

# Historica Canada Education Portal

## Jennie Trout

### Overview

This lesson is based on viewing the [Jennie Trout Heritage Minute](#). It explores Trout's courage and determination to enter the male dominated field of medicine in the 1870s. She became the first woman licensed to practice medicine in Canada.

### Aims

Students will use the example of Jennie Trout to learn about and question gender-role stereotypes in her time and in the present. Students will examine the experiences of Jennie Trout and Emily Stowe within the larger context of the history of medicine. Students will also do research and conduct interviews to determine whether women today face discrimination when entering "male dominated" fields.

### Activities

#### 1. Switching Roles

This Minute reveals how rigid our gender-role stereotyping can be.

Take a traditional fairy tale (like the Frog Prince or Cinderella), and reverse the roles.

After telling or reading the story to the class, discuss what made the reversal funny. What does the reversal show about the traditional ways we think about masculinity and femininity?

What are more subtle forms of gender-role stereotyping that exist today? In what ways are men and women more equal today?

## **2. A Big Step**

Jennie Trout took a risk to enter a "male" profession.

In small groups, list areas of work that are still commonly thought to be "male" or "female."

How would it feel to be the first male/female to enter an occupation? What personal qualities would be necessary to cope with the ridicule you might face in a non-traditional job? Discuss.

Invite someone to speak to your class who has chosen a non-traditional career. Have students prepare questions based on their discussions of the Trout Minute.

## **3. Opening the Doors**

Over the centuries, medical practice became more and more specialized, restrictive and licensed. At the same time, it became dominated by males.

Trace the history of Western medicine, paying particular attention to the roles of women and men in medical practice. It is interesting to note the changes in attendants at childbirth, for instance.

Chart the enrollment figures of women in medical schools. How does female enrollment compare to male enrollment today? Conduct similar studies of university enrollment, and enrollment in other professional training, as in law or engineering.

Interview female doctors about their own medical training, comparing it to the experiences dramatized in the Trout Minute. Has the professional training completely changed, or are there still some remnants of the older attitudes? Students may do similar interviews with female lawyers, engineers, or women in other traditionally male occupations.

#### **4. Emily Stowe**

While Jennie Trout is the central character in the Heritage Minute, her friend Emily Stowe was actually the first practicing woman doctor in Canada.

Read about Stowe's character and career. How did her reaction to the male domination of the profession differ from Trout's?

What other advances in women's rights did Emily Stowe pursue?

#### **Resources**

- [Heritage Minute: Jennie Trout](#)

- [Heritage Minute: Emily Murphy](#)

- [Heritage Minute: Agnes Macphail](#)

- [The Canadian Encyclopedia: Jennie Trout](#)
- [The Canadian Encyclopedia: Emily Stowe](#)