

Stained. The Cultural Story of Periods

Amaia Clayton

Senior Division

Individual Exhibit

Student-Composed Words: 500

Process Paper: 500

Process Paper

When I began the process of finding a topic for NHD 2020, I knew I wanted something powerful. A unique topic, a topic I was passionate about, and something no one had ever seen before. As I sifted through my options, I realized there was one topic that I thought really broke barriers and I couldn't seem to get it out of my head. The menstrual stigma. As I began to gather my research, I realized that the purpose of my project was not to win, as many may feel an NHD project to be. Rather, I wanted my project to mean something, to educate people, and to finish the barrier breaking that had begun.

Though it took a bit of time to get deep enough into my research to begin finding the answers to my questions, I did not have much trouble finding quotes and information. I did, however, have trouble finding pictures until I completed my research and found out what pictures would complement my research the best.

I decided to do an exhibit in order to present my information the best, as well as for it to be able to be something educational for everyone, all the time. I made a lot of decisions on layout, design, and interactive elements for my exhibit to be well-delivered, powerful, intriguing, and for it to convey a message. One of the key decisions I made during this time was the decision to cover one of my more mature photos in order to guard from the fact that many younger siblings would likely be viewing my project, and I wanted to ensure that parents had the choice for their child if they were comfortable with them viewing the photo.

I learned a lot in my National History Day project this year, but it wasn't just about a historical topic. Throughout my research, I feel I learned a lot about myself and my life, as well as what my mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother had to deal with growing up and even into adulthood. I became more grateful for the opportunities that I have today and the fact that

even if it is a little awkward sometimes, I can talk about my period and no one will get mad at me. This project has made me a thousand times more aware and grateful for the times that I will be sitting on the bus riding home from school and I can freely talk to my friends about my period. I can complain when I'm having period cramps, and no one will shush me. My NHD project has not only made me historically smarter, it has forever changed the way I think about my period and has struck me with a deep emotion that I feel for the women who came before me as well as an immense power I feel for the women to come after me. It has even motivated me to continue this work I have begun long into my future.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:

“1985 Tampax Commercial With Courteney Cox.” *1985 Tampax Commercial With Courteney Cox*, YouTube, 26 Nov. 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koYcUw4Ddkg>.

This primary source was the first advertisement of a menstrual product, and I used it for my research about periods in the media.

“Blood Normal.” *Blood Normal*, YouTube, 17 Oct. 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdW6IRsuXaQ>.

This primary source was the first TV advertisement to feature red liquid (menstrual blood), instead of the traditional blue liquid. This video is an integral part to my exhibit and I used it as one of my interactive elements to show.

Blume, Judy. *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. Macmillan Inc., 1970.

This primary source is Judy Blume’s classic 1970 book, “Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret.” I used this book to prove how the stigma around periods was changing and that in a children’s/young adult book periods could now be more graphically talked about.

Chicago, Judy. “Menstruation Bathroom.” *Judy Chicago*, Chicago/Woodman LLC, 1995, <http://www.judychicago.com/gallery/womanhouse/pr-artwork/#0>.

This primary source is Judy Chicago’s “Menstruation Bathroom” photograph. This photograph is a powerful piece of artwork featured in the section of my exhibit about Judy Chicago.

Chicago, Judy. "Red Flag." *Judy Chicago*, Chicago/Woodman LLC, 1971,

<https://www.judychicago.com/gallery/early-feminist/ef-artwork/>.

This primary source is Judy Chicago's "Red Flag" photo-lithograph, a piece of artwork that seems to star in the entirety of the menstrual movement. This photo-lithograph was the most powerful and most important image on my exhibit and it is a bit mature, so I chose to cover it with a flip-up panel.

de Beauvoir, Simone. "The Second Sex." *The Second Sex*, edited by Simone de Beauvoir, Alfred

A. Knopf, 1976, pp. 3-273,

class.guilford.edu/psci/mrosales/gender/The%20Second%20Sex.pdf.

I utilized this primary source, Simone de Beauvoir's book "The Second Sex," to help me to understand how in 1949, when the book was originally published, the attitudes about women wanting more and women beginning to fight back came around.

Delaney, Janice, et al. *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation*. revised ed., University of

Illinois Press, 1988,

https://books.google.com/booksid=njfQfrMr3lEC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

This primary source is a book looking into the deep history of different cultures' views of menstruation and I used it for background information. It went into detail on multiple theories of the origin of the stigma.

Ellingham, Erin. "Now You Are 10." *"You're A Young Lady Now": Menstrual Education*

Through Advertising, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Harvard University,

Cambridge, MA, 17 July 2014, <https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/schlesinger-library/blog/youre-young-lady-now>.

This primary source was a picture of a period pamphlet from 1958, one of the first signs something was changing. I used this photograph at the beginning of my main panel.

Friedan, Betty. "The Problem That Has No Name." *The Feminine Mystique*, edited by Betty Friedan, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963, pp. 15–32, nationalhumanitiescenter.org/ows/seminars/tcentury/FeminineMystique.pdf.

I utilized this primary source, Betty Friedan's book "The Feminine Mystique," to help me better understand some of the attitudes of the 1960s and the turmoil and unrest women were feeling.

Knight, Chris. "Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origin of Culture." *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origin of Culture*, Amazon, <https://www.amazon.com/Blood-Relations-Menstruation-Origins-Culture/dp/0300063083>.

This primary source was social anthropologist and professor Chris Knight's book on his theory of the early beginnings of the menstrual stigma. This book detailed the theory that the stigma of menstruation came from early hunter-gatherer societies.

Nayrīzī, Aḥmad, Scribe. *Qur'ān*. [1708 or 1709, 1708] Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017406493/>.

This primary source was a manuscript of the Quran and was used for a photograph of one of the pages. I used it next to my quote of the Quran stating that menstruation was dirty, and a person should not go near a woman while she was menstruating.

Kaur, Rupī. “Rupī Kaur Image Removed.” @rupikaur_, Instagram, 25 Mar. 2015,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/0prtdPnA4w/>.

This primary source is the image of a screenshot Rupī Kaur took of her error message on Instagram, stating her menstruation picture had been removed. This was an important part of the recent history of the stigma and the fight that was still being fought.

