

# ACTIVITY 6:

## WOMEN AND LABOUR IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

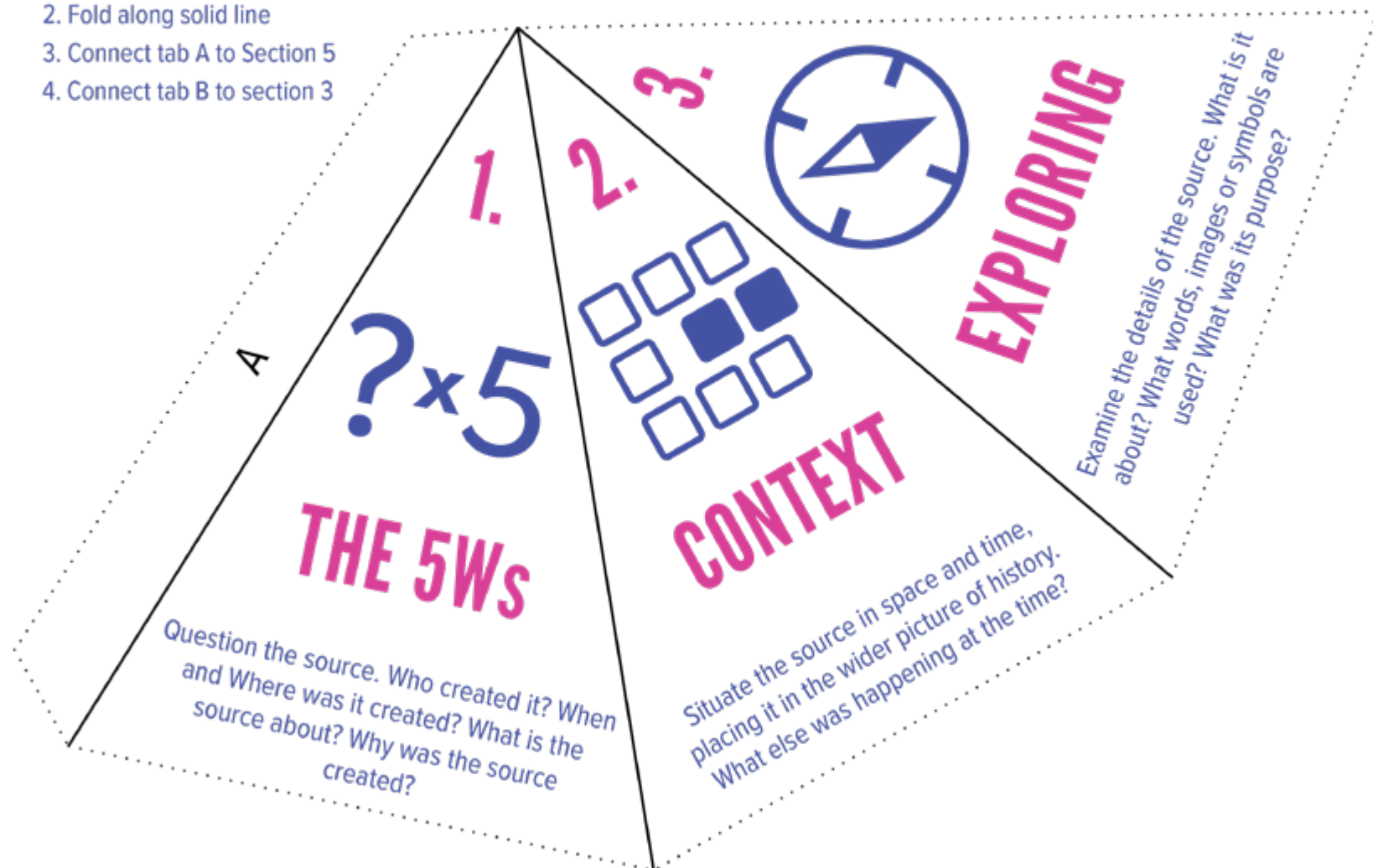
Use this worksheet to support Activity 6, "Women and Labour in the Great Depression," located on page 7 of Historica Canada's **Women in Canadian History Education Guide**.

