

Women's Firsts - Answer Key

Doing something challenging or **notable** for the first time is something to **celebrate!** There are many lists of the first person to do something, and many of those names belong to men. The reason for this is not the women aren't capable of the same accomplishments, but that society has been set up to allow men more freedom and opportunity to take risks and succeed. This is why we see lists of 'firsts' and then lists of 'women's firsts', with women often doing something for the first time years, if not decades, after men.



Sometimes the names of the women are not as **well-known** as the men. For example, Edmund Hillary* is **famous** for being the first to reach the top of Mount Everest in 1953. However, did you know that Japanese climber Junko Tabei (photo left) was the first woman to summit Everest in 1975? Jackie Robinson is **honored** for being the first Black man to play modern professional baseball in 1947. However, did you know

that Marcenia Lyle (known as Toni) Stone was not only the first Black woman, but *the* first woman, to play professional baseball in 1953?

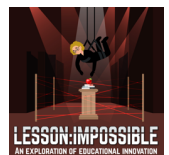
Sometimes the first woman to do something is equally **renowned**. For example, both Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart (photo right) are **acclaimed** for completing solo, nonstop flights across the Atlantic. Lindbergh made his flight just five years before Earhart in 1927. John Rockefeller was **lauded** as the world's first self-made billion in 1916, but Martha Stewart, who became the first female self-made billionaire in 1999, is also a **recognizable** name.



In our modern times, sometimes it's been so long since a man broke a record that we only know the name of the first **prominent** woman to break that record. For example, the names Lewis Milestone and Frank Borzage, the first men to win Best Director at the Oscars in 1929, are lost to history. Yet, Kathryn Bigelow is **celebrated** because she was the first female winner of the award in 2010. Although not exactly **household names**, in 2018 Sharice Davids and Deb Haaland (photo left) **made headlines** as the first Native American women to be elected to Congress, almost 150 years after first man with Native American ancestry, Hiram Revels, was elected in 1870.

* Hillary's Nepalese Sherpa, Tenzing Norgay, is now starting to also get credit for summiting with him

Source: www.lessonimpossible.com/blog/womens-history-month



1. Vocabulary Activity: This text discusses famous (or not as famous as they should be) men and women. There are a lot of words in the text that mean something similar to the adjective 'famous'. List all the *synonyms* that you can find:

Notable

Well-known

Honored

Renowned

Acclaimed

Lauded

Recognizable

Prominent

Celebrated

Household names

Made headlines



Image: www.artkicker.com/baseballprints/toni-stone-sticker-kchly-dq92z

Extension: you can point out to students that the majority of these words are adjectives (i.e. words used to describe nouns). Try writing sentences using these adjectives to describe other people or things related to Women's History Month!

2. Comprehension Activity: In the introductory paragraph it says that "we see lists of 'firsts' and then lists of 'women's firsts', with women often doing something for the first time years, if not decades, after men". List the examples discussed in order from smallest to biggest difference in time between accomplishments.

- 5 years: First transatlantic flight
- 6 years: First Black person to play professional baseball
- 22 years: First to summit Mt. Everest
- 81 years: First winner of Best Director Oscar
- 83 years: First self-made billionaire
- 148 years: First Native Americans in Congress

3. Structural Activity: This text is an expository text, meaning it is a piece of non-fiction writing that give facts and information about a topic. It follows a five-paragraph structure. When planning to write a text, it's important to have a plan. Can we figure out what the planning might have looked like when the author was writing her outline?

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Paragraph 1: Introduction

Main argument: **Firsts are important, and we celebrate both men's and women's firsts. Often men's firsts come before women's.**

Paragraph 2:

Main Idea: **Women's accomplishments are sometimes less known as men's**

Supporting detail #1: **Everest: Hillary* and Tabei**

Supporting detail #2: **Baseball: Robinson and Stone**

Paragraph 3:

Main Idea: **Women's accomplishments are sometimes equally as well-known as men's**

Supporting detail #1: **Transatlantic flight: Lindbergh and Earhart**

Supporting detail #2: **Billionaires: Rockefeller and Stewart**

Paragraph 4:

Main Idea: **Women's accomplishments are sometimes more recognizable as men's**

Supporting detail #1: **Oscars: Milestone & Borzage and Bigelow**

Supporting detail #2: **Congress: Revels and Davids & Haaland**

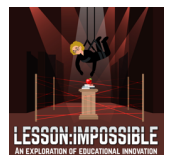
Paragraph 5: Conclusion

You'll notice that the author did not include a concluding paragraph. A concluding paragraph summarizes the main ideas of given in the previous paragraphs. Write what you think should have been the concluding paragraph:

Answers will vary. Answers should include a summary of the three main ideas.

*** you can point out that Hillary got the credit for many years, but now Tenzing Norgay is also mentioned. Discuss why there has been this change and why historically a Sherpa would have been overlooked.**

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4. *Discussion Activity:* [Ellen Ochoa](#) was the first Hispanic female astronaut to go into outer space in 1993. She is quoted as saying: “Now with this milestone we can focus on the fact that what is important to succeed in life, it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman.” Do you think that continuing to focus on women’s firsts is positive or negative? Share your thinking with a partner.

You can discuss Ellen Ochoa further with resources found at <https://spanishmama.com/ellen-ochoa-quotes/>

5. *Extending Knowledge Activity:* Research a woman who was the first do something that you think is important. Create a fake Instagram post to showcase their achievement. In the description be sure to explain:

- **What** happened, giving details
- **Who** was involved
- **Where** and **when** it happened
- **Why** it is an important first

To help guide students, you can start with a class brainstorm or have students research in partners. You can also assign each student/group a field (ex. sports, arts, education, science, etc.) or intersectionality (ex. Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ+, etc.) to help narrow their search.

Although more labor intensive, you can ask students to find examples of women that were the first BEFORE men in certain accomplishments.

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