

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

The Civil War and the Women of Washington
1848–1868



Capital Dames

“Roberts is a gifted narrator of Civil War history, weaving the experiences and perspectives of the women into a fresh and illuminating account of key battles and events.” —*Washington Post*

COKIE
ROBERTS



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About This Book

Cokie Roberts, the author of three *New York Times* bestsellers, including *Founding Mothers* and *Ladies of Liberty*, turns her attention to the Civil War in this riveting exploration of the ways in which the conflict transformed not only the lives of women in Washington, D.C., but also the city itself.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, the small, social Southern town of Washington, D.C., found itself caught between warring sides in a four-year battle to determine the future of the United States. Much has been written about the men who defined the course of the war, but the role of America's women in the conflict has been given short shrift. *Capital Dames* introduces the resilient and remarkable women who remained in America's capital after the declaration of secession, chronicling their experiences during this momentous period of our country's history—and the transformation of a Southern society town into a center of national power, activism, and change.

While the nation's men marched off to war, either onto the battlefields or into the halls of Congress, the women of Washington joined the cause as well. As the city was transformed into an immense Union Army camp and later a hospital, they enlisted as nurses, supply organizers, relief workers, and journalists. Many risked their lives making munitions in highly flammable arsenals, toiled at the Treasury Department printing greenbacks to finance the war, and plied their needlework skills at the Navy Yard—once the sole province of men—to sew canvas gunpowder bags for the troops.

Examining newspaper articles, government records, and private letters and diaries—many never before published—Roberts brings the war-torn capital into focus through the lives of formidable ladies like Sara Agnes Pryor and Elizabeth Blair Lee. Her engrossing, well-researched narrative is an inspiring work about increasing independence and political empowerment, honoring the indispensable role of Washington, D.C.'s women in strengthening the city while keeping the lines of communication open with their Southern sisters, and in facilitating healing once the fighting was done. Compelling social history at its best, *Capital Dames* concludes that the war not only changed Washington; it also forever changed the role of women in American society.

About the Author



Cokie Roberts is a political commentator for ABC News and NPR. She has won countless awards and in 2008 was named a “Living Legend” by the Library of Congress. She is the author of the *New York Times* bestsellers *We Are Our Mothers' Daughters*; *Founding Mothers*; *Ladies of Liberty*; and, with her husband, the journalist Steven V. Roberts, *From This Day Forward* and *Our Haggadah*. She lives just outside of Washington, D.C.

Pre-Reading Activities

1. Before reading this book, ask each student to write two to four paragraphs about what they believe life was like for an average Northern and Southern family just before the Civil War. They should include in their writing how they perceive economic, political, and social conditions in both the North and South at this time.
2. Working in groups, students should create a list of economic, political, and social roles they believed women had in both the North and South just before the Civil War. Each group will compare their lists with the other groups. From these ideas, the class should develop a composite picture of what they believe life was like for Northern and Southern women just before the Civil War began.
3. Within their groups, ask students to consider obstacles women faced in the mid-1800s. Each group should develop at least three obstacles they believe women faced. Each group will share with the class. From the ideas, develop a list of common obstacles students believe women faced during this period of time.
4. For female students, ask them to explain how they would feel about their role in society if they were living during this time period.
5. Ask male students how they would feel about the women's role in society during this time period.

Introduction Section

1. **How did the author's previous books on the role of women in the Revolutionary War and World War II influence her decision to write about the role of women in Civil War?** With her previous work and the beginning of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War in 2011, she began to wonder how the Civil War impacted women of the era.
2. **What roles did women have in Washington, D.C. before the Civil War began?** Women were involved in social and political activities. They wanted to bring about change through political involvement and social functions.
3. **How did women's roles change once the war began?** Southern women left Washington, D.C. Those who remained behind were nurses, supply organizers, relief workers, and pamphleteers. Some were also journalists.
4. **Once the war ended, for what causes and activities did women from both sides work?** They worked for suffrage issues, formed social service organizations, and wrote books and articles.
5. **What is meant by the phrase "Washington beckoned as the Promised Land for tens of thousands so-called contrabands"?** African Americans came to Washington, D.C. to become free and to work to improve conditions in displaced person camps, to establish schools and orphanages, and to become politically active.
6. **What were some of the sources the author used to write this book? Why are these sources important to your understanding of the period of time and the role of women during the Civil War?** Ms. Roberts used many primary sources—including letters, diaries, recollections as well as books and articles. These sources give the reader a view of what people in general and women in particular were experiencing on both sides.

