WOMEN'S HISTORY

LIVES & LEGACIES OF IRISH DIASPORA WOMEN

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

LADY MARY HEATH

1896-1939

Made history by flying solo across Africa, from Cape Town to the UK, in 1928

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

LADY MARY HEATH

Key Achievements

- Britain’s first female commercial pilot
- Set a High Jump World Record
- Made history by flying solo from Cape Town to the UK, in 1928

Struggles/Challenges

- Overcame gender discrimination in both aviation and athletics, fighting for women’s rights to participate in these fields

Impact/Legacy

- Pioneered the inclusion of women in aviation and athletics

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

LADY MARY HEATH

QUESTION

How do you think Lady Mary Heath’s accomplishments influenced opportunities for women today in aviation and sports?

KAY MCNULTY

1921-2006

Worked as one of the original programmers of the ENIAC, one of the world's first general-purpose electronic computers

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

KAY MCNULTY

Key Achievements

- Original programmer of the ENIAC, one of the first general-purpose electronic computers
- Developed early programming techniques, foundational for modern software

Struggles/Challenges

- Faced gender discrimination and went uncredited due to being a woman

Impact/Legacy

- Paved the way for women in STEM
- Shaped the foundations of modern computing

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

KAY MCNULTY

QUESTION

How do you think Kay McNulty's contributions compare to the way we recognise and encourage women in STEM today?

MARY ‘MOTHER’ JONES

C.1837-1930

Played a key role in organising major strikes which brought national attention to the exploitation of child workers

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

MARY ‘MOTHER’ JONES

Key Achievements

- Organised major strikes highlighting child worker exploitation
- Co-founded the Industrial Workers of the World, uniting workers for fair wages and better conditions

Struggles/Challenges

- Faced opposition from industrialists, authorities, and union leaders
- Frequently arrested, threatened, and denounced as an agitator

Impact/Legacy

- Shaped the American workers’ rights movement
- Inspired future union organisers and reinforced collective action for social justice

Mary Harris "Mother" Jones - Zinn Education Project

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

MARY ‘MOTHER’ JONES

QUESTION

Do you think activism today faces the same level of resistance as in Mary Jones' day, and how is it different?

Mary Harris "Mother" Jones - Zinn Education Project

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

EILEEN GRAY

1878-1976

Designed the E-1027 house, a revolutionary example of modernist architecture

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

EILEEN GRAY

Key Achievements

- Designed the revolutionary E-1027 house
- Created iconic pieces like the E-1027 adjustable table and Bibendum chair

Struggles/Challenges

- Overshadowed by male contemporaries like Le Corbusier
- Faced technical and health challenges with Japanese lacquer

Impact/Legacy

- Pioneered the use of tubular steel and lacquer in furniture, influencing the Bauhaus movement
- Established herself as a leading figure in modernist design and architecture, paving the way for women in both fields

EILEEN GRAY

QUESTION

Why do you think some innovators get credit for their work while others are forgotten, and how can we make sure overlooked figures in history get the recognition they deserve?

FANNY DURACK

1889-1956

First Irish-Australian woman to win Olympic Gold in swimming

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

FANNY DURACK

Key Achievements

- First Irish-Australian woman to win Olympic Gold in Swimming
- Set 12 world records throughout her career

Struggles/Challenges

- Discouraged from entering the Olympics as swimming was deemed inappropriate for women
- Forced to raise own funds when competing as female swimmers received little financial aid at the time

Impact/Legacy

- Trailblazer for women in competitive sports fields
- Contributed to the acceptance of professional female swimmers

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum

FANNY DURACK

QUESTION

Do you think female athletes today still face barriers in sports, and how do those challenges compare to what Fanny Durack experienced over 100 years ago?

EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum