Classroom Guide

"These crowded hours have been interesting and stimulating. They have, I hope, been useful. They have, at least, been lived to the hilt." (pg 156)

Our Eleanor: a scrapbook look at Eleanor Roosevelt's remarkable life

written by Candace Fleming published by Anne Schwartz/Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2005

A note to the teacher: This book is appropriate for older elementary students, middle school students and high school students. Included are activities appropriate for each age group. Unless otherwise indicated, all Eleanor Roosevelt quotes come from Our Eleanor and have a page number reference.

Themes:

- Understanding Eleanor: Her Personal Life and Interests
- Eleanor: an Agent of Change
- ♦ From Eleanor's Pen

About the book

Our Eleanor: a scrapbook look at Eleanor Roosevelt's remarkable life is a chronological picture of Eleanor Roosevelt's colorful life outlined in a very personal and accessible way. Her story is told through archival photos, quotes, anecdotes, and sidebars as well as extremely well-written text. Basic research tools include a timeline, family tree, and extensive source notes. Chandler Roosevelt Lindsley and Elliott Roosevelt, Jr (grandchildren of Eleanor Roosevelt) write, "Candace Fleming has chronicled the life of Eleanor Roosevelt as no other. With photographs on every page and with special attention having been given each important person, place and project, this book provides an exciting glimpse into a remarkable life. It will appeal to young and old alike."

About the author

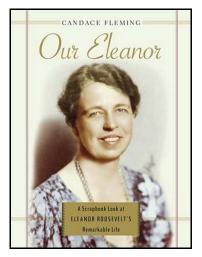
Candace Fleming writes award-winning books for children and young adults. Titles include *Ben Franklin's Almanac*, an ALA Notable Book and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, as well as *Muncha! Muncha!, Gabriella's Song*, and *When Agnes Caws*, all ALA Notable Books.

Things to think about before you read the book

- What makes a life remarkable?
- What makes a person worth remembering?

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- Who is someone you remember from the past, either someone you knew personally or someone from history? Why are they important enough to remember?
- How would someone describe you? Think about more than your physical characteristics and activities. What kind of person are you inside?
- Have you ever done anything to make a difference in someone's life? What is something you could do right now? It could be something in your neighborhood, your family, or your school.
- What are the responsibilities of the First Lady (the President's spouse)? How much responsibility do you think she should have? After you have read *Our Eleanor*, ask this question again. Did Eleanor Roosevelt fit your expectations of a First Lady? Do you think she acted appropriately?
- Eleanor Roosevelt taught current events at the Todhunter School (pg 58). The following is a question from one of her tests. "What do you think has been the most important international event in the past year?" Answer this question. Why was this event important to you? Has it impacted your life? If so, how? What would you have done to change it? Do you think it should have happened?

Understanding Eleanor: Her Personal Life and Interests

"I was afraid... afraid that other people would not like me." (pg 6)

A bit about Eleanor

Despite being considered one of the most influential women of her era, Eleanor Roosevelt was also human with her own fears and insecurities. A troubled childhood left her timid and shy, something she overcame in her public persona but always carried with her in her private self. The exercises here are designed to help students understand themselves better and, in doing so, perhaps realize that they, like Eleanor, have a great deal to offer their world.

"I believe that anyone can conquer fear by doing the things he fears to do, provided he keeps doing them until he gets a record of successful experience behind him."

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY – A TIMELINE

In Eleanor's classes she emphasized the connection between things of the past and things of today (pg 58). By making a timeline with important dates from Eleanor Roosevelt's life and important dates from the students' lives, they can make this connection in a very visual and concrete way.

- 1. Make a timeline of Eleanor Roosevelt's life. For example: Take a long piece of paper and divide it into large sections (mark them as the decades; 1940, 1950 etc...) and smaller sections (mark them as years; 1941, 1942 etc...) so that it looks like a ruler. (The decades are the inch marks and the years are the smaller divisions).
- 2. Write events from Eleanor Roosevelt's life on or in between the lines.

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- 3. Add additional events from your own family's history. For example: When were your grandparents born? When was your school built? When was your town founded?
- 4. Extend the timeline to include your lifetime and things that have happened since you were born.
- 5. An additional option: Have the students interview older people and add their dates to the timeline. Your class could make a visit to a nursing home, senior apartment building, or ask grandparents.
- 6. An additional option: Project the timeline into the future. Ask the students what events they think might happen in their own lives and in the world. Add their predictions to the extended timeline.