Discussion Questions

CHAPTER 1

1. **How did the laying of the cornerstone of the Washington Monument impact people?** Since the country was on the verge of breaking apart, people reminisced about simpler times when there were shared values.
2. **What evidence exists that shows Dolley Madison was a highly respected woman?** She had her own seat in the House of Representatives, she sent the first telegraph, she presented a special medal in memory of the War of 1812, and her funeral shut down Washington, D. C.
3. **Describe the lives of the politicians' wives of Washington, D.C.** They made calls on the wives of other officials and hosted parties. Some received visitors. They listened to debates. Some worked. They comforted each other when necessary.
4. **Using examples, explain how women influenced legislation.** Dorothea Dix worked to help the mentally ill and lobbied Congress to pass legislation. Anna Carroll promoted the ideas of the American Party through her writings.
5. **How did Stephen Douglas help to create the Republican Party?** Douglas championed legislation that allowed people in Kansas and Nebraska to determine if they would come into statehood as free or slave states—which led to those against slavery and its spread to form a political party.
6. **How did the Know-Nothings disrupt the Washington Monument process?** The anti-Catholic Know-Nothings had a strong presence in the Washington Monument Society, and they disrupted the process by destroying artifacts sent by the Catholic officials.

CHAPTER 2

1. **How did family heritage play a role in lives of the women of Washington?** Many of the fathers or relatives of these women had served in government. Thus, they were knowledgeable about the workings of Washington, D.C. that they had witnessed since their childhoods.
2. **How did the violence in Kansas spread to Washington, D.C.?** Senator Charles Sumner criticized Stephen Douglas and Andrew Butler, the authors of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. In retaliation, Butler's cousin Preston Brooks brutally attacked Sumner in the Senate chamber, bringing the violence to Washington, D.C.
3. **Why was Jessie Benton Frémont so well suited for life in Washington, D.C.?** The daughter of a powerful senator, she was knowledgeable about the political system—and she knew how to capture people's attention.
4. **How did the unelected women of Washington wield political power?** The wives and other female relatives of elected officials could sway their husbands' and relatives' minds, and they often did. Women held social gatherings where new ideas were discussed—influencing their husbands and male relatives, who then made these ideas a reality. A married couple named their child in honor of Virginia Clay because she was able to deliver a favor through her husbands' efforts.
5. **How did Harriet Lane embody the idea that the women of Washington, D.C. were well prepared for their future roles?** Her uncle, President Buchanan, educated her in the ways of government and society. She spent time in England and was viewed favorably by the Royal Family.
6. **Why can it be said Harriet Lane was a good "first lady"?** She had her own opinions, but didn't push them onto others. She was very fashionable. She avoided scandal that, being single, was often a potential risk. She supported the arts by having concert nights and lobbied for a National Gallery of the Fine Arts.
7. **Compare the disharmony of the Congress in 1858 with that of today.** In 1858, there could be heated debates that led to physical confrontations. Then, the same combatants might gather at a party later in the day as if nothing had happened.

CHAPTER 3

1. **Why did it take so long for the new Congress to convene after the election?** There wasn't a uniform election day nationally, and travel was very long and slow.
2. **Why can it be said Varina Davis wasn't happily married?** Her husband expected to control her. She was supposed to be seen and not heard. She felt alone--even after having children. She had many disagreements with her husband.
3. **Once Jefferson Davis joined the cabinet of President Pierce, what benefits did entertaining so many people offer to Varina Davis?** She could lobby Congressmen, and push the Administration's agenda. Plus, entertaining was an enjoyable social experience for her.
4. **What was so ironic about the help Varina received when Jefferson Davis, Jr. became very sick?** The help came from northerners who had very different political views than Jefferson Davis. It showed how people could come together despite political differences.
5. **How was Washington, D.C. modernizing or progressing as a city in the 1850s?** Running water was available to private homes. The city was undergoing an expansion.)
6. **According to Varina Davis, what was the scariest thing about John Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry?** On the day of his execution, many northerners treated him as a martyr.
7. **Give examples to support the statement that Abby Adams was not afraid to share her opinions.** She shared her views about John Brown, President Buchanan, and a host of other issues.
8. **How did the John Brown incident affect Washington, D.C.?** Investigations were held, and social invitations were altered based on one's position on the incident.
9. **Why did Abby Adams say "I would advise any young woman who wishes to have an easy, quiet life, not to marry an Adams"?** The Adams men were headstrong and would fight fiercely for any issue in which they believed.
10. **Do you believe the friendships and connections made by the women in Washington, D.C. will continue during and after the Civil War?** Answers will vary and should be supported by the text.

