work with the whole class so everyone learns about each of the women.
4. Discuss with the class their impressions of what they have learned about the women and why they have been overlooked by history.



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### ASSESSMENT:

Have students write a paragraph that is a reflection on what they learned from the lesson using specific examples from the groups' presentations. Ask them also to write about which of the women they would like to know more about and why, if they had the opportunity.

### RESOURCES:

As indicated below, several of the sites contain detailed lesson plans and additional resources.

#### **Anna May Wong:**

Public Broadcasting System: Learning Media. This site links to a short documentary film with excellent lesson plan and activities.

<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/ull20-anna-may-wong/unladylike2020-video/>

[https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https://static.pbslearningmedia.org/media/media\\_files/f3be263b-355a-42af-97ed-3c4ae7e1a38c/b4eac957-a8bb-44c2-8416-f0c41c64c2d4.docx](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https://static.pbslearningmedia.org/media/media_files/f3be263b-355a-42af-97ed-3c4ae7e1a38c/b4eac957-a8bb-44c2-8416-f0c41c64c2d4.docx)

New York Historical Society: Women and the American Story (WAMS). This site contains lesson plans and many other curricular resources.

<https://wams.nyhistory.org/confidence-and-crises/jazz-age/anna-may-wong/>

National Women's History Museum

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/anna-may-wong>

Harper's Bazaar Magazine

<https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/film-tv/a32346961/who-is-anna-may-wong-hollywood-star/>

Mental Floss

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/655778/anna-may-wong-facts>

#### **Mabel Ping Hua Lee:**

Library of Congress. This site contains lesson ideas.

<https://blogs.loc.gov/families/2021/03/celebrate-womens-history-month-with-mabel-ping-hua-lee-and-suffragist-cards/>

National Park Service

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/mabel-ping-hua-lee-how-chinese-american-women-helped-shape-the-suffrage-movement.htm>

History.com

[https://www.history.com/news/chinese-american-womens-suffrage-mabel-ping-hua-lee?li\\_source=LI&li\\_medium=m2m-rcw-biography](https://www.history.com/news/chinese-american-womens-suffrage-mabel-ping-hua-lee?li_source=LI&li_medium=m2m-rcw-biography)



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## RESOURCES (CONT.):

Barnard College/Columbia University

<https://barnard.edu/magazine/fall-2020/mabel-ping-hua-lee-1916-pioneer-suffrage-movement>

New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/19/obituaries/mabel-ping-hua-lee-overlooked.html>

### **Grace Lee Boggs:**

*This site links to multiple resources for lesson ideas and expanded coverage of related topics.*

<https://www.facinghistory.org/ideas-week/remembering-grace-lee-boggs>

National Public Radio

<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/06/27/417175523/grace-lee-boggs-activist-and-american-revolutionary-turns-100>

Boggs Educational Center, Boggs School, Detroit, Michigan

<https://www.boggschool.org/grace-and-jimmy>

New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/06/us/grace-lee-boggs-detroit-activist-dies-at-100.html>

National Park Service

<https://www.nps.gov/people/grace-lee-boggs.htm>

The New Yorker

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/postscript-grace-lee-boggs>



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