

Use this worksheet to support Activity 2, "Women and Work: 1600-1900," located on pages 4 and 5 of Historica Canada's **Women in Canadian History Education Guide**.

Choose one of the documentary sources below, and use the Graphic Organizers to answer questions about women's workplace roles, expectations, conditions, and exploitation.

Teacher Tip: Introduce your students to the concept of "reading against the grain." This is key to "doing" women's history because the subject matter of documentary evidence and material history is often male-oriented.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Note that sources have not been modified from their original form.

1. Sales contract for a slave from the Pawnee Nation, 1740
2. Sale of five Black slaves, Québec, 25 September 1743
3. Employment of Angélique Vignaud, 8 years of age, as servant and domestic, 15 December 1736
4. Description of a woman's work in a cotton mill, Royal Commission on Labour and Capital, 1889
5. Description of women's work in dressmaking industry, Royal Commission on Labour and Capital, 1889
6. Newspaper editorial on the Sweating System, 1897

1. Sales contract for a slave from the Pawnee Nation, 1740

[...] Concerning The Presentation made to the said sieur La Coste, acting on behalf of the said Hurtubise, by damoiselle Marianne Deruisseaux, wife of the said sieur Marin urtubise here present of her Extreme Need for Money in order to have her fields Harvested and to meet her other personal Needs, not having found anyone to advance her Money and not having other Means of finding money than to sell a Slave named Manon, of the panis nation, who has been her Servant to This Day and whom she can do without; she has, for These reasons, requested the Said sieur La Coste, As proxy for the said sieur Marin urtubises, her husband to allow her [slave] to be sold to whomsoever; Wherefore The said sieur La Coste, as proxy, Acknowledged and Confessed to have sold, left, Ceded, transported and relinquished by these presents with a guarantee against all troubles and Obstacles, General and particular to sieur François Marie de Coigne, Merchant and Bourgeois in This city, residing therein in his House on Rue St Paul, here present and accepting, the Said Manon Slave aged twenty years or Approximately for him, as well as his heirs and assignees, to use and dispose of as he sees fit, as with other goods belonging to him through true and Loyal acquisition, to take possession of her at the time hereafter declared, and furthermore for a Sum of three Hundred Livres that the Said sieur de Coigne paid in Cash, in receipts from the Beaver trade, to the said Sieur La Coste in view of the said undersigned notaries [...] This sale, Transfer, transport and relinquishment is thus done, Provided that the said sieur de Coigne Allow the Said Slave to remain with the said Damoiselle urtubise until the feast of St Michel as she is needed for the harvesting, following which, after the feast of St Michel, The Following day at the latest, the said Sr La Coste promises to have the said Slave delivered to sieur de Coigne. [...] Done and Approved at Montréal in The house of sieur La Coste undersigned, in the year seventeen Hundred Forty [...]

Source: Archives nationales du Québec, Centre de Montréal, Greffe de notaire, CN601 S372, Simonnet, François, Sale by Sieur La Coste of a slave named Manon to Sieur de Couagne, September 7, 1740.

<http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/angelique/contexte/lasociete/esclavage/2293en.html>

2. Sale of five Black slaves, 1743

Before the undersigned Royal notary At The Provostship of quebec, therein Residing, and the witnesses named below, was present Sieur charles Reaume merchant usually Residing on The seigneurie of Isle Jesus near The city of montreal and presently in this city, Who has sold by these presents, with a guarantee against all problems and hindrances whatsoever, to Sieur Loüis Cureux dit St Germain Bourgeois in this city, who accepts the acquisition for Himself and his assignees, five negro slaves, two men and three women and girls whom the said purchaser states to have seen are currently At the house of the widow dame cachelievre, and the said vendor promises to Deliver them shortly to the said purchaser for the Sum of three thousand livres which the Said purchaser Promises to pay to the said Seller upon the Delivery of the said slaves. Thus it was ꝑc, obliging, ꝑc. done and passed at the said quebec, at the Office of the said notary in the morning of the twenty-five of September seventeen Hundred forty-three, in the presence of Sieurs Loüis Lambert And nicolas Bellevüe witnesses residing at the said quebec who along with the Said Sieur Reaume and notary did sign, the Said Sieur St Germain having declared to not Know how to write or Sign as requested following a Reading done of it.

Source: Archives nationales du Québec, Centre de Québec, Greffe de notaire, CN301 S224, Pinguet de Vaucour, Jacques-Nicolas, Sale of five Black slaves by Charles Rhéaume to Louis Cureaux de Saint-Germain, September 25, 1743.

<http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/angelique/contexte/lasociete/esclavage/2300en.html>

3. Indentured servitude contract, 1736

Employment of Angélique Vignaud, 8 years of age, as servant and domestic, 15 December 1736.