CHAPTER 4

1. **After his election, why did Lincoln regret sneaking into Washington, D.C.?** People made jokes about this throughout his presidency. He was the people's choice, and he felt he shouldn't have sneaked into the capital city.
2. **How did Dorothea Dix influence Lincoln's decision to arrive earlier than scheduled?** She indicated she had heard of plans to kill him.
3. **How were the hostilities of some women on display at the inauguration and at events leading up to it?** Many were very critical of Mrs. Lincoln. Women snickered behind her back at events leading to the inauguration. Some women didn't call upon Mrs. Lincoln at Willard's Hotel as protocol demanded.
4. **Why did Lincoln have to try to resupply Fort Sumter?** Doing anything else would have implied recognition of the Confederacy.
5. **Why did Jefferson Davis attack Fort Sumter?** Letting Lincoln resupply it would have implied the Confederacy was not independent.
6. **What role did women in the North play immediately after Fort Sumter?** Women began caring for the injured.
7. **During war, rumor and chaos often ensue. How was this true right after the attack at Fort Sumter?** Rumors spread about the fall of Washington, D.C. Rumors spread of an impending attack. People didn't know what to believe.
8. **How did life change in the capital after the war started?** There were soldiers everywhere, including the chambers of Congress. Cows were brought to the area so meat could be available. Bread was being baked in the basement of Congress. Many Southerners left to go home. There was concern of spying occurring.

9. **Give an example of something that didn't change in Washington, D.C.** There were still social events at the White House.
10. **Why do you believe General Scott didn't begin fighting sooner?** Answers will vary. They may include Scott's concern that the troops weren't ready as was shown at Bull Run.
11. **How did the first battle at Bull Run highlight the naiveté of the North?** Many went to watch the battle as if going to a sporting event or to a picnic. They expected an easy Northern victory.
12. **Besides the military defeat, why did the victory by the South at Bull Run concern Northerners?** There were concerns that those sympathetic to the South or opposed to the war would be arrested. People feared Union spies were telling government officials who they were.
13. **How did Rose Greenhow help the South?** She was able to gather military information by staying connected with Union government officials. She would share that information with Southern generals.
14. **Why was it hard to get information about people from the South?** Since mail was suspended, people had to rely on word from travelers. Rumors were rampant and often false.
15. **How were people in Washington, D.C. affected by the behavior of soldiers occupying the city?** Soldiers often looted food and other supplies from the residents. Shots were fired and hit unsuspecting people.
16. **What did Jessie Frémont mean when she said, "When a man expresses a conviction fearlessly, he is reported as having made a trenchant and forceful statement, but when a woman speaks thus earnestly, she is reported as a lady who has lost her temper"?** Do you believe this is true today? Women and men were held to different standards and judged differently. Answers will vary to the second part of the question.
17. **How did Jessie Frémont show her loyalty to her husband?** She defended him vigorously and traveled to Washington, D.C. to plead his case to the President.
18. **Why was Lincoln hesitant to brand the Civil War as a war to abolish slavery?** He was afraid of losing the Border States. He also said he would keep slavery if that would keep the country united.
19. **What distinction does Mary Walker hold?** As of 2015, she is the only woman to receive the Medal of Honor.
20. **Why did Dorothea Dix establish strict requirements about who could serve as a nurse?** She didn't want the soldiers to take advantage of young women with little life experience.
21. **Why did Elizabeth Blackwell believe men should get credit for training nurses?** She understood the field of medicine was considered a man's domain. It would possibly be the only way women would be accepted as nurses.
22. **How was the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" written?** Julia Ward Howe heard the song sung at a camp outside the city. She then wrote new words for the tune.
23. **Why was Mrs. Lincoln often ridiculed?** Some of her missteps (big spending sprees and leaking the State of the Union address) overshadowed her acts of kindness and caring.

CHAPTER 5

1. **How did Ellen Ewing Sherman show loyalty to her husband?** She lobbied the President to defend his reputation.
2. **Why were the victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson so important?** Kentucky would stay in the Union, and the rivers and railroads in western Tennessee continued to be under Union control.
3. **Describe the rivalry between Mrs. Lincoln and Kate Chase.** Kate Chase was angry that her father had lost to presidential election to Lincoln. She routinely criticized Mrs. Lincoln and competed with her by hosting social gatherings which rivaled those hosted by the White House.
4. **In what ways was marriage similar to slavery?** Married women were not allowed to own property. Wives were the property of their husbands under the law of coverture.