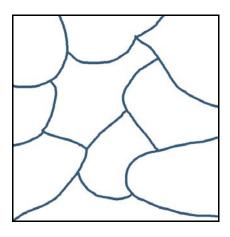
Materials Needed:

Long paper, ruler, colored markers or highlighters if you wish to separate the events from Eleanor Roosevelt's life

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY – JIGSAW PUZZLE

Life is like a jigsaw puzzle. We are all involved in many different things and know many different people. Sometime the only connection is that all the different people know you. Eleanor Roosevelt had many different interests. This activity will help students see how she connected them together.

- 1. Write down 10 different things that were important to Eleanor Roosevelt. They do not have to be related to each other. They can be things she did, people she knew or ways she felt about things.
- 2. Draw curved lines on a piece of cardstock, connecting them so you have ten sections.



- 3. Write a different thing about Eleanor Roosevelt on each section (the list you prepared in #1)
- 4. On the back write "ELEANOR ROOSEVELT," "OUR ELEANOR," "ELEANOR ROOSEVELT MADE A DIFFERENCE," or something else to indicate this is her story.

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- 5. Cut out the pieces.
- 6. Now have the students do the same thing with their own lives. Have them list 10 different things about themselves. Encourage them to look farther than their favorite sports teams or music groups think about the special interests and talents they have.

Materials Needed:

Card stock, scissors, pen or pencil

TAKING IT FURTHER – UNDERSTANDING ELEANOR'S FEARS THROUGH POETRY

Things to think about before you start. Have the students answer the following questions:

- What are you afraid of?
- Eleanor craved attention as a child. Have you ever done anything just to get attention?
- Who is the teacher who influenced you the most?
- Eleanor Roosevelt lived in her imagination after her father died it was a way to escape her everyday life. Has anything ever happened in your life that you wish you could escape from?
- One thing that helped Eleanor "escape" was to read. What is your favorite book? Does reading help you escape?
- Eleanor Roosevelt often went to a special place to find peace and get away from the pressures and worries of everyday life. Do you have a special place you like to go?

Some Additional Eleanor Roosevelt Quotes

- "Everything I ever did was always accomplished across a barrier of fear."
- "My greatest fear has always been that I would be afraid afraid physically or mentally or morally and allow myself to be influenced by fear instead of by my honest convictions."
- "In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility."
- "We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face...we must do that which we think we cannot."

A WRITING EXERCISE: POEMS ABOUT FEAR AND OVERCOMING IT

Use some of the information from the above questions to complete the following poem:

- a. Three adjectives that describe you
- b. Write a sentence about something you fear.
- c. Three different positive adjectives that describe you

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- d. Write a sentence about something you wish you could escape from *or* something you once did just to get attention.
- e. Write a sentence about a place you can go to find peace or comfort.
- f. "I have to remember that..." (write out these words)
- g. Use one of Eleanor Roosevelt's quotes *or* make up a saying of your own about life, overcoming fears or following your convictions.

An example:

Friendly, kind, curious

Spiders make me jump

Helpful, understanding, funny

I don't like thunderstorms; they make me want to hide

under the covers until they stop

I have to remember that

"In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves."

An additional writing exercise: an "I AM" poem:

There are many ways to write an "I AM" poem. This is a guideline. Encourage the students to use metaphor (a word or phrase literally representing one kind of idea or object that is used in place of another: i.e., "rolling in dough") and simile (a word or phrase comparing two unlike things; often introduced by "like" or "as": i.e., "tall as a mountain") to create word pictures.

I AM A color... A food... A season... A feeling... An animal... Something you find in nature or outside... An object... I AM ME

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An example:

I AM

Blue as the early morning sky

Hot chocolate chip cookies fresh from the oven

Fall-orange and red and brown mixed up in the crispness of a pre-winter wind

Excitement bouncing off the walls and bouncing back again

A moose, master of the forest

Trees dancing in the wind

An eagle flying as high as the sun

I AM ME

Curriculum Connections

Language arts, personal psychology (understanding self and therefore understanding more about Eleanor Roosevelt), personal connection to history (understanding that history is about people and not just facts)

Eleanor: an Agent of Change

"I listened to the people and everywhere I went I asked: 'Tell me, what do you need? What do you want?'" (pg 86)

A bit about Eleanor's Projects

Eleanor Roosevelt didn't just sit and talk about problems, she did something about them. She began her volunteer work in 1903 working with new immigrants at the Rivington Street Settlement House in New York City. It was quickly determined that this was not appropriate for a lady of her social standing, but her need to make a difference in people's lives never changed.

