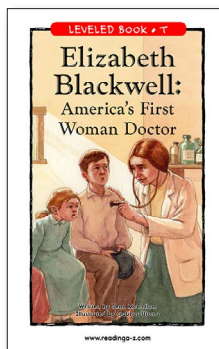


Lesson Plan

Elizabeth Blackwell: America's First Woman Doctor



About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Biography Page Count: 16 Word Count: 1,188

Book Summary

"This is the way to learn!" wrote Elizabeth Blackwell in 1847, after beginning her medical studies. Blackwell was the first woman ever to attend medical college. Readers will learn how this determined woman never gave up on her dream, and how she went on to devote her life to helping others. In the process, she also broke down many of the barriers to becoming doctors that women once faced.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Summarize

Objectives

- Summarize to understand text
- Identify elements of a biography
- Recognize and use proper nouns that name places
- Identify and understand syllable patterns

Materials

Green text indicates resources are available on the website.

- Book—*Elizabeth Blackwell: America's First Woman Doctor* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry-erase board
- Dictionary
- [Elements of a biography, proper nouns: names of places, and syllable patterns worksheets](#)
- [Discussion cards](#)



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting the book on an interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if the books are reused.)

Vocabulary

*Bold vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on [VocabularyA-Z.com](#).

- Content words:

Story critical: **anatomy** (n.), **career** (n.), **determined** (adj.), **graduation** (n.), **physician** (n.), **rejected** (v.)

Enrichment: **improper** (adj.), **infection** (n.), **medical** (adj.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Ask students who their doctor is and if their doctor is a male or a female.
- Explain to students that, not that long ago, women were not allowed to be doctors, and no medical college would accept them. It wasn't until the mid-1800s that a woman named Elizabeth Blackwell helped change that. Explain to students that they are going to read a biography of Elizabeth Blackwell. A biography is a specific type of nonfiction book that tells factual information about a real person, usually written by someone else. Ask students if they have read any other biographies.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name, illustrator's name).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Summarize**

- Direct students to the table of contents. Remind students that the table of contents provides an overview of what the book is about. Ask students what they expect to find out about in each section.
- Have students preview the rest of the book, looking at illustrations, photographs, captions, and other text features. Show students the glossary and explain its purpose.
- Explain to students that one way to understand and remember information in a book is to write a summary, or a brief overview, of the most important information in a section. Point out that a summary often answers the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why*. A biographical summary will answer these questions about a specific person.
- Create a chart on the board with the headings: *Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where*, and *Why*.
Think-aloud: *As I read this book, I am going to stop every now and then to remind myself about the information I have read so far about Elizabeth Blackwell. Doing this helps me remember what I'm reading and makes me think about new information. I can use a chart like this one to help me keep track of the important details. When I finish reading the book, I will be able to tell, in my own words, some of the most important information from each section of the book.*
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Elements of a biography**

- Ask students to review with you the difference between a *biography* and a *story* (*biography*: the story of a real person's life written by someone else; *story*: made up by the author, with characters who may or may not be real). Explain that this book is a biography. A biography includes information about the person's personality, accomplishments, and influence on the world.
- Write the words *Personality*, *Accomplishments*, and *Influence* on the board. Discuss with students the meaning of each of these words (*personality*: the qualities that makes each person unique; *accomplishments*: success achieved through practice or training; *influence*: an effect on someone or something).
Think-aloud: *As I read through each section of this book, I am going to stop and think about what I've learned about Elizabeth Blackwell. As I read, I can think about these categories as well as the who, what, when, where, and why questions. By categorizing the information this way, I know I will understand more about her and the events of her life.*

Introduce the Vocabulary

- As students preview the book, ask them to discuss what they see in the photographs. Reinforce vocabulary words they will encounter in the text.
- Model how to apply word-attack strategies. Direct students to page 11. Have them find the boldface word *improper*. Model how students can use prior knowledge along with prefix and context clues to get an idea of the word's meaning. Review or explain that the prefix *im-* means *not*, or the *opposite of*.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

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- Model how students can use a dictionary to find a word's meaning. Read the definition of *improper* from the dictionary, and ask students what they think might have been improper about Elizabeth Blackwell. Have another volunteer read the definition for *improper* in the glossary to confirm the meaning of the word. Remind students that they should always check whether a word makes sense by rereading it in the sentence. As time allows, repeat the exercise with other words in the text.
- Have students preview the rest of the book.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to learn about Blackwell's personality, accomplishments, and influence on women and the medical profession.