5. **How was Lizzie Lee's personal view of slavery inconsistent with her political view of slavery?** She believed African Americans were inferior. Yet she believed slavery was wrong, and she wanted them to be freed.
6. **What is compensated emancipation? Why did Lincoln come to support this concept?** This means paying slaveowners for the slaves that are freed. Lincoln felt this might be a way to convince the slaveowners in the Border States to accept emancipation.
7. **How did slaveowners in Washington, D.C. circumvent the emancipation of the slaves in the District?** They sent them to Maryland where they would still be enslaved.
8. **Were Anna Ella Carroll's demands reasonable? Explain your reasoning.** Answers will vary.
9. **Why was Rose Greenhow viewed as a heroine in the South?** Her spying activities helped the South win the first battle of Bull Run. She also remained very defiant toward union officials even after her imprisonment.
10. **Why was President Lincoln so unhappy with General McClellan?** McClellan delayed moving his men across the Potomac in pursuit of Lee.
11. **Why did Lincoln overrule his generals when they freed slaves in the South?** Lincoln believed he should free the slaves.
12. **Why was the Battle of Antietam a lost opportunity for the Union?** McClellan failed to pursue Lee, squandering a chance to end the war or at least score a significant victory.
13. **In terms of casualties, why was Antietam significant?** It is the single bloodiest day in U.S. military history.
14. **Explain why Clara Barton was called "The Angel of the Battlefield."** She cared for the sick and injured. She secured needed medical supplies. She went to frontlines of the war—risking her life in caring for the sick and injured.
15. **What were Clara Barton's beliefs about equality for women?** She was a very strong believer in women's equality, especially when it came to pay.
16. **Why did Lincoln issue the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863?** He believed it would prevent England and France from supporting the South. He also believed he had placated the Border States long enough, and now it was time to act. He also felt the Union could lose the war if this wasn't done. Slaves were also helping the South's war effort.
17. **What were conditions like for the freed slaves in Washington, D.C.?** The conditions were very bad. Supplies were scarce. Many were ill and dying from lack of basic supplies in the contraband camps.
18. **What role did women play in Washington, D.C. as the number of casualties rose? Why didn't Lizzie Lee participate?** Women were urged to help out in the hospitals. Many took an active role in doing this. Lizzie Lee had always been sickly. Going into a hospital would have put her health at risk.
19. **How did Louisa May Alcott's brief involvement in the war influence her later in life?** Her experiences caring for the sick and wounded, while brief, provided the basis for a good deal of her literary work for which she became very famous.

CHAPTER 6

1. **Why were women employed in government jobs?** Men had gone off to fight. Women were hired for less pay and their work was just as good as the men's, if not better.
2. **How was news of the Emancipation Proclamation greeted in Washington, D.C.?** African Americans were jubilant. Whites weren't universally happy. Some harassed and sometimes attacked African Americans. Southerners ridiculed the Emancipation Proclamation.
3. **Why was the Southern victory at Chancellorsville so costly for the South?** General Stonewall Jackson was killed by friendly fire.
4. **Do you believe the President was influenced by the séances?** Answers will vary.
5. **Why was Vicksburg so important?** A Union victory there gave the North control of the Mississippi River. It also geographically divided the South in half.

6. **Why did both General Lee and General Meade offer their resignations after the battle of Gettysburg?** Both made mistakes in the battle.
7. **Why did Lizzie Lee have so much information, and at times, influence, during the war?** Her family was very connected in Washington, D.C. Her father and President Lincoln were very close.
8. **Do you think Janet Seward was brave or foolish for heading to the area around Washington, D.C. to be with her husband?** Answers will vary. There was considerable risk in taking the trip. Women were also expected to obey their husbands in that era.
9. **Why was the draft considered unfair?** Rich people could buy their way out of serving.
10. **How well was the concept of the draft accepted?** It was not well accepted. There was a lot of rioting and protesting.
11. **Explain your thoughts about Lincoln's son, Robert, not joining the military for most of the war.** Answers will vary.
12. **Why did Mrs. Lincoln show no emotion in public when her family members were killed in battle?** She was often accused of being a southern sympathizer because her brothers and half-brothers fought for the South. Showing emotion in public would have convinced people she did sympathize with the South.
13. **Why was Mrs. Lincoln in a no-win position regarding her family's choice of sides in the war?** Because some of her family fought for the South, she was accused of being sympathetic to the South. When she didn't show emotion when family members from the South were killed in battle, she was accused of being coldhearted. Even when she tried to comfort the wife of one of her slain brothers, she was accused of having Southern sympathies.
14. **Why was Mrs. Lincoln fearful of an assassination attempt on her husband's life?** There were constant death threats. Her head injury most likely occurred because of an attempt to kill her husband.
15. **How was the Chase family rivalry with others evident at her wedding?** Mrs. Lincoln and Montgomery Blair didn't attend because they were not on good terms with Kate and/or her father.
16. **Why was the placement of the Statue of Freedom on the capitol dome significant?** It symbolized a united and enduring nation. It reminded people of what the country was like before the split. It also suggested business as usual even though the war was in progress.
17. **How did Louisa Meig's life reflect the difficulty the wives of military men faced?** They would go for long periods of time without knowledge of what their husbands were doing or if they were even alive. They had to make major life decisions on their own. They had to deal with rumors about their husbands.
18. **Why was Lincoln's December 1863 State of the Union speech important?** Lincoln announced his plan for Reconstruction in this speech.