She became active in the National League of Women Voters and the Women's Division of the New York State Democratic Committee. She taught part-time at the Todhunter School and became the eyes and ears of her husband, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, on fact-finding trips around the country. In 1934, she began speaking out on behalf of African Americans and soon became popular on the lecture circuit. Many criticized what she believed in, but Eleanor Roosevelt didn't let that stop her, and her efforts made a big difference.

"No woman of this generation and few in the annals of history have so well understood and articulated the yearnings of men and women for social justice." (Jawaharlal Nehru, pg 154)

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UNDERSTANDING ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S WORK IN THE WORLD

"The condition of democratic living is not to lower standards, but to raise those that have been too low." (pg 77)

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was concerned with the Depression's impact on the young and lobbied for expanded federal aid for youth and education. "I have moments of real terror," she explained in 1934, "when I think we may be losing this generation. We have got to bring these young people into the active life of the community and make them feel that they are necessary."

By far the largest category of requests in the letters young people sent to her were for clothing. "I am writing you for some of your old soiled dresses if you have any," a 13-year-old girl from Arkansas began her letter to the First Lady in winter 1936. "I am a poor girl who has to stay out of school on account of dresses, and slips, and a coat. I am in the seventh grade in school but I have to stay out of school because I have not books or clothes to ware. I am in need of dresses and slips and a coat very bad." Many were hungry and suffering from health problems because of their poverty. An eighth grader from Salida, Colorado confessed to Mrs. Roosevelt that her family was so poor that "every week we go to bed one or two days without anything to eat." (quotes taken from www.newdeal.feri.org)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: LETTERS FROM CHILDREN TO MRS. ROOSEVELT

- 1. Go to the website: *www.newdeal.feri.org.* Under "more features," go to "Dear Mrs. Roosevelt" and read the letters young people sent to her.
- 2. Are there any children or young people in your community who have similar problems to the children in the letters?
- 3. Have a school clothing or coat drive for a local charity organization.

TAKING IT FURTHER: LEARNING ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY AND ITS NEEDS

Find someone in your community to come and talk to the class. For example: an immigrant talking about what it is like to settle in a new country, a politician talking about representing the people, a police officer talking about troubles they face, a person from a minority group talking about discrimination in today's world.

THE UNITED NATIONS AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world." (Eleanor Roosevelt's remarks to the United Nations, March 27, 1953)

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A BIT ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS (THE UN)

The purpose of the United Nations is to bring all nations of the world together to work for peace and development, based on the principles of justice, human dignity and the well-being of all people. It officially came into existence on October 24, 1945 when the UN Charter had been ratified by a majority of the original 51 member states. More information about the United Nations can be found at *www.un.org* or *www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus* (a site designed specifically for teachers and students).

Eleanor Roosevelt's role in the UN was critical. In 1934 she founded the United Nations Association of the United States to advance support for the formation of the UN. She was a delegate to the UN General Assembly in 1945 and chaired the committee that drafted and approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. President Harry S. Truman called her the "First Lady of the World" in tribute to her human rights achievement. *www.wikipedia.org*

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: CREATING A NEW DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- 1. Review the function of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights (the Declaration can be found at the following website: *www.unhchr.ch/udhr*).
- 2. Divide the students into groups and have them write their own Declaration of Human Rights for the class or the school.
- 3. Have the groups present their document to the class. Why did the groups choose the issues that they did? Why (if this is the case) do some groups/students disagree with other groups/students? Do policymakers in government ever disagree? How do they resolve their differences?
- 4. As a class, create one document. Discuss the need for compromise.

TAKING IT FURTHER: TWO ACTIVIIES MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR WORLD

ACTIVITY ONE: FIND OUT WHAT IS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- 1. Most communities have volunteer organizations or chapters of national organizations that help people in need. Have your students make a list of the volunteer groups and programs in your community that are dedicated to helping others (Meals on Wheels, Big Brother/Sister programs, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, church groups, shelters, nursing home visitors).
- 2. Working in small groups, ask students to choose one organization or program and write an essay to share with the whole class. Essays should include:
 - The purpose of the organization
 - How, when, and why it was founded
 - Who started it (an individual or a group)
 - Benefits to the community

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3. Ask a person from one or more of the programs to come in and speak to the class or, if possible, go on a fieldtrip to the site.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

History, government, sociology, nonfiction/essay writing

ACTIVITY TWO: DONATING YOUR OWN TIME AND/OR MONEY

Your class or school can make a difference in today's world, just as Eleanor Roosevelt did during her lifetime. There are many organizations that are set up for groups to come and help. Check with your local food shelf about food donations. Some organizations accept donations of winter coats, school supplies, or gently used books. Below are a few specific organizations to get you started.