Kaur, Rupī. “Rupī Kaur Menstruating.” @rupikaur_, Instagram, 24 Mar. 2015,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/0ovWwJHA6f/>.

This primary source is the image of Rupī Kaur laying down with a red stain on her pants, after Instagram un-censored it. I used this image to show that even after society tried to fight the stigma, we were able to fight back and yet again a barrier was broken. This time, the barrier of social media.

Schroeder, Fred E. H. “Feminine Hygiene, Fashion, and the Emancipation of American Women.” *Womens Bodies*, 1976, pp. 101–110. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1515/9783110976328.348.

This primary source is a book written by Fred Schroeder about the development of attitudes on menstruation in America. I used it in order to understand more theories on the origins of the stigma.

“The Internet Classics Archive: Aphorisms by Hippocrates.” *The Internet Classics Archive* |

Aphorisms by Hippocrates, The Internet Classics Archive,

<http://classics.mit.edu/Hippocrates/aphorisms.6.vi.html>.

This primary source is a copy of Hippocrates’ Aphorisms text, used for background information. This was another place in early writing that we could see the menstrual stigma show up.

Secondary Sources:

“Always Ultra Thin.” *Always Runs First Feminine Hygiene Ad To Show Blood*, HuffPost, 6 July 2011, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/always-runs-first-feminin_n_891546.

This source was used for a photograph of the first advertisement to feature menstrual blood. I used this photograph in my “Moving Forward” panel to show periods becoming more common in the media.

Bergoffen, Debra, and Megan Burke. “Simone de Beauvoir.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 27 Mar. 2020, plato.stanford.edu/entries/beauvoir/.

I utilized this secondary source when I was exploring Simone de Beauvoir’s book, “The Second Sex.” This source helped me to analyze the book and the writer herself in order to better understand the culture and society’s views at the time.

Blume, Judy. “Banned Books Week: Here Are 5 Classic Books to Celebrate With.” *Banned Books Week: Here Are 5 Classic Books to Celebrate With*, Time, 22 Sept. 2014, <https://time.com/3418361/banned-books-week/>.

This secondary source contained a photograph of the cover of Judy Blume’s book, “Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret,” which I used to support my analysis of the book and its impact.

Churchill, Lindsey Blake. “The Feminine Mystique.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 19 Feb. 2020, www.britannica.com/topic/The-Feminine-Mystique.

This secondary source looked deep into Betty Friedan's book "The Feminine Mystique" and I used it to help me better understand some of Friedan's motivations and her lifestyle when she was writing the book.

Druet, Anna. "How Did Menstruation Become Taboo?" Clue, Clue, 6 June 2019,
<https://helloc clue.com/articles/culture/how-did-menstruation-become-taboo>.

This secondary source delved into the background of the menstrual stigma, giving me a good groundwork to start on in order to figure out where to look next.

Hoyt, Alia. "Why So Many Women Remember 'Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret!'" *HowStuffWorks*, HowStuffWorks, 31 Oct. 2018,
<https://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/arts/literature/are-you-there-god-its-me-margaret.htm>. re

This secondary source interviewed many women on why Judy Blume's "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret" was so impactful when it was first published. I used this source and these quotes when I analyzed the impact of the book.

Laskis, Erin. "Girl with White Pants." *How to Get Period Stains Out: Dealing With Unexpected Leaks*, Knixteen, 2 May 2018, <https://www.knixteen.com/blogs/the-rag/period-stains>.

This secondary source was used for a photograph of a girl wearing white pants, which I used as a part of my title for the exhibit.

Litman, Jill. "Menstruation Stigma Must Stop. Period." *The Public Health Advocate*, University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health, 5 June 2018,
<https://pha.berkeley.edu/2018/06/05/menstruation-stigma-must-stop-period/>.

This secondary source was an article about the menstrual stigma and was used for background information. It was a solid source from a university and was good for a surface-level beginning explanation of the stigma.

Montana, Luna. *Period Tips from a Ballerina*, YouTube, 19 Sept. 2019,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUN2e6iGh5U>.

This secondary source was used for background information to see how easily people can talk about menstruation today.

“Ms. Magazine October 1978.” *Ms. Magazine October 1978*, Wolfgang's,
<https://www.wolfgangs.com/magazines/ms-vol-vii-no-4/magazine/OMS12423.html>.

This source contained a photograph of the cover of Ms. Magazine’s October 1978 issue, featuring Gloria Steinem’s essay, “If Men Could Menstruate.” I used it at the bottom of my central panel when discussing the importance of Steinem’s article.

Okamoto, Nadya. *Period Power: A Manifesto for the Menstrual Movement*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2018.

This secondary source is a book written by Harvard junior and “Period.” founder, Nadya Okamoto. This book was my most valuable source and was an amazing book helping to detail so many corners of the menstrual stigma and the menstrual movement.

Steinem, Gloria. “If Men Could Menstruate.” *If Men Could Menstruate by Gloria Steinem*, Haverford College, 1986,
<https://ww3.haverford.edu/psychology/ddavis/p109g/steinem.menstruate.html>.

This primary source is an essay written by Gloria Steinem for the October 1978 copy of Ms. Magazine. This was also one of my most valuable sources and one of the key “turning points” of the entire story.

