

## **EXPLORING SALLY THOMAS AND LAUNDRY PAST AND PRESENT**

### **STUDENT HANDOUT 2: CREATING HISTORICAL FICTION ABOUT AN EXPERIENCE WITH A NINETEENTH-CENTURY LAUNDRESS**

Works of historical fiction are creative stories that are based in a historical time period and accurately portray the period's customs and events.

The following are criteria for your work of historical fiction:

- Tell an interesting story about doing the laundry that does not conflict with the historical records.
- Think about how some of the experiences doing laundry today may be used to inspire your work of historical fiction. For example, stories need to have a problem or conflict. Could shrinking a garment you are washing for someone else create a conflict? Could mixing colors together and accidentally dyeing a garment a new color be a conflict? If you were a laundress like Sally Thomas and you mixed up garments, returning the wrong laundry to the wrong person, could this create conflict?
- Make all characters realistic. For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it would be realistic for a laundress to be a black woman and for a child to assist a mother who was a laundress with the laundry work.
- Be creative and use descriptive language (adjectives and adverbs) about garments, settings, personalities, and places.

The following are a couple of ideas to show you how to think about writing your short story:

- Imagine that you are a child living in the nineteenth century and that your mother is a laundress. You help her by picking up the laundry each week and returning it to customers and collecting their payment.
- Imagine that you are a child living in the nineteenth century and that you live in a fancy house. Each week the son of a laundress comes by to pick up the laundry. The boy is your age and is black. You are white. You like each other and want to be friends but your parents forbid you to be friends with someone who is of another class and race.

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