

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Activity 6

Please read the following text and underline reasons which contributed to development of the work Sibylla Merian:

«Although sibylla was an untitled woman, born and raised in the household of a craftsman and artisan made her way into natural history. Two aspects seem to be of great importance. On the one hand, caterpillars, silkworms to be precise, were economically interesting. From the knowledge of the origin of silk the wish for European silkworm-cultivation emerged. One can assume that Sibylla Merian visited such a breeding station. Later she was always interested in an alternative to the silkworm. On the other hand she was the daughter of a famous engraver and got a professional training at the workshop of her stepfather, who also worked as a painter and engraver.

..This time was the Baroque time where it was possible for women to participate in science, mostly as passive consumers, though.

..... Especially Amsterdam as the place of residence in her late years was close to ideal. The Netherlands were one of the leading maritime powers of the time and one of the most important trading points for goods from the Americas. Therefore it was possible for her to go to Surinam the Dutsch colony in America. Studying the butterflies and their metamorphosis was the main reason for this journey, on which she was accompnied by one of her grown up daughters.

Goods from other continents did not only satisfy the curiosity of the time, but also were economically important. The search for cures for the new diseases that appeared in the colonies was of great importance for the colonial empires. Those plants could also generate great profit in the old world. As example may serve the cacao, that came as a medical tonic to Europe and then turned into a beverage.

Naturally the indigenious population was not eager to cooperate with their suppressors. They could be pressed to work, but not to reveal their knowledge.

Sibylla Merian was one of the few naturalists who made friends with parts of the indigenious population. Later she criticized the repression of the natural population by their colonial masters. It should be mentioned, that the appetite for new knowledge had its limits. Some knowledge was not suitable for transfer in the eyes of most of the authors. The native people could prevent and abort pregnancies for example, using some plants. One of the very few reports about this was written by Sibylla Merian. Although she was not the only one to report this, the knowledge was not transferred to Europe.

One can conclude that the Baroque was a time where it was possible for women to participate in science, mostly as passive consumers, though”.

.....

.....

.....