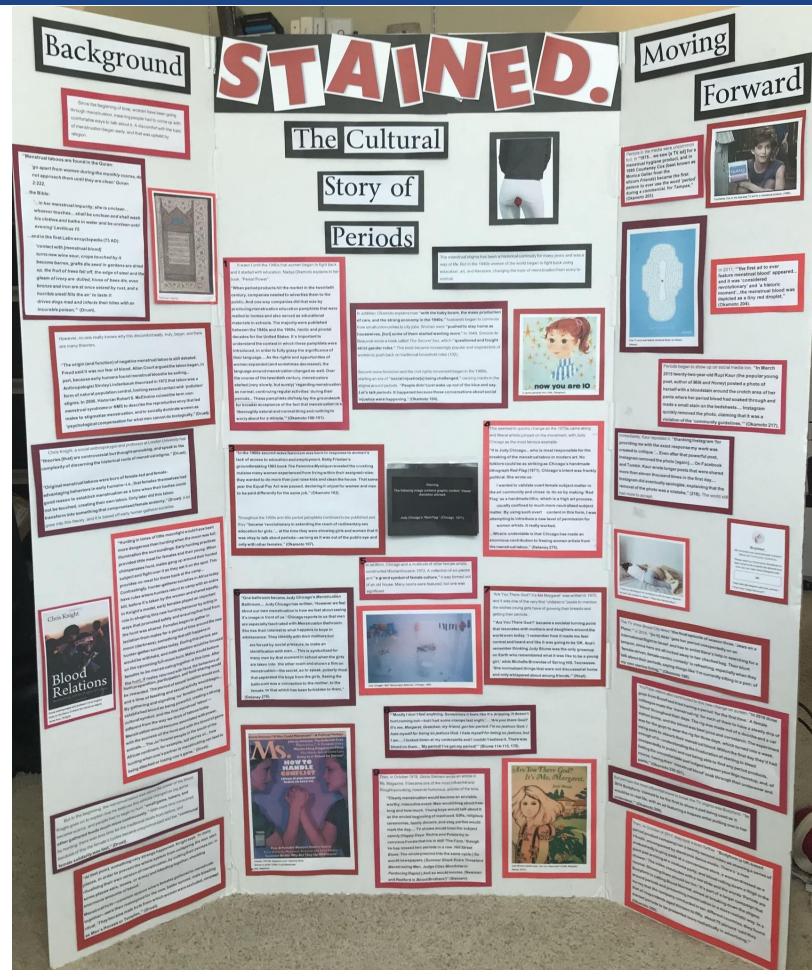
Stockton, Richard. “Let It Bleed: A People's History Of Menstruation.” *All That's Interesting*, All That's Interesting, 9 Sept. 2016, <https://allthatsinteresting.com/menstruation-history>.

This secondary source discussed the history of menstruation in religious texts, along with how menstrual products developed throughout the ages. This was one of the first sources I viewed and helped me to gain a base-level understanding of what to start with and what to look into next.

Exhibit Entry Information

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title: | Stained. The Cultural Story of Periods |
| Name(s): | Amaia Clayton |
| Division: (Junior/Senior) | Senior |
| Individual/ Group: | Individual |
| Number of Student Composed Words on Exhibit: | 500 |
| (Optional) Link to Any Audio or Video on Exhibit (no more than 3 minutes total): | 2017 Bodyform Ad: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdW6IRsuXaQ&feature=youtu.be |

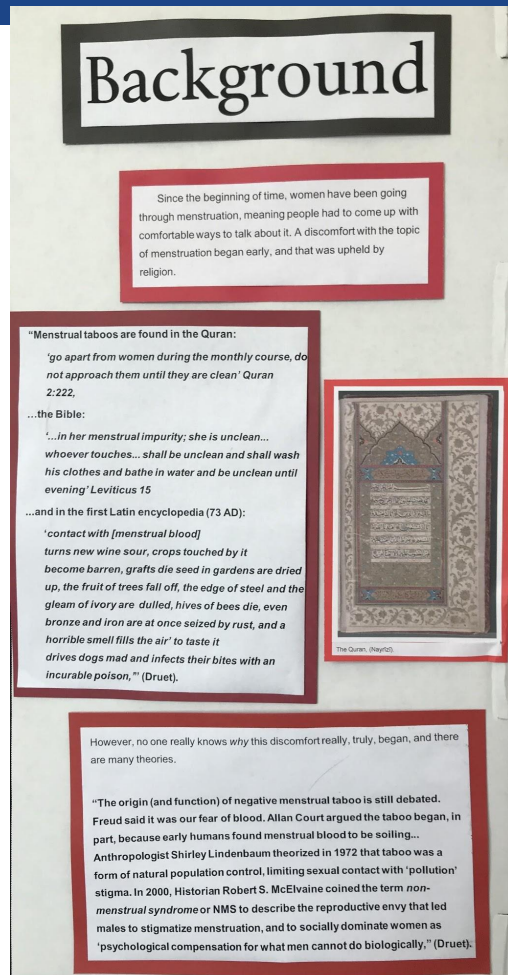
Picture of Entire Exhibit



Thesis/Historical Argument

The menstrual stigma has been a historical continuity since the beginning of time. But in the 20th century, women of the world fought back and broke barriers using education, art, and literature to change conversations about menstruation from hushed comments to bold discussions.

Picture & Text on Left Panel of Exhibit 1 of 3



Background

Since the beginning of time, women have been going through menstruation, meaning people had to come up with comfortable ways to talk about it. A discomfort with the topic of menstruation began early, and that was upheld by religion.

"Menstrual taboos are found in the Quran:

'go apart from women during the monthly course, do not approach them until they are clean' Quran 2:222,

...the Bible:

'...in her menstrual impurity; she is unclean... whoever touches... shall be unclean and shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening' Leviticus 15

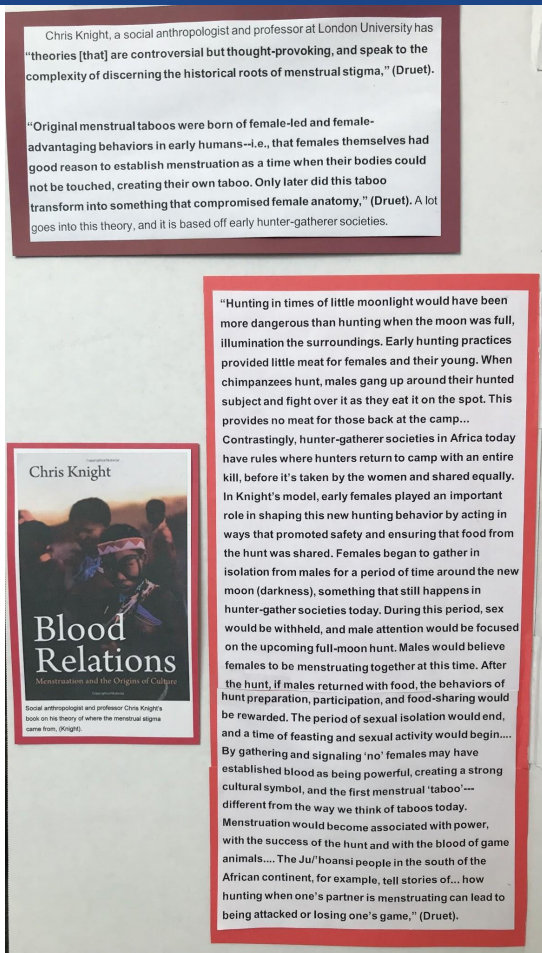
...and in the first Latin encyclopedia (73 AD):

'contact with [menstrual blood] turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren, grafts die seed in gardens are dried up, the fruit of trees fall off, the edge of steel and the gleam of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once seized by rust, and a horrible smell fills the air' to taste it drives dogs mad and infects their bites with an incurable poison,' (Druet).