During Reading

Student Reading

 **Guide the reading:** Have students read pages 4 through 6. Model underlining important details to help summarize important information and identifying elements of a biography in the first two sections.

Think-aloud: *I made sure to stop reading after these pages to summarize what I'd read so far. First, I thought about the information that answered the questions who, what, when, where, and why about Elizabeth Blackwell. Then, in my mind, I organized the important information into a few sentences. After reading pages 4 and 5, I've decided that these pages are a snapshot of Blackwell as she began her medical studies. I think the author did this to grab my attention. The section titled "A New Direction" begins to tell the story of Elizabeth's life. In this section, I learned that she was born in 1821 to a large and loving family. Her parents believed that boys and girls deserved a good education. I also learned that Elizabeth and her family moved to the United States, and her father died soon afterward. The family struggled to get by. I will underline these words and phrases. I will also underline that in 1844, Elizabeth visited a sick neighbor who said she should become a doctor.*

- Review with students that a biography answers the questions *who, what, when, where, and why* about a specific person. Modify the headings on the chart to read: *Who is this book about? What did she do? When did this happen? Where did it happen? Why did this happen? How did she make it happen?*
- Invite students to assist you in filling in this information on the chart on the board. Have them decide which facts go in the various boxes of the chart. Point out that sometimes not all of the questions (*who, what, when, where, and why*) are answered in every section. Create a summary with students on the basis of the information in the chart. (*Elizabeth Blackwell was born in England in 1821 to a large, loving family. They moved to America in 1832, but her father died soon after, leaving the family poor. After visiting a sick neighbor, she started thinking about becoming a doctor.*)
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read to the end of page 8. When students have finished reading, have them work with a partner to identify the important information (What: *Girls and women had few rights and career opportunities; Elizabeth identified three things she needed to do: save money, learn human biology, get accepted to medical school; lived with two doctors, taught music to make money, studied.* When: *in the 1840s.* Where: *America, North and South Carolina.* Why: *Elizabeth became determined to become a doctor.*)
- Have students work together on a separate piece of paper to create a summary of this section.
- Ask students to identify Blackwell's personality, accomplishments, and influence from the discussion and their reading (Personality: *smart, determined, resourceful, brave;* Accomplishments: *identified her goals, moved to North and South Carolina, taught music to save money, studied medical texts.*)

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

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- Distribute and explain the **summarize worksheet**. Write this information on the chart on the board and have students write the information on their worksheet. Discuss with students the words from the book that support the information on the chart.
- Discuss how Blackwell's personality might have influenced her accomplishments. Facilitate the discussion with questions such as: *How would you describe Blackwell's personality? What characteristics of her personality might have influenced her to do the things she did in her early life?*



Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to underline important details and to use the information learned to identify the elements of a biography (personality, accomplishments, and influence on others).



Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Divide students into pairs. Assign each pair one of the remaining sections from the book. Remind them to underline information that answers the questions *who, what, when, where, and why* about Elizabeth Blackwell while reading. Have each group discuss the information they underlined in their section. Have them use the information to rehearse an oral summary of the section. When students have finished, share and discuss their summaries aloud.
- **Think-aloud:** *I know that summarizing keeps me actively involved in what I'm reading and helps me remember what I've read. I know that I will remember more about Elizabeth Blackwell because I summarized as I read the book.*
- **Independent practice:** Have students fill in their underlined information on their worksheet, then on the back, write a summary for the section they worked on.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Discuss how much of Blackwell's work and actions influenced the career opportunities for women in America and Europe, especially in the medical field.
- **Independent practice:** Have students use their biographical summary worksheet to identify and discuss Blackwell's personality, accomplishments, and influence.
- **Enduring understanding:** When we read biographies, we not only learn important and interesting details about a person, but we also learn about the time period in which the person lived. After reading this story about Elizabeth Blackwell, what else did you learn about women and their rights in the 1800s?