"An economic policy which does not consider the well-being of all will not serve the purposes of peace and the growth of well-being among the people of all nations." (pg 77)

KIVA *www.kiva.org* (an organization that provides opportunities to connect with, and loan money to, unique and small businesses in the developing world, helping the working poor make great strides towards economic independence.)

HEIFER INTERNATIONAL *www.heifer.org* (a humanitarian assistance organization that works to end world hunger and protect the earth. Through livestock, training, and "passing on the gift," Heifer has helped seven million families in more than 125 countries improve their quality of life and move toward greater self-reliance. Each participant in turn passes on the gift of animal offspring, training, or skills to another family in need).

"How can a few dollars a month given to (the) needy... for food, shelter, and clothing, be the wrong choice for a moral nation?" (pg 77)

GLOBAL HEALTH MINISTRIES *www.ghm.org* (an organization that provides funding for health care projects, scholarships, and gathers and ships health care equipment and supplies to countries where such materials are not available or are very expensive. Website includes lesson plans, instructions on making bandages and midwife kits for countries overseas and volunteer ideas)

FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN *www.fmsc.org* (an organization that offers hope to the hungry around the world. In 2005, more than 75,000 volunteers – the majority under the age of 18 – manually assembled 15 million meals for hungry children, helping to heal the world of the hurt of hunger. Elementary, middle, and high schools use FMSC to strengthen curriculum efforts focusing on citizenship, social service, asset building and other positive aspects of character development. Volunteer sites are present in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota and in Chicago, IL. How about your city?)

"Decent housing is a basic human right that society is morally and politically obligated to provide all of its citizens." (p77)

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HABITAT FOR HUMANITY *www.habitat.org* (an organization dedicated to eliminating poverty housing worldwide. Since the founding in 1976, Habitat for Humanity has become a global leader in addressing substandard housing by helping more than 1,000,000 people of all races, faiths, and backgrounds have a simple, decent place to live. HFH has built or renovated more than 200,000 homes throughout the world.)

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Sociology, history, international relations, global awareness

From Eleanor's Pen

"I simply tell small human happenings which may interest or amuse the average reader" (pg 75)

A bit about Eleanor's writing, television, and radio appearances

Eleanor Roosevelt was not afraid to speak her mind, and her thoughts often took shape in the form of newspaper columns and magazine articles. She wrote for serious publications like *Atlantic Monthly, the New Republic,* and the *Harvard Law Review.* She enjoyed writing for popular magazines like *Good Housekeeping, Collier's,* and *Redbook* because she felt they helped her reach the average person. She averaged thirty to thirty-five articles a year, but was best known for her daily columns. Her 400 word daily column, *My Day,* first appeared in November 1935 and ran for twenty-seven years, six days a week. *Mrs. Roosevelt's Page* first appeared in the magazine, *Woman's Home Companion,* in 1933.

Eleanor Roosevelt's first children's book, *A Trip to Washington with Bobby and Betty*, came out in 1935 and she published the first in a series of autobiographies, *This is My Story*, in 1937. Her voice was often heard on the radio and in 1959 she appeared on a monthly television program, *Prospects of Mankind*.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER THE ACTIVITY CHOSEN

Eleanor Roosevelt knew she was writing for publication, that her words would be read by thousands of people.

- How is writing for publication different than writing just for yourself?
- Do you think you express your ideas in different ways?
- If you want the students to see the difference for themselves, give them two writing assignments: one that only they will read and one that will be published in a classroom or school newsletter.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: KEEPING A JOURNAL

- 1. Have students keep a personal journal every day for two weeks. Here are some things they can write about:
 - What is your role in your community? What differences can you make?
 - How do you see yourself fitting into the world? Can you make a difference?

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- What is an issue in your community (state, nation, world) that confuses you?
- What is an issue that makes you sad?
- What makes you happy? What can you do to help make others happy?
- Who are people in your community who make a difference?
- 2. At the end of the two weeks, have students share their thoughts in small groups or with the rest of the class.