However, no one really knows *why* or *how* this discomfort truly began, and there are many theories.

"The origin (and function) of negative menstrual taboo is still debated. Freud said it was our fear of blood. Allan Court argued the taboo began, in part, because early humans found menstrual blood to be soiling... Anthropologist Shirley Lindenbaum theorized in 1972 that taboo was a form of natural population control, limiting sexual contact with 'pollution' stigma. In 2000, Historian Robert S. McElvaine coined the term *non-menstrual syndrome* or NMS to describe the reproductive envy that led males to stigmatize menstruation, and to socially dominate women as 'psychological compensation for what men cannot do biologically,' (Druet).

Picture & Text on Left Panel of Exhibit 2 of 3



Chris Knight, a social anthropologist and professor at London University has **"theories [that] are controversial but thought-provoking, and speak to the complexity of discerning the historical roots of menstrual stigma," (Druet).**

"Original menstrual taboos were born of female-led and female-advantaging behaviors in early humans--i.e., that females themselves had good reason to establish menstruation as a time when their bodies could not be touched, creating their own taboo. Only later did this taboo transform into something that compromised female anatomy," (Druet). A lot goes into this theory, and it is based off early hunter-gatherer societies.

"Hunting in times of little moonlight would have been more dangerous than hunting when the moon was full, illumination the surroundings. Early hunting practices provided little meat for females and their young. When chimpanzees hunt, males gang up around their hunted subject and fight over it as they eat it on the spot. This provides no meat for those back at the camp... Contrastingly, hunter-gatherer societies in Africa today have rules where hunters return to camp with an entire kill, before it's taken by the women and shared equally. In Knight's model, early females played an important role in shaping this new hunting behavior by acting in ways that promoted safety and ensuring that food from the hunt was shared. Females began to gather in isolation from males for a period of time around the new moon (darkness), something that still happens in hunter-gatherer societies today. During this period, sex would be withheld, and male attention would be focused on the upcoming full-moon hunt. Males would believe females to be menstruating together at this time. After the hunt, if males returned with food, the behaviors of hunt preparation, participation, and food-sharing would be rewarded. The period of sexual isolation would end, and a time of feasting and sexual activity would begin.... By gathering and signaling 'no' females may have established blood as being powerful, creating a strong cultural symbol, and the first menstrual 'taboo'--- different from the way we think of taboos today. Menstruation would become associated with power, with the success of the hunt and with the blood of game animals.... The Ju/'hoansi people in the south of the African continent, for example, tell stories of... how hunting when one's partner is menstruating can lead to being attacked or losing one's game," (Druet).

Picture & Text on Left Panel of Exhibit 3 of 3

But in the beginning, the menstrual taboo was about the power of the blood. Knight goes on to explain that he believes this attitude changed as big game became scarce, and people had to begin to hunt **“small game, tubers, and other gathered foods much more continuously.”** With more time consumed by hunting, there was less time for the traditional rituals from before, and because of this the female’s cycles became unsynchronized and the **“communal female solidarity was lost,”** (Druet).

“At that point, something very strange happened, Knight says. ‘In many places, in order to prevent the whole system from collapsing, the men start ritualizing their own version of menstruation, by cutting their penises (or, in some places ears, noses, or arms) and bleeding together, shedding enormous amounts of blood.’

Menstrual huts—common spaces where females gathered to menstruate together—were then reassigned for the new, better synced, male bleeding ritual. **‘They became male huts from which women were excluded, renamed as Men’s Houses or Temples,’”** (Druet).

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STAINED.

The menstrual stigma has been a historical continuity for many years and was a way of life. But in the 1940s women of the world began to fight back using education, art, and literature, changing the topic of menstruation from scary to normal.

In addition, Okamoto explains how "with the baby boom, the mass production of cars, and the strong economy in the 1940s," husbands began to commute from small communities to city jobs. Women were "pushed to stay home as housewives, [but] some of them started wanting more." In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir wrote a book called *The Second Sex*, which "questioned and fought strict gender roles." This book became increasingly popular and inspired lots of women to push back on traditional household roles (132).

Warning:
The following image contains graphic content. Viewer discretion advised.

This seemed to quickly change as the 1970s came along and liberal artists jumped on the movement, with Judy Chicago as the most famous example.

"It is Judy Chicago... who is most responsible for the breaking of the menstrual taboo in modern art. No folklore could be as striking as Chicago's handmade *Uterine Rhythm Play* [1971]. Chicago's intent was frankly political. She wrote as:

I wanted to validate over female subject matter in the art community and show it do so by making *Rhythm Play* as a handmade little, which is a high art process, usually confined to much more neutralized subject matter. By using such overt content in this form, I was attempting to introduce a new level of permission for women artists. It really worked.

...[What is undeniable is that Chicago has made an enormous contribution to freeing women artists from the menstrual taboo]. (Delany 275).

In addition, Chicago and a multitude of other female artists constructed Womanhouse in 1972. A collection of six pieces and "a grand symbol of female culture," it was formed out of an old house. Many rooms were featured, but one was

"Are You There God? It's Me Margaret" was written in 1970, and it was one of the very first "child-in" books to mention the wishes young girls have of growing their breasts and getting their periods.