CHAPTER 7

1. **How did Anna Dickenson catch a break in launching her speaking career?** Wendell Phillips, the main speaker, had to cancel his speech due to illness. Anna filled in and was quite the hit.
2. **Why did Anna Dickenson alter her speech at the House of Representatives in January 1864?** Anna was going to criticize Lincoln's moderate Reconstruction plan, but then the President and his wife walked in to hear the speech. She then endorsed Lincoln's reelection bid.
3. **Why did Secretary of Treasury Chase have to withdraw from the campaign to get the Republican nomination in 1864?** When one of the Radical Republicans publically called on the Republican Party to dump Lincoln in favor of Chase, Chase had to indicate he knew nothing of this plot and his candidacy collapsed.
4. **How did political rivalry and distrust impact the Washington social scene during the campaign to choose a Republican nominee?** Mrs. Lincoln wasn't going to invite Kate Chase Sprague and her husband to dinner for families of the Cabinet and Supreme Court.

5. **Contrast the elegant side of Washington, D.C. with the seedier side of Washington, D.C.** Washington, D.C. was known for its lavish parties, the elegance of the chambers of Congress, and its upscale style. Yet, there was prostitution, involving many of the people involved with the elegant side of the city. There also was a lot of crime in the city.
6. **Why was the war good for business?** Supplies were needed. They had to be shipped and stored. People needed places to stay. This benefited the hotel, restaurant, and real estate markets.
7. **How did women help the soldiers in the war?** They worked to get food, medicine, and supplies to the soldiers. They organized drives to collect money for needed supplies. They also championed the campaign to buy no imported items of apparel.
8. **How did women influence the abolition of slavery?** They joined anti-slavery societies. They circulated petitions calling for a constitutional amendment to ban slavery.
9. **What evidence exists to show Jessie Frémont wanted to be First Lady?** She promoted her husband as a possible replacement for Lincoln. She criticized Lincoln's commitment to the anti-slavery movement. She tried to get her husband a military appointment that would enhance his chances of getting the nomination. She met with officials of Congress and spoke out on political matters.
10. **How do we know Frémont's candidacy was not a serious one?** Only 156 people showed up at the convention held to nominate him. Some also ridiculed his small number of supporters.
11. **Why was Lincoln worried about winning the election after receiving the Republican nomination?** There was little success on the battlefield. More and more people were beginning to think the Peace Democrats had the right idea of negotiating a settlement with the Confederacy.
12. **How could the course of the war have been altered at the battle at Fort Stevens?** If Lincoln had been shot and killed (as he nearly was), somebody else would have been President, and he might have had less determination to see the war through to victory.
13. **Why did Mrs. Lincoln desperately want her husband to be reelected?** She feared neither of them would know what to do if he wasn't reelected. She spent huge amounts of money and needed the funds.
14. **Once news improved from the battlefield, how did Lincoln use his power to get the things he wanted?** Some speculate that Lincoln got the Radical Republican candidate to drop out of the race by making a deal requiring Postmaster General Montgomery Blair to resign from his Cabinet. He insisted Salmon Chase campaign for Lincoln if Chase wanted to be considered for the Chief Justice position on the Supreme Court.
15. **How would this statement from Sojourner Truth apply today?** "It's hard for the old slave-holding spirit to die. But die it must." Answer will vary. They may include the discrimination and inequality opportunities facing people of color.
16. **Was Lincoln's signed note titled "For Aunty Sojourner Truth" an appropriate way for him to refer to her?** Answers will vary.
17. **Why was a landslide victory so important to Lincoln?** It would show that the Union was firmly supported him and his policies.
18. **Why were soldiers allowed to go home and vote?** They most likely were going to vote for Lincoln.
19. **Why was it important to hold the elections in 1864?** It showed a Democracy can function even during very difficult times.
20. **How did Lincoln's appointment of Salmon Chase show his dedication to our country?** Lincoln did what he thought was best for country, even if it meant appointing a personal and political enemy.
21. **After being reelected, what was Lincoln's most immediate goal besides ending the war?** He wanted a constitutional amendment banning slavery.

