Lesson Plan: The Struggle for Equal Opportunities for Women

THE FILM
This lesson plan is designed to be used with the film *Ella Es El Matador* (*She Is the Matador*), which shows the struggles that two women face while trying to succeed in the male-dominated world of bullfighting in Spain. Classrooms can use this film and its companion website resources to spark student interest in those who have fought for equal opportunities for women in other “arenas.”

Note: This film has English subtitles, which may be difficult for some viewers to follow. It also shows the stabbing and killing of bulls inherent to bullfighting. Please preview the film before showing it in a classroom setting.

POV documentaries can be recorded off-the-air and used for educational purposes for up to one year from their initial broadcast. In addition, POV offers a lending library of DVDs and VHS tapes that you can borrow any time during the school year — FOR FREE! Get started by joining our Community Network: [www.amdoc.org/outreach/events/](http://www.amdoc.org/outreach/events/).

Please visit our Film Library at [http://www.amdoc.org/outreach_filmlibrary.php](http://www.amdoc.org/outreach_filmlibrary.php) to find other films suitable for classroom use.

OBJECTIVES
By the end of this lesson, students will:
- Use viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret film clips.
- Consider historic and modern barriers that deny women the same opportunities as men.
- Research and prepare presentations on women who were able to overcome barriers to success and make valuable contributions to society.

GRADE LEVELS
6-12

SUBJECT AREAS
Civics, U.S. History, Current Events, Geography, World History

MATERIALS
Access to computers and the Internet to show online video clips and website resources

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED
Two 50-minute class periods

SUGGESTED CLIPS
Clip 1: Meet Eva Florencia (length 2:53)
The clip starts at 1:27 with a shot of bull horns and the text, “Andalucia, Spain.” It ends at 4:20 when Florencia says, “... connection between man and beast.”

Clip 2: Focusing on the Dream (length 2:05)
The clip begins at 29:00 with an image of Florencia working out. It ends at 31:05 when she says, “But usually it’s about bulls.”

**Clip 3: Women in Bullfighting (length 2:19)**
The clip starts at 16:28, when a man on the street says, “Female bullfighters have their role . . .” and ends at 18:47 with the line, “. . . all-female bullfighters.”

**Clip 4: Discrimination (length 3:05)**
The clip begins at 33:43 with archival film of Conchita Cintrón. It ends at 36:48 when Cristina Sanchez says, “Those at the top can get rid of you if they want to.”

**Clip 5: Small Town Bullfight (length 3:56)**
The clip begins at 40:28 with Florencia waiting for her turn to fight. It ends at 44:22 when Florencia says, “I don’t want to see anymore.”

**BACKGROUND**
Bullfighting in its modern form has evolved from many influences over the centuries, and became a fixture of public life in Spain by the 18th century. While some criticize the practice as a cruel blood sport, aficionados see bullfighting as a performance, similar to ballet, in which the outcome is uncertain and the skills of the matador in managing the bull help shape the nature of the show. There are about 600 bullrings in Spain, from the 20,000-seat rings in Madrid and Barcelona to the many smaller rings in towns across the country.

In the most common type of Spanish bullfighting, three matadors face two bulls apiece. Assisting are horse-mounted *picadors*, who use lances to bleed and weaken the bulls in the first part of the performance, and *banderilleros*, who place barbs in the bulls during the second part of the performance while executing the first turns of the cape. In the third portion of the event, a matador faces the weakened bull on foot and encourages the bull to charge so that the matador can execute stylized passes with a cape. Finally, the matador kills the bull with a sword.

Women have always had a place in the male-dominated world of bullfighting, although their proper role has been contested and at times their participation has even been banned. The most prominent female bullfighter in recent years has been Mari Paz Vega, featured in the film *Ella Es El Matador (She Is the Matador)*, who earned her status as a matador in 1997. As the only professional female matador in the world, she has built an outstanding reputation in Spain and especially in Mexico and South America, where, she says, the bullfighting world is more open to women. Also featured in the film is aspiring bullfighter Eva Florencia, who must complete 25 bullfights in order to become an official “matador.”

You can find a breakdown of a bullfight and more information on the history of female bullfighters at the POV website.

**ACTIVITY**
1. Ask students to spend a few minutes writing about their dreams for the future. Invite a few volunteers to share what they’ve written with the class.

2. Tell the class that you are going to show a video clip that introduces them to Eva Florencia, a woman who dreams of being a bullfighter in Spain. Then, play Clip 1.
3. Use POV’s Anatomy of a Bullfight feature to provide students with background on what a bullfight entails.

4. Explain that Florencia ran away from her home in Italy at age 16 in order to pursue a career as a bullfighter in Spain. She has completely dedicated herself to achieving her dream. Then, play Clip 2. Ask students if they would be willing to make the sacrifices that Florencia has in order to achieve their dreams.

5. Next, tell students that the top matadors in the world have always been men, and that it has been difficult for female matadors to get invited to the most popular arenas and achieve the same level of success as males. Then, play Clips 3 and 4 and ask students to note what barriers to success female bullfighters have encountered. Use POV’s History of Female Bullfighters to highlight other women matadors and the challenges they faced. On the board, make a list of factors beyond merit that seem to lead to a female bullfighter’s success or failure.

6. Tell students that Florencia trained hard, but struggled to get bookings in notable arenas. Remind the class that in order to become an official matador, she must complete 25 bullfights. Play Clip 5. Tell students that a year later, Florencia was still unable to get the opportunities she needed to become a matador and had to give up on her dream. Also, tell them that currently there is only one active professional female matador in the world: Mari Paz Vega.