"Are You There God?" became a societal turning point that resonates with mothers and daughters around the world even today. I remember how it made me feel: normal and heard and like it was going to be OK. And I remember thinking *July Blawie* was the only girl growing up on Earth who remembered what it was like to be a young girl," adds Michelle Brownlee of Spring Hill, Tennessee. "She normalized things that were not discussed at home and only whispered about among friends." (Hayt)

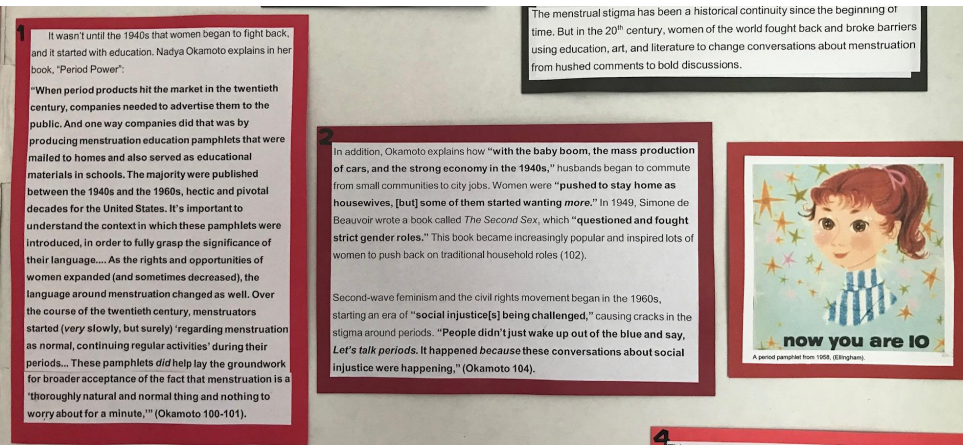
2 "Mostly I don't feel anything. Sometimes it feels like it's dripping. It doesn't hurt *sounding sad*—but I had some cramps last night." ... "Are you there God? It's me, Margaret. Gretchen, my friend, got her period. I'm so jealous. God, I hate myself for being so jealous. God, I hate myself for being so jealous, but I am..." looked down at my underpants and I couldn't believe it. There was blood on them... *My period! I've got my period!*" (Blume 154-155, 170).

[illegible]

*Are You There God?
It's Me, Margaret.*
Judy Blume

Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret?
Judy Blume's iconic book, "Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret?" (1970).

Picture & Text on Center Panel 1 of 4



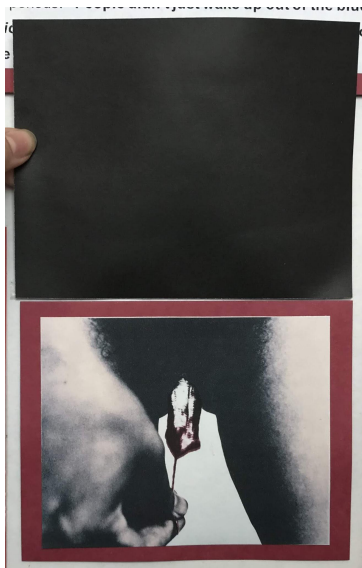
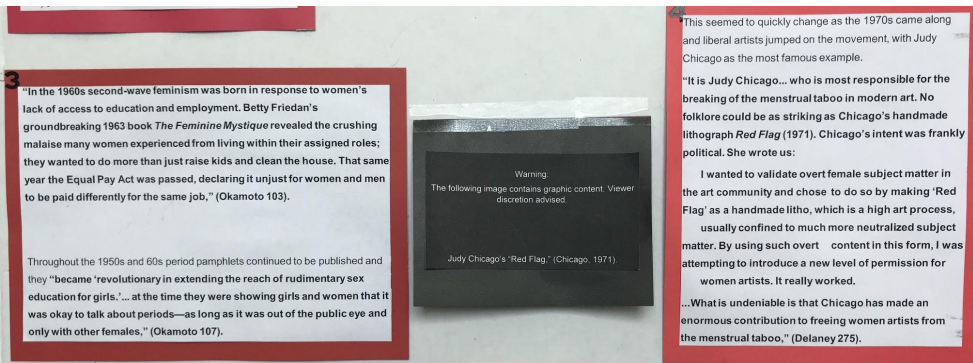
It wasn't until the 1940s that women began to fight back, and it started with education. Nadya Okamoto explains in her book, "Period Power":

"When period products hit the market in the twentieth century, companies needed to advertise them to the public. And one way companies did that was by producing menstruation education pamphlets that were mailed to homes and also served as educational materials in schools. The majority were published between the 1940s and the 1960s, hectic and pivotal decades for the United States. It's important to understand the context in which these pamphlets were introduced, in order to fully grasp the significance of their language.... As the rights and opportunities of women expanded (and sometimes decreased), the language around menstruation changed as well. Over the course of the twentieth century, menstruators started (very slowly, but surely) 'regarding menstruation as normal, continuing regular activities' during their periods... These pamphlets *did* help lay the groundwork for broader acceptance of the fact that menstruation is a 'thoroughly natural and normal thing and nothing to worry about for a minute,'" (Okamoto 100-101).

In addition, Okamoto explains how **"with the baby boom, the mass production of cars, and the strong economy in the 1940s,"** husbands began to commute from small communities to city jobs. Women were **"pushed to stay home as housewives, [but] some of them started wanting more."** In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir wrote a book called *The Second Sex*, which **"questioned and fought strict gender roles."** This book became increasingly popular and inspired lots of women to push back on traditional household roles (102).

Second-wave feminism and the civil rights movement began in the 1960s, starting an era of **"social injustice[s] being challenged,"** causing cracks in the stigma around periods. **"People didn't just wake up out of the blue and say, *Let's talk periods*. It happened because these conversations about social injustice were happening," (Okamoto 104).**

Picture & Text on Center Panel 2 of 4



"In the 1960s second-wave feminism was born in response to women's lack of access to education and employment. Betty Friedan's groundbreaking 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* revealed the crushing malaise many women experienced from living within their assigned roles; they wanted to do more than just raise kids and clean the house. That same year the Equal Pay Act was passed, declaring it unjust for women and men to be paid differently for the same job," (Okamoto 103).

Throughout the 1950s and 60s period pamphlets continued to be published and they "became 'revolutionary in extending the reach of rudimentary sex education for girls.'... at the time they were showing girls and women that it was okay to talk about periods—as long as it was out of the public eye and only with other females," (Okamoto 107).