Choose a letter from the examples below, written by a Canadian woman to Prime Minister Bennett, and use the Primary Source Pyramid to analyze the letter. What does it reveal about the impact of the Depression?

### 3D PYRAMID: 5 STEPS TO ANALYZE PRIMARY SOURCES

#### INSTRUCTIONS

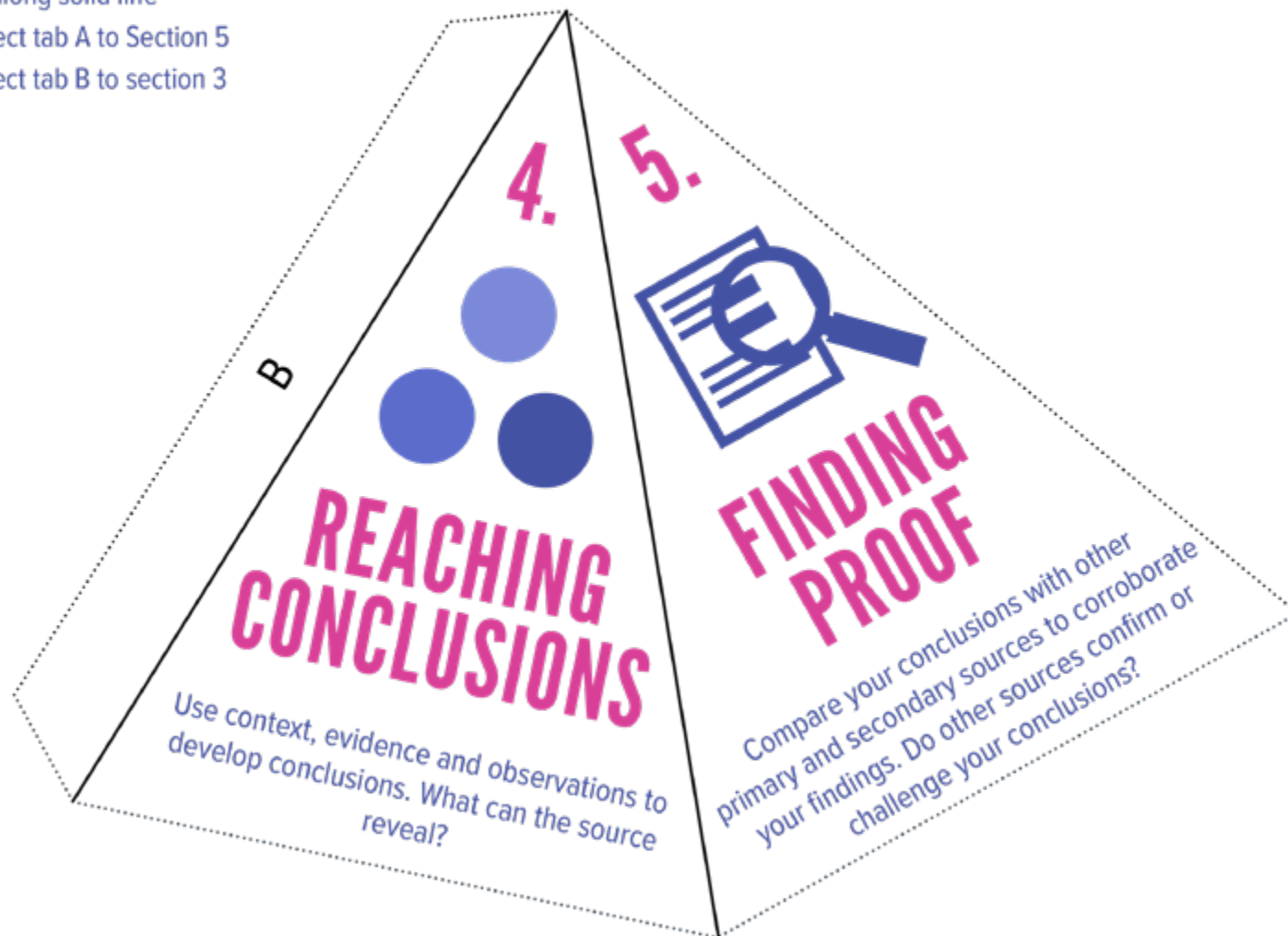
1. Cut along dotted line
2. Fold along solid line
3. Connect tab A to Section 5
4. Connect tab B to section 3