CHAPTER 8

- 1. What benefit did Francis Preston Blair's visit to Richmond offer President Lincoln?** It allowed Blair to see what Jefferson Davis was thinking about a way to end the war.
- 2. Describe how women banded together to form a quasi-labor union in 1865.** When the military contracted out the work for women to make uniforms, there were fewer jobs, and the pay was lower. They appealed to the President to restore the pay cuts and number of positions for women. Lincoln did intervene on their behalf.
- 3. How did Lincoln encourage Democratic Congressmen to support the approval of the 13th Amendment?** The President and his allies lobbied the Democrats very hard with reminders that he could offer the Congressmen and their families a variety of perks, positions, and pardons.
- 4. Why did Lincoln insist at the Hampton Roads Peace Conference that any cease-fire had to include reunification?** If it didn't, the war would have been fought in vain from the North's perspective. Reunification was one of the goals of the North.
- 5. Why were the Fall of Charleston and the recapture of Fort Sumter so ironic?** These events happened on George Washington's birthday.
- 6. What was so significant about the joint session of Congress held on February 8, 1865?** A black man preached against slavery from the Speaker's desk in the House of Representatives.
- 7. What did Lincoln mean in his second inauguration address when he pledged with "malice towards none; with charity toward all...?"** People had to be forgiven and treated well in order for the country to move forward.
- 8. Why was the visit to City Point a disastrous one for Mrs. Lincoln?** Mrs. Lincoln embarrassed herself with her reaction to General Ord. She was offended when Julia Grant sat on the same settee as she did.
- 9. Why was Lincoln's visit to Richmond a dangerous one?** There could have been an attempt on his life by anybody in the area.
- 10. Why was Mrs. Grant upset with President Lincoln before he returned to Washington, D.C.?** Once Mary Lincoln returned to Richmond, Lincoln didn't invite Mrs. Grant to join the group on the *River Queen*, even though her ship was less than 100 yards away. Mrs. Grant wasn't on the list for the farewell reception either.
- 11. How would you describe Mrs. Lincoln as a person based on what you have read so far?** Answers will vary.
- 12. How did the people of Washington, D.C. celebrate the news of the end of the war?** Bands played, salutes were fired, fire engines were decked with flags, people were singing, and people gathered at the White House.
- 13. What were the people expecting to hear from Lincoln's speech at the White House?** They were expecting to hear harsh words towards the South. Instead, they heard words of a conciliatory Reconstruction plan.
- 14. What unusual circumstances surrounded the events of Lincoln's assassination?** Lincoln was tired and really didn't want to go to theater. The guard assigned to protect Lincoln abandoned their posts. Several people declined the invitation to attend the play with the President and his wife. Julia Grant believed she and her husband had encountered the assassin as they were leaving Washington, D.C. earlier in the day.
- 15. Why did Lizzie Lee write "Those of Southern sympathies know now they have lost a friend willing—& more powerful to protect & serve them than they can now ever hope to find again.?"** She understood that Lincoln would have had compassion for the South while others may have wanted to get revenge on the South.
- 16. Contrast the lives of Lizzie Lee and Mary Lincoln.** Mary Lincoln had few friends, was easy to anger, made enemies, and was viewed as not very giving (even if that was untrue). Lizzie Lee was upbeat, well liked, had many friends, and was kind and giving of herself.
- 17. Describe Mrs. Lincoln's condition after her husband's assassination.** She was inconsolable. She didn't want to receive visitors. She stayed in the White House for a long time after the assassination.
- 18. Why did Mrs. Lincoln believe her husband might die a sudden and violent death?** She knew there were many people angry with him because of his goal to end slavery. Security wasn't that tight when the President appeared in public. Thus, there was plenty of opportunity for an assassin.

19. **Do you believe the leaders of the Confederacy conspired to kill Lincoln after the war ended?** Answers will vary.
20. **Describe which version you believe of the arrest of Jefferson Davis. Explain why you believe this version.** Varina Davis maintained that her husband had thrown her raincoat over his shoulders, and that she had tossed her shawl over his head when he went to a creek to wash. Then, he got arrested. Newspaper reports indicated that Jefferson Davis tried to disguise himself as an old lady with Mrs. Davis asking the soldiers to let her old mother go to the spring to wash. Answers will vary for the second part.
21. **Describe how Lizzie Keckley and Josephine Griffing helped the freed slaves.** These women worked to get freed slaves opportunities to provide for and to care for themselves. Lizzie set up relief associations while Josephine was actively involved in the Freedmen's Bureau for a while. She worked to provide employment opportunities for the freedmen in the North. She also supervised schools which taught former female slaves how to make a living by sewing.
22. **What distinction does Mary Surratt hold?** She was the first woman executed by the United States federal government.
23. **Why was there little public support for Mary Surratt even though most of the evidence suggested she was innocent?** There was a belief that women were the most defiant, bitterest, and dangerous enemies the Union faced in the war. Some people may also not have been aware of all the evidence.
24. **How did Clara Barton assist military families after the war ended?** She worked to identify what had happened to soldiers who were reported as missing.
25. **How had Washington, D.C. grown as a result of the war?** The size of the government increased significantly. More improvements were being made in the city.
26. **How was Mrs. Johnson different from Mrs. Lincoln?** Mrs. Johnson had no political ambitions. Mrs. Johnson was either uninterested or unable to do the honors of the house. Mrs. Johnson was very unpretentious.