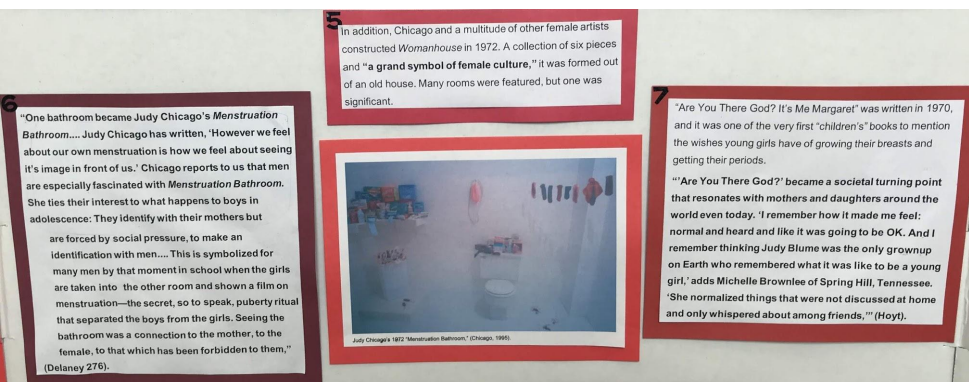
This seemed to quickly change as the 1970s came along and liberal artists jumped on the movement, with Judy Chicago as the most famous example.

"It is Judy Chicago... who is most responsible for the breaking of the menstrual taboo in modern art. No folklore could be as striking as Chicago's handmade lithograph *Red Flag* (1971). Chicago's intent was frankly political. She wrote us:

I wanted to validate overt female subject matter in the art community and chose to do so by making 'Red Flag' as a handmade litho, which is a high art process, usually confined to much more neutralized subject matter. By using such overt content in this form, I was attempting to introduce a new level of permission for women artists. It really worked.

...What is undeniable is that Chicago has made an enormous contribution to freeing women artists from the menstrual taboo," (Delaney 275).

Picture & Text on Center Panel 3 of 4



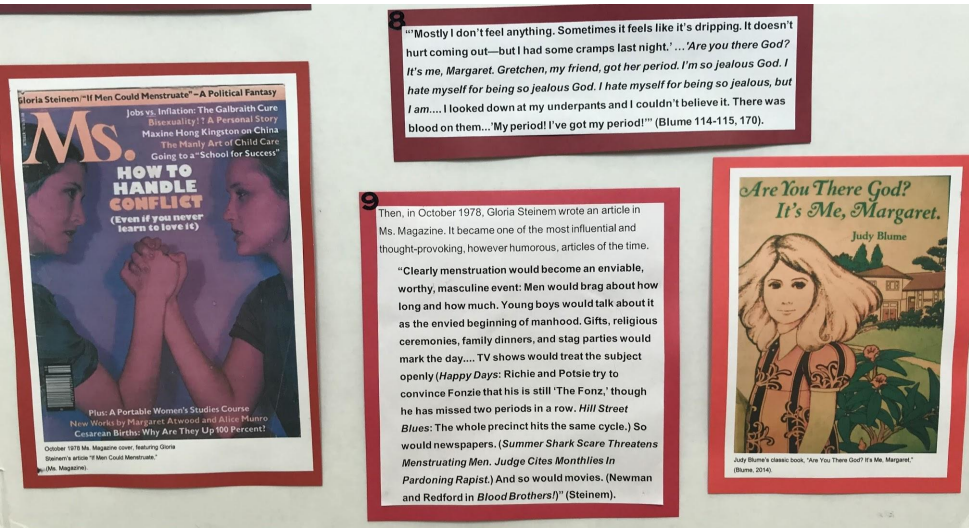
In addition, Chicago and a multitude of other female artists constructed *Womanhouse* in 1972. A collection of six pieces and "**a grand symbol of female culture,**" it was formed out of an old house. Many rooms were featured, but one was significant.

"One bathroom became Judy Chicago's *Menstruation Bathroom*.... Judy Chicago has written, 'However we feel about our own menstruation is how we feel about seeing it's image in front of us.' Chicago reports to us that men are especially fascinated with *Menstruation Bathroom*. She ties their interest to what happens to boys in adolescence: They identify with their mothers but are forced by social pressure, to make an identification with men.... This is symbolized for many men by that moment in school when the girls are taken into the other room and shown a film on menstruation—the secret, so to speak, puberty ritual that separated the boys from the girls. Seeing the bathroom was a connection to the mother, to the female, to that which has been forbidden to them," (Delaney 276).

"Are You There God? It's Me Margaret" was written in 1970, and it was one of the very first "children's" books to mention the wishes young girls have of growing their breasts and getting their periods.

"'Are You There God?' became a societal turning point that resonates with mothers and daughters around the world even today. 'I remember how it made me feel: normal and heard and like it was going to be OK. And I remember thinking Judy Blume was the only grownup on Earth who remembered what it was like to be a young girl,' adds Michelle Brownlee of Spring Hill, Tennessee. 'She normalized things that were not discussed at home and only whispered about among friends,'" (Hoyt).

Picture & Text on Center Panel 4 of 4

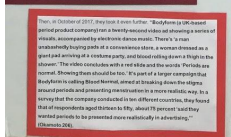
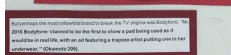
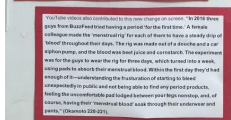
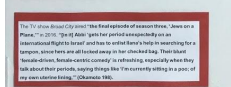


"Mostly I don't feel anything. Sometimes it feels like it's dripping. It doesn't hurt coming out—but I had some cramps last night.' ... *'Are you there God? It's me, Margaret. Gretchen, my friend, got her period. I'm so jealous God. I hate myself for being so jealous God. I hate myself for being so jealous, but I am....* I looked down at my underpants and I couldn't believe it. There was blood on them... *'My period! I've got my period!'*" (Blume 114-115, 170).