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#### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut along dotted line
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3. Connect tab A to Section 5
4. Connect tab B to section 3





### #1. Hamilton, Ontario. April 6, 1934.

"I am writing you as a last resource to see if I cannot, through your aid, obtain a position and at last, after a period of more than two years, support myself and enjoy again a little independence. The fact is: this day I am faced with starvation and I see no possible means of counteracting or even averting it temporarily. [...] Since I have applied for every position that I heard about but there were always so many girls who applied that it was impossible to get work. [...] I began to cut down on my food and I obtained a poor, but respectable, room at \$1. per week. [...] Above everything else I have been very particular about my friends and since moving here I have never gone out in the evening. I know no one here personally and the loneliness is hard to bear, but oh, sir, the thought of starvation is driving me mad! [...] Oh please sir, can you do something for me? Can you get me a job anywhere in the Dominion of Canada. I have not had to go on relief during this depression but I cannot get relief even here. Moreover it is a job I want and as long as I get enough to live I shall be happy again."

Miss Elizabeth McCrae

**Source:** Thomas Thorner, *A Country Nourished on Self-Doubt: Documents in Post-Confederation Canadian History* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1998), 272-274.

### #2 Craven, Alberta. February 11, 1935.

"Please don't think I'm crazy for writing you this letter, but I've got three little children, and they are all in need of shoes as well as underwear but shoe's are the most needed as two of them go to school and its cold, my husband has not had a crop for 8 years only enough for seed and some food. and I don't know what to do. I hate to ask for help. I never have before and we are staying off relief if possible. What I wanted was \$3.00 if I could possible get it or even some old cloths to make over but if you don't want to do this please don't mention it over radios as every one knows me around here and I'm well liked, so I beg of you not to mention my name. I've never asked anyone around here for help or cloths as I know them to well."

Mrs P.E. Bottle

**Source:** Michael Bliss and Linda M. Grayson, eds., *The Wretched of Canada: Letters to R.B. Bennett, 1930-1935* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 112.

<https://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/norman/background/1930s/5394en.html>



**#3 Lambert, Saskatchewan. February 23, 1934.**

"I am writing you regarding Relief Will you please tell me if we can get Steady relief & how much we should be allowed per week[.] we have three children 2 of School age, one boy is going to School Some day's he cant go to school as we have no food in the house & I wont let him go those day's. [...] we came to Lambert we came here on the intentions of taking up a home stead & we couldnt locate any land suitable & the water here is rank. everytime I go up to ask the Mayor here in Lambert for any asistances he always Says he cant help us as the town is broke [...] we are living in a shack two rooms a bed room Just enough room for two beds & the house is cold theres two inches of Ice freezes on the water in the house cold nights we are shivering in bed at night we have no mattresses on our beds, only gunny Sacks & not enough blankets on our beds. [...] I have no house dresses & no wash tub & when I tell Mayor veal those thing's he says why dont you go back to Manitoba where you came from its a nice thing for a old country english man to tell a Canadian in its own country Eh. [...] all I have in the house now is potatoes & there are good meny people the same in this town[.] I am five months pregnant & I havent even felt life yet to my baby & its I feel quite sure for the lack of food [...]"

Mrs. C.L. Warden

**Source :** Michael Bliss and Linda M. Grayson, eds., *The Wretched of Canada: Letters to R.B. Bennett, 1930-1935* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 75

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