7. Explain that women in the United States have had to face barriers to success similar to those that Florencia encountered. Then, provide a brief overview of the different phases of the women’s movement. (See “The Movement” in the Resources section for a good, succinct summary.) Refer back to the list of factors on the board that contribute to a female bullfighter’s success or failure. Ask students to modify this list to reflect the challenges faced during different phases of the U.S. women’s movement. How have these barriers been overcome? Do students believe that any of these challenges still exist today? Why or why not?

8. Ask each student to research a historic or modern woman who was able to overcome barriers to success and make valuable contributions to society. For ideas, consult the list of inductees (http://www.greatwomen.org/women.php?action=viewAll) in The National Women’s Hall of Fame. Each student should prepare a presentation that summarizes his or her chosen woman’s achievements and analyzes how she was able to overcome barriers to succeed. A presentation may take the form of a slideshow, a video, an oral summary of a written report, a poster presentation or a blog entry.

9. After each presentation, discuss how that woman’s achievements have increased opportunities for women and improved society as a whole (or comment on this online in the case of a blog entry).

**ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS**
Students can be assessed on:
- Contributions to class discussions.
- Overall quality of presentations.
EXTENSIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

• Identify the influence that bullfighting has had on modern fashion. View POV’s gallery of matador costumes and recent clothing inspired by these outfits. Then, have students design their own matador-inspired clothing. You can download free croquis drawings (http://www.designersnexus.com/design/free-fashion-croquis-templates/) that class members can use to sketch out their ideas. Then, have students present their work to the class or in small groups and explain the thinking behind their designs.

• Assess the level of gender equality in sports at your school. The Women’s Sports Foundation provides a guide to Title IX (http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/Content/Articles/Issues/Title-IX/P/Playing-Fair-A-Guide-to-Title-IX.aspx) and a tool to help determine a school’s “Title IX grade” (http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/Take-Action/Advocate-for-Change/Grade-Your-School.aspx). Have the class use these resources to learn more about the legal rights provided under Title IX and then evaluate your school’s compliance. Students can also access athletics participation data (http://ope.ed.gov/athletics/) reported by nearly 2,000 colleges and universities to the U.S. Department of Education.

• Use bullfighting to explore gender roles further, as well as the nature of cowardice and bravery. Read Ernest Hemingway’s Death in the Afternoon and discuss the allure of bullfighting. Then, watch Ella Es El Matador (She Is the Matador) in its entirety. How do Eva Florencia and Mari Paz Vega compare to the bullfighters described by Hemingway? Do female bullfighters seem to display fear or courage differently than men? What other factors might distinguish male and female bullfighters? In the film, world-class matador Enrique Ponce says, “A woman in the bullring is not an easy fit.” Do students agree? Why or why not? Have students write persuasive essays about whether or not women should be matadors, citing both the book and the film in their arguments.

RESOURCES

19th Amendment to the Constitution
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html#19
This page provides the text of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution and links to a page that describes the process that brought about its ratification.

Bullfighting - Guide
http://www.andalucia.com/bullfight/guide.htm
This description of a bullfighting event includes details on its traditions and the activities involved in each stage.

Chisholm ’72: Unbought and Unbossed: On Women
http://www.pbs.org/pov/chisholm/special_excerpt_03.php
This book excerpt from the first of two memoirs by pioneering politician Shirley Chisholm reflects on the modern role of women, particularly in politics.

Equal Pay and Compensation Discrimination
http://www.eeoc.gov/types/epa.html
The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission offers an explanation of laws that are designed to help women obtain equal pay for equal work.

**The Movement**
http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/sistersof77/movement.html
Resources related to the film *Sisters of '77* include this description of three historical phases of the women’s movement. This page also links to a succinct timeline of the U.S. women’s movement.

**Not For Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony**
http://www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/
This website explores the 19th century women’s movement through historical documents, articles, essays, biographies, interviews and more.

**NOW: Women and the Vote**
http://www.pbs.org/now/politics/womenvote.html
This timeline provides a brief summary of the women’s suffrage movement and the movement to pass the Equal Rights Amendment.

**The Spanish Fiesta Brava: Historical Perspective and Definition**
http://coloquio.com/toros/bullhist.html
This article written by a matador provides historical information and perspective on bullfighting.

**STANDARDS**
These standards are drawn from “Content Knowledge,” a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning) at http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/.

**Behavioral Studies**
*Standard 1*: Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity and behavior.

**Civics**
*Standard 13*: Understands the character of American political and social conflict and factors that tend to prevent or lower its intensity.

*Standard 14*: Understands issues concerning the disparities between ideals and reality in American political and social life.

*Standard 25*: Understands issues regarding personal, political and economic rights.

**Geography**
*Standard 13*: Understands the forces of cooperation and conflict that shape the divisions of the Earth’s surface.

**Language Arts**
*Standard 4*: Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

*Standard 9*: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.
U.S. History
**Standard 29**: Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties.

World History
**Standard 35**: Understands the patterns of nationalism, state-building and social reform in Europe and the Americas from 1830 to 1914.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**
Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is an educational writer with a background in secondary education and media development. Previously, she served as PBS Interactive’s Director of Education, overseeing the development of curricular resources tied to PBS programs, the PBS TeacherSource website (now PBS Teachers) and online teacher professional development services. She has also taught in Maryland and Northern Virginia.

**Background Sources**