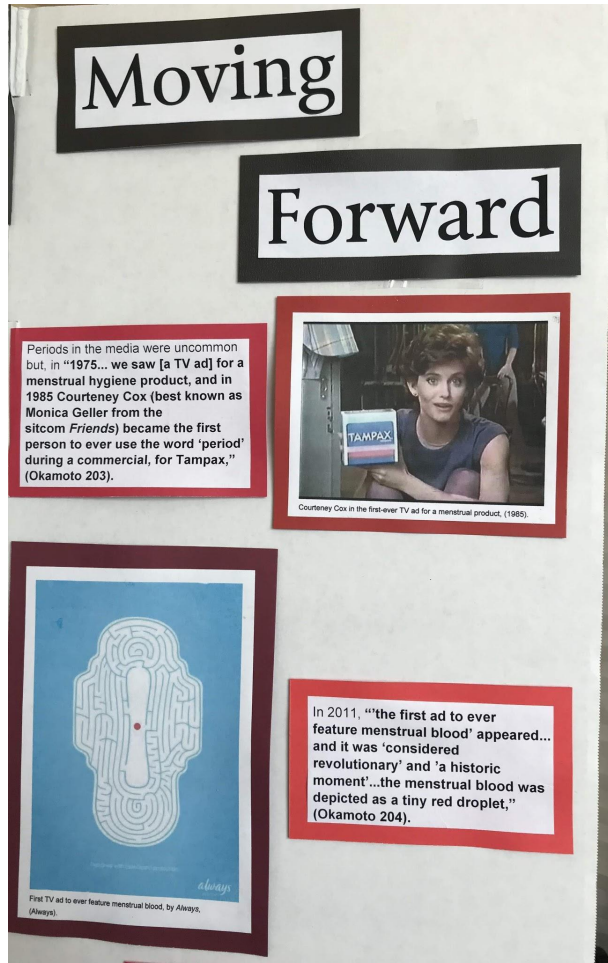
Then, in October 1978, Gloria Steinem wrote an article in Ms. Magazine. It became one of the most influential and thought-provoking, however humorous, articles of the time.

"Clearly menstruation would become an enviable, worthy, masculine event: Men would brag about how long and how much. Young boys would talk about it as the envied beginning of manhood. Gifts, religious ceremonies, family dinners, and stag parties would mark the day.... TV shows would treat the subject openly (*Happy Days*: Richie and Potsie try to convince Fonzie that his is still 'The Fonz,' though he has missed two periods in a row. *Hill Street Blues*: The whole precinct hits the same cycle.) So would newspapers. (*Summer Shark Scare Threatens Menstruating Men. Judge Cites Monthlies In Pardoning Rapist.*) And so would movies. (Newman and Redford in *Blood Brothers!*)" (Steinem).

Moving Forward



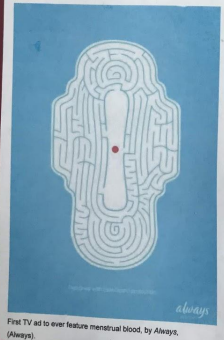
Picture & Text on Right Panel 1 of 3



Periods in the media were uncommon but, in “1975... we saw [a TV ad] for a menstrual hygiene product, and in 1985 Courteney Cox (best known as Monica Geller from the sitcom *Friends*) became the first person to ever use the word ‘period’ during a commercial, for Tampax,” (Okamoto 203).



Courteney Cox in the first-ever TV ad for a menstrual product, (1985).



First TV ad to ever feature menstrual blood, by Always, (Always).

In 2011, “the first ad to ever feature menstrual blood’ appeared... and it was ‘considered revolutionary’ and ‘a historic moment’...the menstrual blood was depicted as a tiny red droplet,” (Okamoto 204).

Moving Forward

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Picture & Text on Right Panel 2 of 3

Periods began to show up on social media too. "In March 2015 twenty-two-year-old Rupī Kaur (the popular young poet, author of *Milk and Honey*) posted a photo of herself with a bloodstain around the crotch area of her pants where her period blood had soaked through and made a small stain on the bedsheets.... Instagram quickly removed the photo, claiming that it was a violation of the 'community guidelines,'" (Okamoto 217).

Immediately, Kaur reposted it. "thanking Instagram 'for providing me with the exact response my work was created to critique.'... Even after that powerful post, Instagram removed the photo [again].... On Facebook and Tumblr, Kaur wrote longer posts that were shared more than eleven thousand times in the first day.... Instagram did eventually apologize, explaining that the removal of the photo was a mistake," (218). The world still had more to accept.



"Thank you @instagram for providing me with the exact response my work was created to critique," (Rupī Kaur Menstruating).



The TV show *Broad City* aired "the final episode of season three, 'Jews on a Plane,'" in 2016. "[In it] Abbi 'gets her period unexpectedly on an international flight to Israel' and has to enlist Ilana's help in searching for a tampon, since hers are all locked away in her checked bag. Their blunt 'female-driven, female-centric comedy' is refreshing, especially when they talk about their periods, saying things like 'I'm currently sitting in a poo; of my own uterine lining,'" (Okamoto 198).

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Picture & Text on Right Panel 3 of 3

YouTube videos also contributed to this new change on screen. "In 2016 three guys from BuzzFeed tried having a period 'for the first time.' A female colleague made the 'menstrual rig' for each of them to have a steady drip of 'blood' throughout their days. The rig was made out of a douche and a car siphon pump, and the blood was beet juice and cornstarch. The experiment was for the guys to wear the rig for three days, which turned into a week, using pads to absorb their menstrual blood. Within the first day they'd had enough of it---understanding the frustration of starting to bleed unexpectedly in public and not being able to find any period products, feeling the uncomfortable pad lodged between your legs nonstop, and, of course, having their 'menstrual blood' soak through their underwear and pants," (Okamoto 220-221).

But perhaps the most influential brand to break the TV stigma was Bodyform. "In 2016 Bodyform 'claimed to be the first to show a pad being used as it would be in real life, with an ad featuring a trapeze artist putting one in her underwear,'" (Okamoto 206).

Then, in October of 2017, they took it even further. "Bodyform (a UK-based period product company) ran a twenty-second video ad showing a series of visuals, accompanied by electronic dance music. There's 'a man unabashedly buying pads at a convenience store, a woman dressed as a giant pad arriving at a costume party, and blood rolling down a thigh in the shower.' The video concludes with a red slide and the words 'Periods are normal. Showing them should be too.' It's part of a larger campaign that Bodyform is calling Blood Normal, aimed at breaking down the stigma around periods and presenting menstruation in a more realistic way. In a survey that the company conducted in ten different countries, they found that of respondents aged thirteen to fifty, about 75 percent 'said they wanted periods to be presented more realistically in advertising,'" (Okamoto 206).