TAKING IT FURTHER: WRITING AN EDITORIAL

- 1. Discuss as a class what an editorial is. (An editorial is an article, typically short, that expresses an opinion or point of view.)
- 2. Look at examples from your local newspaper.
- 3. Have students read Eleanor Roosevelt's columns included in the "Special Features" section of the following website: *www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eleanor/sfeature/myday.html*
- 4. Have students write their own editorials about policies they'd like to see changed whether in school, in their town, or in the government.
- 5. If appropriate, send the editorials to student and local newspapers, or compile them as a publication to be read by other students in the school. Remind students to write clearly about the issues and to give sound arguments why and how policies should be changed.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Sociology, history, creative writing, journalism

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Companion Materials for the Classroom

BOOKS

- Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride by Pam Muñoz Ryan, illus by Brian Selznick, Scholastic, 1999 (fiction, based on a true event)
- *Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters to Eleanor Roosevelt through Depression and War,* edited by Cathy D. Knepper, Da Capo Press, 2006
- Eleanor by Barbara Cooney, Viking Juvenile Books, 1996

Eleanor Roosevelt: a life of discovery by Russell Freedman, Clarion Books, 1997

- Eleanor Roosevelt: a photographic story of a life, by Kem Knapp Sawyer, Dorling Kindersley, 2006
- *Grandmère: a personal history of Eleanor Roosevelt* by David B. Roosevelt and Manuela Dunn-Mascetti, Grand Central Publishing, 2002
- *My Day: the best of Eleanor Roosevelt's newspaper columns,* 1936-1962, edited by David Emblidge, Da Capo Press, 2001
- A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by Mary Ann Glendon, Random House, 2002

WEBSITES ON CIVIL RIGHTS/WOMEN'S RIGHTS

"One of the main destroyers of freedom is our attitude toward the colored race... We must face this problem and change our actions, or democracy will fade." (pg 77)

www.42explore2.com/suffrage.htm links to women's suffrage sites including Library of Congress photos

www.teacher.scholastic.com/activities/suffrage great classroom activities for preK-12 about the women's suffrage movement

www.pbskids.org/wayback/civilrights/index.html women's rights, religious freedom, civil rights with parent/teacher area, sponsored by PBS

www.suffragist.com/ex1.htm

the history of the suffrage with excerpts from a new book by Anne Hutchinson

www.nmwh.org National Museum of Women's History includes lesson plans, self-guided tours, photographs)

www.lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/vfwhtml/vfwhome.html
photographs sponsored by the Library of Congress

NEW DEAL PROJECTS

www.newdeal.feri.org

This is a fantastic database of primary source materials including photographs, political cartoons and texts (speeches, letters and other historical documents) gathered from the

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Franklin D Roosevelt Presidential Library, the National Archives and Records Administration, the Library of Congress. Includes curriculum ideas, sponsored by the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute

Films or videocassettes about the New Deal available for sale or rent from:

National Audiovisual Center, Washington, D.C. 20409. Titles include: *The River (32 minutes)* and *The Plow That Broke the Plains (25 minutes)*

CRM/McGraw-Hill Films, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Del Mar, California 92014, telephone (714) 453-5000. Titles include: *The New Deal (25 minutes), Dust Bowl (30 minutes), Life in the Thirties (52 minutes)*

READING AND WRITING

"Wherever the standard of education is low, the standard of living is low. Government must take the lead in providing all Americans with a sound and basic education." (pg 77)

- A Letter to Mrs. Roosevelt by C.Coco De Young, Random House, 2000
- A Teen's Guide to Getting Published: Publishing for Profit, Recognition And Academic Success by Jessica Dunn and Danielle Dunn, Prufrock Press, 2006
- *People Writing Down the Days: 365 Creative Journaling Ideas for Young People* by Lorraine M. Dahlstrom, Free Spirit Publishing;, 2000

www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/one-book.html

library of congress "one book reading promotion: - lists communities across the USA who are reading one book together

THE UNITED NATIONS

- A World in Our Hands: In Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations : Young People of the World by Ten Speed Press and the Young People of the World, Tricycle Press, 1995 (a collection of prose, poetry and art by and for young people from around the world. Published in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations)
- *Humanitarian Relief Operations: Lending a Helping Hand* by Roger Smith, Mason Crest Publishers, 2006.
- *The UN and Cultural Globalization: One World, Many People* by Sheila Nelson, Mason Crest Publishers, 2006.
- UNICEF and Other Human Rights Efforts: Protecting Individuals by Roger Smith, Mason Crest Publishers, 2006.

www.un.org/cyberschoolbus

resources, links and information to help children get connected to world issues; site sponsored by the United Nations and includes downloads, interviews about world issues and on-line activities

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ADDITIONAL WEBSITES ABOUT ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/abouteleanor/erlinks.cfm

a collection of Eleanor Roosevelt websites sponsored the George Washington University – includes primary source material

www.brownvboard.org/brwnqurt/05-1/05-1f.htm

lesson plan about Eleanor Roosevelt that highlights her humanitarian efforts

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