On the 15 xber [December] 1736

Employment of angelique vignaud
by Sr mailhiot and his wife

Appearing before the undersigned Royal notaries of the Jurisdiction of Montreal, therein residing, was present Louise heleine Poirier, widow of Jean Baptiste vignaud inhabitant of Isle Perrault, domestic Servant of Sieur françois Mailhiot, bourgeois Merchant of this city and residing on Rue St Paul, Who by the presents has voluntarily Placed her daughter angelique vignaud, approximately eight years of age, in the employment of the said sieur mailhiot And dame Charlotte Gamelin his Spouse who have accepted her, until the Full age of twenty years, and promises during the said period of time to have her said daughter work at the house of the Said Sieur and dame Mailhiot As a Domestic servant and without the possibility of leaving their service under whatever pretext, under penalty of all expenses, Damages and dues, And in the event that her said daughter leaves their said service, she is obliged to have Her return to the Said Sieur and dame Mailhiot to complete her time there, And the Said Sieur and dame Mailhiot Promise and Together commit to nourish, Lodge and Keep the said Angélique vignaud until the age of twenty years And to treat her humanely And Otherwise turn over to her At the end of the said period of time all Linen and clothing that she will have used, along with Twelve new Beaufort linen Shirts, a Section of Muslin, a sallamande Petticoat, one pair of Muslin stockings, one pair of shoes, two Aunes of muslin, one pair of Gloves, one black Headdress And a silk handkerchief, and under penalty if not done ꝑc Thus it was ꝑc Promising, obliging ꝑc Renouncing. Done And Signed in the said Montreal in the Study of Gaudron De Chevremont one of the undersigned notaries in the year seventeen hundred thirty-six on The fifteen of December And signed by the Said Sieur and dame Mailhiot; As for the said vignaud widow She declared to not Know how to Write or sign as requested after a reading was done in accordance with the Ordinance.

Source: Archives nationales du Québec, Centre de Montréal, Greffe de notaire, CN601, S89, Gaudron de Chèvremont, Charles-René, "Indenture of Angélique Vignaud to Sieur Mailhiot and his wife," December 15, 1736.

<http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/angelique/contexte/lasociete/montrealaises/2281en.html>

4. Description of a woman's work in a cotton mill, Royal Commission on Labour and Capital, 1889

Jennie Morrell, Weaver, Cornwall, wife of William Arkwright, of the same place, Laborer, called and sworn.

By Mr. Boivin :—

- Q- What is your occupation? **A-** I am a weaver in the Stormont Cotton Mill.
Q- How long have you worked in that mill? **A-** The most of four years.
Q- What are your wages there? **A-** I get about \$1 a day now.
Q- Are there any children working there? **A-** Not in the room I am in.
Q- Is your work constant? **A-** Yes.
Q- Do you see any employee there having too much work to do? **A-** I think we all have too much work, once in a while.
Q- Do you work by the piece? **A-** Yes.
Q- And you take a little rest when working by the piece—you do not object to take a little rest when working by the piece? **A-** Yes; but if we do not do the work we do not get the money, that is all.

By Mr. Heakes :—

- Q- I suppose prices are not so good that you can afford to take a rest? **A-** No; it is only \$1 a day.
Q- Do you get as much now as before the strike? **A-** Well, I have got back again now.
Q- Is it true that the length of the cut has been increased? **A-** Not that I know of.
Q- Is every thing satisfactory in the room where you are now? **A-** Every thing that I know of.
Q- Is the treatment of the hands fairly good? **A-** Well, he always used me well.

By Mr. McLean :—

- Q- Did any of the overseers ever use obscene or bad language towards you? **A-** No; he never used bad language to me.

Source: Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital in Canada : evidence, Ontario. Ottawa : A. Senecal, 1889, http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_08114/2?r=0&s=1

5. Description of women's work in dressmaking industry, Royal Commission on Labour and Capital, 1889

Miss Helen Garnett, Dressmaker, Toronto, called and sworn.