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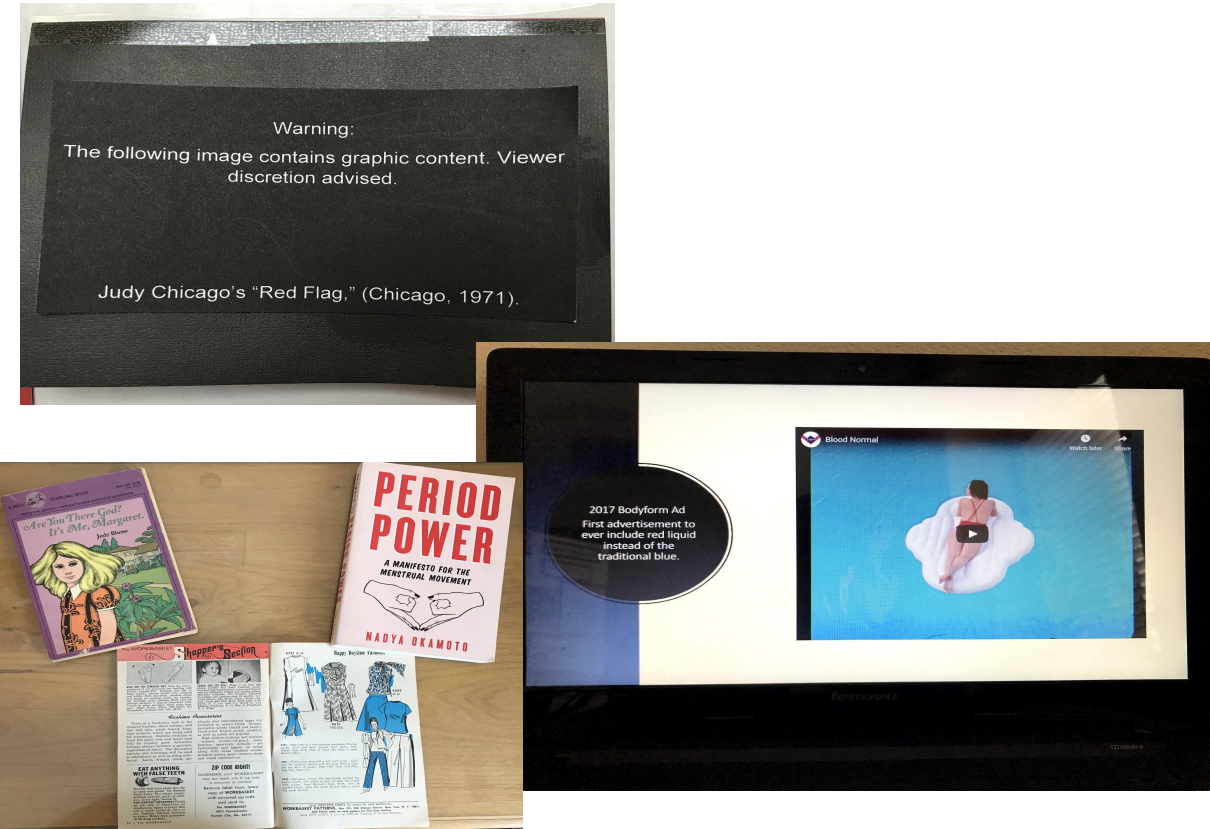
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdW6IRsuXaQ&feature=youtu.be>

Picture & Explanation of Interactive Elements on Your Exhibit

(You can include images and descriptions of parts of your exhibit that invite the viewer to engage with the exhibit beyond reading the text or looking at an image. Delete this slide if you don't have interactive elements on your exhibit.)



On my exhibit, I do have one picture that is covered by a black flap. This is because that picture is a bit graphic, and I wanted to be aware of the fact that younger kids may be looking at exhibits. This flap helps to ensure that parents can decide for themselves if they would like to show their kids that picture.

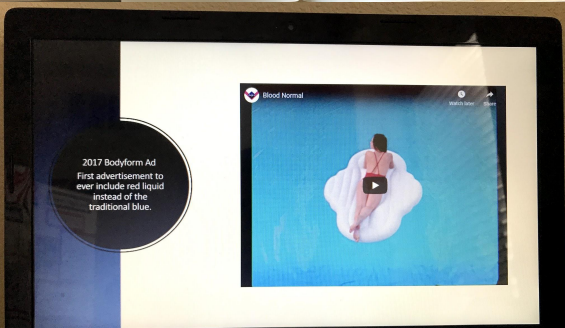
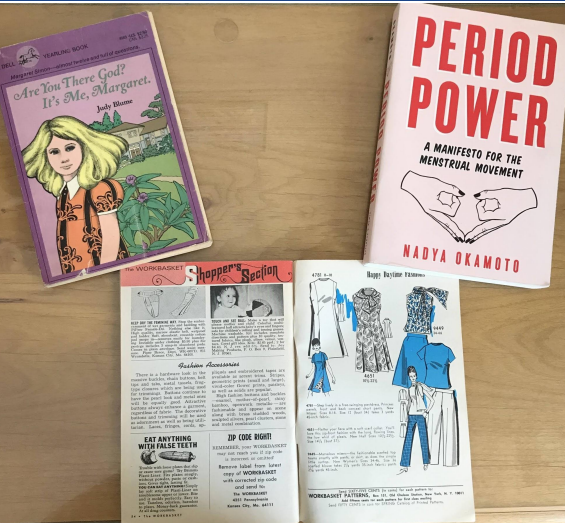
On the table in front of the exhibit, a laptop is set up displaying the 2017 Bodyform ad "Blood Normal" that viewers can click on to view.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdW6lRsuXaQ&feature=youtu.be>

There is also an original 1970 magazine that shows an ad for a feminine hygiene product that viewers can flip through, as well as an original copy of Judy Blume's "Are You There God? It's Me Margaret" and a copy of the book, "Period Power." Viewers can pick up these books and flip through them.

Picture & Text on Table in Front of Exhibit

(Delete this slide if you don't have anything on the table in front of your exhibit.)



On the table in front of my exhibit, I have four things:

- An original copy of the book, “Are You There God? It’s Me Margaret.” by Judy Blume.
- An original antique magazine from June of 1970, called “The Workbasket.” it includes an advertisement for a feminine hygiene product.
- My most valuable source, a book written by now Harvard senior Nadya Okamoto. It is called “Period Power,” and goes into the history of the menstrual movement, as well as the history behind the organization she started, “Period.”
- A laptop set up with the 2017 Bodyform advertisement, “Blood Normal.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdW6lRsuXaQ&feature=youtu.be>