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: **Proper nouns: Names of places**

- Review or explain that a noun is a person, place, or thing. Write the following sentence on the board: *Elizabeth Blackwell was born in England.* Underline *Elizabeth Blackwell*, and point out that this is an example of a proper noun, naming a person.
- Ask students why *England* is capitalized. Explain or review that this is an example of a *proper noun*, naming a specific place; therefore, it is capitalized as well. Specific things are also proper nouns and should be capitalized. For example, point out the words *Declaration of Independence* in the text box on page 7 and explain that this is the name of a specific thing.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

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- Remind students not to confuse a proper noun with the capital letter used at the beginning of a sentence or with the title of a section. Point out instances in the book where capitals are used but a proper noun is not present.
- **Check for understanding:** Write *Place* on the board and underline it. Ask students to read through page 9 and locate any proper nouns that name a place (*Philadelphia, New York City, Geneva Medical College, New York*). Write these on the board. Ask them to notice other proper nouns on the page that name people (*Blackwell, Elizabeth*) or things (*October*).
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [proper nouns worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers aloud after students finish.

Word Work: Syllable patterns

- Review with students that a *syllable* is a unit of sound in a word. A syllable contains a vowel and possibly one or more consonants. For example, point out to students that the word *girl* contains one syllable, the word *Blackwell* contains two syllables, and *unmarried* contains three. Explain that many words have multiple syllables, like the words *Elizabeth* and *Philadelphia*. Explain to students that knowing how to break words into syllables can help them read and spell longer or unfamiliar words.
- Write the word *doctor* on the board. Say the word aloud, stressing the syllables, and put a dot over each of the vowels in the word. Then, draw a line to divide the word into its two syllables. Say: *Notice that the vowel o is in the middle of the syllable doc, and it is closed in by the consonants d and c on either side. The vowel sound is short in the syllable doc. We call this a closed syllable. Often, vowels in closed syllables are short vowels. I can use this strategy when I am trying to sound out unfamiliar words.*
- Repeat the process above with the word *become*. Demonstrate that the syllable break comes after the vowel (*be/come*), so the first syllable is an *open syllable*—there is no consonant closing it in at the end. Often, open syllable vowels are long.
- **Check for understanding:** Write several more words from the book on the board (*repay, visit, limits, female*, and so on), making sure to choose three- or four-syllable words as well. Ask student volunteers to come to the board and divide each word into syllables and then explain whether the first syllable is open or closed. If students are ready, have them identify whether the second and third syllable is open or closed.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [syllable patterns worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers aloud after students finish.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Have students discuss Elizabeth Blackwell's important work as a doctor.

Extend the Reading

Informational Writing Connection

Provide print and Internet resources for students to further research the life of Elizabeth Blackwell. Invite students to add to the knowledge learned in the book by finding three additional facts about her personality, accomplishments, and influence. Citing information from their research on note cards, have students participate in a "Did You Know?" round-table sharing and discussion format. Visit WritingA-Z.com for a lesson and leveled materials on informational writing.

Social Studies Connection

Provide print, Internet, and other media resources for students to further research the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 and the Equal Rights Amendment. Help students to explore and draw conclusions as to why women didn't have the right to vote until 1919 and why the ERA has still not been adopted. If time allows, ask students to create a bulletin board highlighting the history of women's rights in the United States. Provide students with copies of other Reading A–Z books that feature famous women, such as *Annie Oakley*, *Jane Goodall*, *Rosalind Franklin's Beautiful Twist*, *Women of the Supreme Court*, *Helen Keller*, and *Sonia Joins the Supreme Court*.

Skill Review

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently use the strategy of summarizing to comprehend the text during discussion and on a worksheet
- identify elements of a biography and categorize information by element during reading and on a worksheet
- correctly identify proper nouns in the text, during discussion, and on a worksheet
- accurately identify and understand open and closed syllable patterns during discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

- **Book Quiz**
- **Retelling Rubric**