By Mr. Armstrong :—

- Q- Will you please tell the Commission the average weekly wages of a first- class milliner or dressmaker, or are both trades combined? **A-** They are separate.
Q- Take, then, a first class dressmaker; please state what would be her average wages? **A-** I have never been in anyone else's workroom besides my own, and I run only a small business. My best hands receive \$5, \$6, or \$7; \$7 is the outside a week.
Q- How many hours will a woman work per day for those wages? **A-** From 8 until 6, with one hour at noon.
Q- Take young girls going to learn the business; are they apprenticed? **A-** Usually they are.
Q- How many years have they to serve before they become experienced hands? **A-** They think it dreadful if they have to serve six months.
Q- What do they generally receive per week when they first go to the business? **A-** They are supposed to serve six months without receiving anything. They are usually little girls who come right out of school. We have to teach them to sew; they cannot even so much as use a needle. My experience has been that sometimes, a girl can be very useful in two months, but then she has been taught to sew at home.
Q- Then you would consider a young girl who has some knowledge of sewing much more useful in the business than a young girl who has never been taught that branch? **A-** Certainly.
Q- Are there many dressmakers idle in Toronto at the present time, to your knowledge? **A-** I could not say; there are none of mine idle; this is what we call the dull season.
Q- What would be the average wages of a first-class milliner, to your knowledge? **A-** I used to work at the millinery myself, and the wages—of course it is difficult to give you the average, but the best wages were about \$8 or \$9 a week. That, however, lasts a very short time; it would only be about four months in the year.
Q- Are they employed a larger part of the year at less wages? **A-** Yes; we keep on the cheap hands and teach them while business is dull, because we have more time ourselves to show them how we want the work done. [...]

By Mr. Heakes :-

Q- You have mentioned the rate of wages paid by yourself. Do you think that the general rate paid will be about the same as that you have mentioned? **A-** There are more fashionable places than mine where the hands will obtain larger wages, and establishments that keep more hands and do a more select business, although in larger places they do piece-work.

Q- Do you think that which you have given us would be a fair average of a dressmaker's wages, say \$5 per week? **A-** I have girls to whom I give more than that, but the trouble is with girls that they are always looking to getting married; they do not make a business of dressmaking. I do not know why it is, but you can very seldom get young women to make up their minds that they are going to spend their lives in this business. They do not take enough interest in it, the interest in it they might take. The trouble is in the girls themselves, and of course with most of my good girls the trouble is they get married just when I get them where I want them. They leave me and I have to begin again. [...]

Source: Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labor and Capital in Canada : evidence, Ontario. Ottawa : A. Senecal, 1889, http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_08114/2?r=0&s=1

6. Newspaper editorial on the Sweating System, 1897

Daily Mail and Empire

9 October 1897

The term "sweating," when properly used, denotes a condition of labour in which a maximum amount of work in a given time is performed for a minimum wage, and in which the ordinary rules of health and comfort are disregarded. It is inseparably associated with contract work, and is intensified by sub-contracting in shops conducted in homes ... Although the sweating system exists in a number of occupations, it is the garment-making industry (comprising men's clothing, ladies' cloaks and suits, undergarment, and shirt-making branches) that has given it its real significance.

Garments lend themselves readily to such a system of manufacture. Sewing is a branch preeminently suited to the home, and a coat or blouse is as easily manufactured there as in a factory. Merely working at home on some article of manufacture is not in itself so objectionable, it is that the rate of wages paid for labour is, as a rule, so low when the sweating system has come into vogue that work from early morn till late at night will scarcely suffice to procure the necessaries of a bare existence. But even this is not the worst feature of the evil. The combination of living apartment and factory, and the employment of outsiders therein, constitute

the detrimental features which in time become a menace to the community. ...

The woman who was working said that she received only \$1.50 a week, and out of this paid 75 cents a week for a room. She was entirely dependent upon herself, and had been forced to take this wage rather than starve to death. When asked how she could possibly live on 75 cents a week she replied that it would not be long before she would have to give up altogether. The hours were long, from eight in the morning until six every night; incessant work; no one to talk to ...

Source: Thomas Thorner, ed., *A Country Nourished on Self-Doubt: Documents in Canadian History, 1867-1980* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1998), 69-72.

WOMEN AND WORK

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

THE 5WS: QUESTIONING THE SOURCE

<p>Who created it, and who is the subject?</p>	
<p>What is it about, and what kind of work is involved? What is the source's main idea?</p>	
<p>When was the source created? When do the events described take place in relation to the source's creation?</p>	
<p>Where was it created? Where did the events take place?</p>	
<p>Why was the document created? Why is this source significant?</p>	

CONTEXT

Situate the source in space and time, placing it in the wider picture of history. What else was happening at the time the document was created? What questions about women working might this help answer?

EXPLORING

Examine the details of the source. What is it about? What words, images or symbols are used? What stands out? What was the document's purpose? What or who is missing? Who was the intended audience?

REACHING CONCLUSIONS

Use context, evidence, and observations to develop conclusions. What can the source reveal? What was the author's purpose in creating this text? What does the source tell us about women's workplace history in Canada?

FINDING PROOF

Compare your conclusions with other primary and secondary sources to corroborate your findings. Do other sources confirm or challenge your conclusions? Why?

What further questions do you have? What further insights can you draw?
