

Elizabeth Blackwell | Lesson Plan

How did Elizabeth Blackwell become the first female doctor in the United States?

Students will understand how Elizabeth Blackwell became the first female doctor in the United States in 1849. Students will understand Dr. Blackwell's determination to achieve her dreams despite the difficulty of forging a new path.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain how Elizabeth Blackwell became the first female doctor in the United States.
- Explain why Elizabeth Blackwell was determined to earn a medical degree and become a doctor.
- Identify the obstacles Elizabeth Blackwell overcame throughout her education.
- Evaluate the significance of Elizabeth Blackwell's achievement.
- Evaluate how Elizabeth Blackwell's determination helped her achieve her dream of becoming a doctor.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Medical degree:** An academic qualification awarded to individuals who have successfully completed a course of study in the field of medicine.
- **Practical joke:** A mischievous or playful trick played on someone.
- **Plight:** A difficult or challenging situation.
- **Admitted:** To be granted entrance or access.
- **Obstacle:** Something that blocks or hinders progress, making it difficult to achieve a goal.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.SL.4

Academic Subject Areas: Biography, Women of History, Perseverance

What You'll Need

- Video: *Elizabeth Blackwell: America's First Female Doctor* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Elizabeth Blackwell: America's First Female Doctor* (Click [Here](#))
- Pictures of Elizabeth Blackwell

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: (15 minutes)

1. Initiate a class discussion on the fear of trying something new or challenging. Prompt students to think about something they have been intimidated by or fearful of trying because it is new to them or historically unproven. Encourage students to think of an example and invite students to share examples aloud and brainstorm together.

Scan to watch episode:



2. Display a copy of the “Elizabeth Blackwell Worksheet” and pass out individual worksheets to students.
3. Instruct students to draw their example of something they are nervous about and explain why in the “Warm-Up Activity” box. Teachers may need to model an example for students (Example: I am afraid to ride a bike because my friends and I have never done it.).
4. Once completed, invite students to share their drawings with a partner or explain them aloud.
5. Invite students to share what they know about what it takes to become a doctor and if anyone can become a doctor today.
6. Read the rest of the worksheet as a class so students know what to listen for during the video.
7. Highlight the theme of perseverance and overcoming obstacles to set the stage for the upcoming video. Show students pictures of Elizabeth Blackwell and explain that she was a woman who accomplished something unprecedented. Encourage students to look for ways throughout the video to see how Elizabeth Blackwell persevered in the face of discrimination and other challenges.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video.
2. Assist students with completing the worksheet alongside the video, encouraging note-taking and active listening.
3. Pause throughout the video to allow students to answer questions—especially short answer responses. If necessary, model short answer responses, restate the question, and write a complete sentence.

Wrap-Up: (10-15 minutes)

1. Allow students 10 minutes to complete the worksheet independently, which can either be collected as a formative assessment or discussed in class.
2. Ask students to read aloud their responses to the “Making Connections” section and share their “Wrap-Up Activity.”
3. Conclude by having students reflect on what they’ve learned about Elizabeth Blackwell. Explain that, like Elizabeth, they can be pioneers in their own ways, whether in academics, sports, or personal projects. Encourage students to persevere and conquer their fears—not letting obstacles stand in the way of accomplishing a goal or dream—just like Dr. Blackwell.

Don’t have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15-20 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.