

ADVENTUROUS WOMEN



*Eight True Stories About
Women Who Made a Difference*

READING GUIDE

PENNY COLMAN

INTRODUCTION and QUESTIONS

by Penny Colman

Adventurous Women: Eight True Stories About Women Who Made a Difference is the eleventh book featuring women that I have written since my first two—**Breaking the Chains: The Crusade of Dorothea Lynde Dix** and **Spies! Women in the Civil War**—were published in 1992. Why have I written so many books about women? Because there are so many fabulous women to write about, women whose commitment and courage and contributions are woven into the history of every person, family, community, country, and, indeed, the world.

Adventurous Women features eight women from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds—Louise Boyd, an Arctic explorer; Mary Gibson Henry, a botanist and plant hunter; Juana Briones, an entrepreneur and family head; Alice Hamilton, a scientist and industrial toxicologist; Mary McLeod Bethune, an educator and humanitarian; Katharine Wormeley, a Civil War superintendent on a hospital transport ship; Biddy Mason, a former slave, midwife, landowner, and church founder; and Peggy Hull, a journalist and war correspondent.

Adventurous Women is about ordinary and extraordinary women who were bold enough to confront obstacles and take risks in pursuit of their diverse goals. It celebrates the intelligence, fortitude, courage, and contributions of women who led passionate and productive lives.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Here is how I defined adventures in my Author's Note: "Adventures are about being bold, about defying set ways of thinking and behaving, about taking risks, going beyond the boundaries, the limitations, about overcoming obstacles, about daring to be different." Do you agree with my definition? Disagree? Why?

The eight adventurous women I wrote about are just a small sample of countless other adventurous women. Make your own list of adventurous women from the past or from today. Discuss your choices.

I wrote each chapter as an essay about a particular woman and her adventures, not as a comprehensive biography. Select the woman, or women, you would like to learn more about. Discuss your selection(s).

By the standards of their times, how were the eight women conventional? How were they unconventional? How do you view yourself—conventional, unconventional, or a mix?

What life lessons did you learn from these eight adventurous women? Discuss what you learned.

CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER QUESTIONS

CHAPTER ONE

Louise Boyd, Arctic Explorer

Although Louise Boyd was full of confidence about her ability to organize an expedition and to deal with the demands and dangers of the Arctic, she initially had doubts about whether or not she was "suited for leadership, particularly with a group of men." Why do you think she had those doubts? Several years after she expressed her doubts, Boyd told a reporter: "As for the men, most of them go back with me each voyage. We get along fine." Why do you think she no longer expressed any doubts?

What appeals to you about Boyd's adventures? What doesn't appeal to you?

CHAPTER TWO

Mary Gibson Henry, Botanist and Plant Hunter

Mary Gibson Henry went on her first adventure in northern British Columbia with her husband and children, and on her subsequent adventures with her daughter Josephine. If you were going on a similar adventure, whom, if anyone, would you take?

"As for the flowers," Henry once wrote, "although many and many a time I risked my life for them, the flowers have done far more for me than I have done for them." Would you make a similar statement about something in your life? Discuss your answer.



CHAPTER THREE

Juana Briones, Entrepreneur and Family Head

Juana Briones lived during a time when it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a woman to do what she had to do, but she did it anyhow. Could a similar statement be written about you or any of your female ancestors, or, for that matter, your male ancestors? Discuss your answer.

What do you think about the way Briones handled the situation with her husband and provided for her family?

CHAPTER FOUR

Alice Hamilton, Scientist and Industrial Toxicologist

Why do you think I chose "Supersleuth" as the subtitle for this chapter? Propose other possible subtitles (an exercise you can do with all the chapters) and explain your suggestions.

If Alice Hamilton were alive today, what would you want her to investigate? Why?

CHAPTER FIVE

Mary McLeod Bethune, Educator and Humanitarian

Mary McLeod Bethune started a school. If you were going to start something, what would it be? How would you begin?

In "My Last Will and Testament," Bethune listed nine "principles" (pp. 104–105). What are your principles?

CHAPTER SIX

Katharine Wormeley,
Civil War Superintendent on a Hospital Transport Ship

Could you imagine yourself serving alongside Katharine Wormeley? Discuss your answer.

In her letters, Wormeley described many scenes and incidents that evoked emotions in me. Identify and discuss passages that evoked emotions in you.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Biddy Mason, Former Slave, Midwife, Landowner, and Church Founder

Biddy Mason's favorite saying was: "If you hold your hand closed, nothing good can come from it. The open hand is blessed, for it gives in abundance, even as it receives"? Do you agree with this saying? What favorite sayings do you or your family and friends have?

Do you support the building of public memorials to historical people, such as the Biddy Mason Memorial in Los Angeles? Discuss your answer.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Peggy Hull, Journalist and War Correspondent

Peggy Hull covered war before the sights and sounds of bombings and battles were widely broadcast on the radio and television. How do you think that affected her writing?

In the words of one soldier, Hull "made them know they weren't forgotten." What other roles do war reporters perform? Do you think these roles are important?



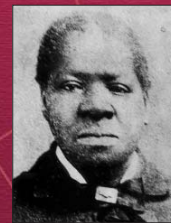
Louise Boyd



Juana Briones



Mary McLeod Bethune



Biddy Mason



Mary Gibson Henry



Alice Hamilton



Katharine Wormeley



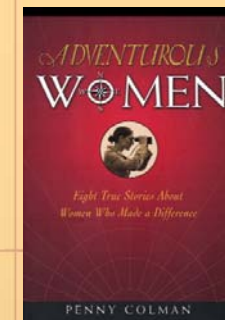
Peggy Hull

About PENNY COLMAN

Penny Colman is the author of many award-winning nonfiction books for all ages, including *Rosie the Riveter: Women Working on the Home Front in World War II*, *Girls: A History of Growing Up Female in America*, and *Corpses, Coffins, and Crypts: A History of Burial*. A popular speaker, she lives in Englewood, New Jersey. Check her Web site at www.pennycolman.com for activities for readers; speeches, essays, and articles; Q & A; bibliography; biographical information; and links to audio and visual material. She is Distinguished Lecturer at Queens College, the City University of New York.



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