

# WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## A Civics In Real Life Series



### Rosie the Riveter



“Rosie the Riveter,” an icon for the ages, continues to resonate as a symbol of women's strength, resilience, and accomplishment decades after World War II. Through the collective efforts of American women filling the industrial roles left vacant by men heading off to war, the “spirit” of “Rosie” was born.

Rosie’s “birth” can be traced back to 1942, when the song “[Rosie the Riveter](#)” was written by [Redd Evans](#) and [John Jacob Loeb](#). The song was written after Evans and Loeb read a newspaper article about 19-year-old [Rosalind P. Walter](#), who, after graduating high school, went to work as a riveter in an airplane factory. With the song’s release by [The Four Vagabonds](#), “Rosie the Riveter” became part of the American psyche and Rosalind a part of history.

Because of the song, images of [women in their coveralls, with their hair pulled back, covered with a neckerchief, and holding a power tool](#), became synonymous with “Rosie the Riveter.” Perhaps the most famous rendition of Rosie was created by the [Westinghouse Electric Corporation](#) in 1943. The poster, emblazoned with the slogan, “We Can Do It!” and a woman flexing her bicep, was not called “Rosie the Riveter.” It was simply known as “We Can Do It,” and it was intended to keep the Westinghouse workforce mindful of the importance of their wartime jobs. It was not until the early 1980s that the Westinghouse poster emerged as a symbol of women's strength, resilience, and accomplishment. It was then that the moniker “Rosie the Riveter” was applied to it.

Of course, Rosalind is not the only “Rosie.” While she may be the first, other “Rosies” have been recognized as the models for the more famous images of the mighty “riveter.” The artist Norman Rockwell [painted his image of “Rosie”](#) for a 1943 Saturday Evening Post cover. The model for his “Rosie” was Mary Doyle Keefe. The model for the Westinghouse poster was [Naomi Parker Fraley](#).

However, in reality, there were millions of “Rosies”, working away in America’s factories, toiling away in anonymity, doing their jobs in support of the war effort. America’s “Rosies” answered a call to fill the industrial void during a time of critical importance. Because of their sense of duty and know-how, they continue to inspire today, marking “Rosie the Riveter” as one of the most important pop-culture icons of American history.

### *Civics Challenge: Search & Learn & Write*

Listen to the Four Vagabonds version of “Rosie the Riveter.” How might you update it for the 21st century, showcasing the continued contributions of American women? Explain as a new verse.



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