CHAPTER 9

1. **How do we know Virginia Clay was truly devoted to her husband?** She worked tirelessly to get his parole. She visited many high-powered government officials, got their support, and basically forced President Johnson to parole him. She also worked with women who had influence in the White House.
2. **Why might somebody conclude that Johnson was not willing to do the right thing when it came to dealing with Clement Clay and Jefferson Davis?** He held both Jefferson Davis and Clement Clay in prison for ten months with neither charges brought against them nor a set trial date. Despite evidence these men were innocent of being involved in the plot to kill President Lincoln, he refused to free them, claiming fear of the public's reaction. He only paroled Clement Clay when he was sure there was no chance of a public outcry of his action. However, he had no difficulty pardoning thousands of other ex-confederates. Also, he didn't step up when the South started to restrict the freedoms of former slaves by passing the Black Codes. His Reconstruction Plan was also very easy on the South.
3. **How did Varina Davis advocate for her husband?** She pushed for her husband to receive proper medical treatment. She worked tirelessly for him to be released in order for a trial to be established. She bonded with people who would help her achieve her goals and provide money for bail for her husband.
4. **How did Lizzie Lee work to help her husband?** She enlisted the help of many to get him reassigned from a military transfer to California.
5. **In what ways were Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Davis similar?** Both were suspected of having sympathies for the other side. Women from their respective countries often made snide remarks about them, and they also snubbed them. Both had sons die at an early age. Both cared deeply about their husbands.
6. **As the war ended, what happened to women like Clara Barton and Dorothea Dix?** Their official roles in Washington, D.C. ended. They were able to focus on interests besides caring for the wounded.
7. **How did President Johnson alienate his own party in Congress?** He vetoed laws they sent to him, something that was unprecedented at that time. He campaigned against Radical Republicans. He went very easy on most southerners in his Reconstruction efforts.

8. **How did Mrs. Lincoln's attempts to deal with her debt problems backfire on her?** She looked greedy. She was blasted in the press. Her spending habits were ridiculed. She had to disguise herself by taking a different name when trying to sell her clothes and other items. She made no money from the sale of her items. She also lost her friendship with Lizzie Keckley.
9. **Describe the suffering and hardship Sara Pryor faced as the war began.** She had to relocate several times due to events in the war. She had to work to try to make ends meet. Her family was separated, and her husband eventually captured. She had to sell almost everything she had just to survive. She and her husband were separated again after his release when he went to New York to try to find work. Eventually, she joined him there.
10. **What national holiday was established as a result of the Civil War?** Memorial Day was established to honor those who died in war.
11. **Why were the suffragists disappointed when African American males got voting rights in the District of Columbia?** Women of all races were excluded from the right to vote.
12. **Why was this statement by Senator Stevens a dangerous one? "...To carry out the views of our party, we must have Executive power & we intend to have it & pretty quickly too."** This would violate the separation of powers concept as provided in the Constitution.
13. **Why was Salmon Chase's handling of impeachment trial both good and bad for him if he wanted to become President?** It was bad because the Radical Republicans were upset that President Johnson wasn't removed, thus reducing his appeal to the Republicans. It was good for him because it increased his appeal to the Democrats.
14. **Why was Kate Chase a loser as a result of the President Johnson impeachment trial?** She couldn't convince her husband to cast the deciding vote to remove Johnson. This cost her father a chance at the Republican nomination for President. She also wasn't able to secure his nomination for the Democratic nomination for President.
15. **What was meant by the statement, "the services and sacrifices, the abilities and accomplishments of women in the Civil War had changed the face of Washington, just as Washington had changed the face of women"?** What women did in the Civil War had a big impact on Washington. As a result, women's place in society was viewed differently than it was before the war began.

EPILOGUE

1. **How did the women of the Civil War impact life in our country after the war ended?** Many were involved in causes they had taken up before and during the Civil War. Some women got involved in new causes and ventures.
2. **How do the women of the Civil War represent life in general?** They all experienced the highs and lows of life. They went through illnesses, death, divorce, and suffering. They also achieved success with their writing, work, and social activities. The "Capital Dames" represent the cycle of life as it applies to almost all people.
3. **Explain if your viewpoint about Mrs. Lincoln has changed by the time you finished reading the book. Explain your reasoning.** Answers will vary.

