

Well-behaved women seldom make history – Fact sheet

By Elizabeth Jones

Anne Bonny

Job description: Professional pirate

Born: March 8, 1702, Kinsale, Republic of Ireland

Died: Unknown

How she is unconventional:

Anne Bonny was a woman living in a world where women were actively excluded. All sailors, not just pirates, believed allowing women onboard would bring bad luck because they distracted the men from their work and might become a cause for conflict.



While men were in favor of excluding women from a life at sea, Anne wished she had more women fighting at her side as she made her final stand.

“Dogs! If instead of these weaklings I only had some women with me,” she screamed at her crew.

—Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pyrates*

Video Link: <http://player.history.com/pservice/embed-player/?siteId=hist&tPid=21115861>

Harriet Tubman

Job description: Civil Rights Activist

Birth: c. 1820

Death: March 10, 1913

How she is unconventional:

Harriet Tubman escaped slavery to become a leading abolitionist. She led hundreds of enslaved people to freedom along the route of the Underground Railroad.

"I was the conductor of the Underground Railroad for eight years, and I can say what most conductors can't say; I never ran my train off the track and I never lost a passenger."

– Harriet Tubman



<http://www.biography.com/people/harriet-tubman-9511430/videos/harriet-tubman-union-spy-15036995841>

Hypatia

Job description: Scholar, Teacher, Philosopher, Mathematician and Astronomer

Born: 350 CE, Alexandria, Egypt

Died: March 8, 415 CE, Alexandria, Egypt

How she is unconventional:

In a time of religious strife at the intellectual center of the ancient world, Hypatia of Alexandria was the first woman in history recognized as a mathematician and scientist. She became a martyr for intellectual thought and logic when she was brutally tortured to death because of the influence she held with public officials. She was accused of exacerbating a conflict between two prominent figures in Alexandria, the governor Orestes and the Bishop of Alexandria.

Socrates best explains why she held the influence she did and why she was so remarkable for her time:

“There was a woman at Alexandria named Hypatia, daughter of the philosopher Theon, who made such attainments in literature and science, as to far surpass all the philosophers of her own time. Having succeeded to the school of Plato and Plotinus, she explained the principles of philosophy to her auditors (students), many of whom came from a distance to receive her instructions. On account of the self-possession and ease of manner which she had acquired during the cultivation of her mind, she sometimes appeared in public in the presence of the magistrates, a rare scene at the time. Neither did she feel abashed in going to an assembly of men. For all men on account of her extraordinary dignity and virtue admired her the more.”

—Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*

Video link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bByhFiV_nvK



Hua Mu-Lan (Mulan)

Job description: Soldier

Date: Northern Wei dynasty, 386 CE to 534 CE, China

How she is unconventional:

Hua Mu-Lan is famous for cutting off her hair and dressing as a man to join China's imperial army. She became such a great warrior that the general she served offered her his daughter's hand in marriage.

The emperor called his army to fight invaders, but her ailing father, being the only man in the family and therefore the only person qualified to serve, would surely die. He had to choose between his life and his honor. Adamantly refusing her plan to take his place in the military, Mu-Lan challenged her father to a sparring match with swords to prove she was more capable of going to war. She buckled on her father's armor and spent the next ten years at the frontlines of the emperor's forces.

Her legend made it to the West in the form of a Disney animated movie and received several Golden Globe and academy award nominations. However, it was in the ancient epic poem called *Ballad of Mulan* that she was truly immortalized. The last line of the poem sums up her notoriety:



“She had much fighting ability and could act the leader. Her body passed through one hundred battles, always at the front, and compared to the fiercest soldiers, she was better still.”

—David E. Jones, *Women Warriors, A History*

Video link: www.youtube.com/embed/00BZSEWFhTo

Cleopatra VII, The Great

Job description: Egyptian Monarch

Birth: 70 or 69 BC, Alexandria, Egypt

Death: August 21, 30 BC, Alexandria, Egypt

How she is unconventional:

Cleopatra was the last reigning pharaoh of Egypt. This says everything you need to know about how unconventional she was since there have only been a handful of other women pharaohs. After Hatshepsut's rule, Thutmose ordered her history as Egypt's ruler "erased." Her statues were torn down, her monuments were defaced, and her name was removed from the official king list.



Known for her quick mind, charm and lust for power, Cleopatra was simply too influential not to be remembered for her reign. She maneuvered the death of her brother Ptolemy XIII. She found her way to Julius Caesar, rolling herself in a rug so as not to be noticed until the most opportune moment. She participated in councils of war and thought she could rule through Caesar as Empress of the Eastern Empire. When Caesar was assassinated, she saw another opportunity to rule in Caesar's right-hand man and military commander, Mark Antony.

They lived a blissful and nonstop life of revelry until Roman Emperor Octavian declared war against them. They succeeded in carving out a good portion of the Roman Empire, however Octavian would not be defeated.

She killed herself instead of becoming a slave to Rome, refusing to participate in Octavian's plans to display her in his triumphant procession upon their return. The following excerpt commends her as a warrior and not the seductress many believe her to have been:

“It is easier for historians, most of whom are men, to think of women sexually than militarily. A closer reading of the history of Cleopatra indicates that it was her armies and navies, her world-conquering ambition, and her savvy in the ways of war and politics that drew the Roman leaders to her. Beautiful women would be easy to access if one were Caesar or Mark Antony, but Cleopatra's attraction to the Romans was more powerful than the transient quality of beauty. First and foremost, Cleopatra the Great was a military asset to the Romans.”

—David E. Jones, *Women Warriors, A History*

Video Link: <http://player.history.com/pservice/embed-player/?siteId=hist&tPid=21097856>

Queen Elizabeth I

Job description: English Monarch



Birth: September 7, 1533, Greenwich, United Kingdom

Death: March 24, 1603, Surrey, United Kingdom

How she is unconventional:

The daughter of Anne Boleyn and King Henry VIII, she was the last monarch of the Tudor dynasty. King Henry executed her mother when she was only two years old because she had not produced a male heir.

Despite the fact Queen Elizabeth I was a woman, she proved a more capable monarch than her father, ruling for 44 years. Elizabeth was especially unconventional because she ruled singularly as “The Virgin Queen” meaning she had no husband or children, and she wanted to keep it that way.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada in August 1588 was Elizabeth’s finest hour. She stood in full armor with her small army and prepared to die with them. Her call to her people at Tilbury is considered one of the most inspirational leadership speeches in history.

This period in history was declared the Elizabethan Era because of her influence.

“Though the sex to which I belong is considered weak, you will nevertheless find me a rock that bends to no wind.”

—Queen Elizabeth I

Video Link: <http://www.biography.com/people/queen-elizabeth-i-9286133/videos/elizabeth-i-mini-biography-126123587975>

Resources:

Smithsonian Magazine <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/if-theres-a-man-among-ye-the-tale-of-pirate-queens-anne-bonny-and-mary-read-45576461/?no-ist>

Minnesota Science Museum <http://www.smm.org/pirates/annebonny>

Women Warriors, A History by David E. Jones

A general history of pyrates by Defoe, Daniel and Johnson, Charles

<https://archive.org/details/generalhistoryof00defo>

Encyclopedia Britannica <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1558418/Anne-Bonny>