Research and Writing Activities

1. Imagine if some of these women were alive today and involved in politics. Devise a specific campaign platform for at least two of these women dealing with at least three major issues if they were running for President in the next election. There should be a specific platform for **each** woman.
2. Describe the indignities women faced in the 1850s and 1860s. Explain if these indignities still exist today. Be sure to use facts and statistics to support your answer.
3. Using the [website](#) for the Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Papers Project, create a women's bill of rights for today. Explain why each item is needed in this Bill of Rights.
4. Develop a skit focusing on what a social gathering in Washington, D.C. would be like hosted by one of the "Capital Dames."
5. Stage a debate between Varina Davis and Lizzie Lee over the issue of slavery.
6. Give four examples showing how the "Capital Dames" changed Washington, D.C., and how Washington, D.C. changed the role and view of women.
7. Prepare a Power-Point presentation or write a report focusing on a woman who was influential in the Union during this time period. Use a variety of sources in your research. Be sure to cite each source.
8. Prepare a Power-Point presentation or write a report focusing on a woman who was influential in the Confederacy during this time period. Use a variety of sources in your research. Be sure to cite each source.
9. Imagine you are travel agent for a client who wants to visit the places where many of these women lived during the Civil War. This client also wants to visit some of the important battle sites. Prepare a ten to fourteen-day tour for this client. Your trip will be complete with the specific places visited, hotels at which to stay, and places at which to eat. Entertainment options should also be included. Be sure to provide a detailed explanation about the places visited and sites of the battles.
10. Write a play focusing on the lives of Varina Davis and Lizzie Lee. Your final scene should include a reunion of these two women at the end of the Civil War.
11. The role of the First Lady was clearly evident throughout the book. Research that role and explain how it has changed throughout the years. Compare the lives of some recent first ladies to the lives of those who served in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s. Develop a report or a twenty minute news feature from your research.
12. Imagine that you could sit down and interview one of the Capital Dames. Develop a list of questions you would ask in your interview. Choose a partner who will answer your questions. Then your partner will ask you the questions he/she developed for his/her interview. Conduct the interview in front of the class. Be sure to research the Capital Dame you are interviewing as well as the Capital Dame to whom you are responding to your interviewer's questions.
13. How has your view of women of this period changed after reading this book? Prepare a chart or diagram highlighting what you believed before reading this book to what you know after reading this book. Feel free to revisit the pre-reading activity you may have done on this topic.
14. Create a newspaper focusing on the main events before, during, and after the Civil War. Your newspaper should have a title and city of publication. It should have at least twenty news articles summarizing events during this time period. In addition to the twenty news articles, your paper should have two editorials. One should be about the role of women during the war. The other should be about the necessity of the Civil War. Your newspaper should also include at least five advertisements, five want ads, and a crossword puzzle in addition to the above requirements.
15. The Capital Dames were very involved in organizations of personal interest to them. Choose two Capital Dames and report on the organizations in which each was involved. Explain what the organization was, what the organization did (or still does), and how it impacted (or impacts) society. Provide research on each organization. Then choose two modern-day women and report on organizations in which they are involved. Explain what the organization is, what the organization does, and how it impacts society. Provide research on each organization. Summarize how all four women impacted society through their involvement in these organizations.

Further Reading

BOOKS BY COKIE ROBERTS

- *Capital Dames: The Civil War and the Women of Washington, 1848-1868* by Cokie Roberts
- *Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation* by Cokie Roberts
- *From This Day Forward* by Cokie Roberts and Steven V. Roberts
- *Ladies of Liberty: The Women Who Shaped Our Nation* by Cokie Roberts
- *Our Haggadah: Uniting Traditions for Interfaith Families* by Cokie Roberts and Steven V. Roberts
- *We Are Our Mother's Daughters* by Cokie Roberts

BOOKS ABOUT THE CIVIL WAR AND WOMEN'S HISTORY

- *Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy: Four Women Undercover in the Civil War* by Karen Abbott
- *Nellie Taft: The Unconventional First Lady of the Ragtime Era* by Carl Sferrazza Anthony
- *Mrs. Lincoln: A Life* by Catherine Clinton
- *America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* by Gail Collins
- *Don't Know Much About the Civil War* by Kenneth C. Davis
- *How to Lose the Civil War* by Bill Fawcett
- *Reconstruction: American's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* by Eric Foner
- *Lincoln: How Lincoln Ended Slavery in America* by Harold Holzer
- *The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt* by Eleanor Roosevelt
- *American Tapestry: The Story of the Black, White, and Multiracial Ancestors of Michelle Obama* by Rachel L. Swarms
- *April 1865: The Month That Saved America* by Jay Winik
- *The Other Civil War: Slavery and Struggle in Civil War America* by Howard Zinn

Additional Teaching Guides

- *Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation* by Cokie Roberts
- *Ladies of Liberty: The Women Who Shaped Our Nation* by Cokie Roberts
- *Lincoln: How Lincoln Ended Slavery in America* by Harold Holzer
- *The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt* by Eleanor Roosevelt
- *American Tapestry: The Story of the Black, White, and Multiracial Ancestors of Michelle Obama* by Rachel L. Swarms

You'll find even more teaching guides [here](#).