

The Women's Rights Movement

TEACHER GUIDE

BACKGROUND

For centuries, women around the world struggled against unequal treatment and discrimination based on various societies' views of the role of women. Western women, such as Abigail Adams, Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Caddy Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Susan B. Anthony used the natural rights philosophies found in documents like The Declaration of Independence to appeal for equal treatment, but progress was slow. After many years of strife, women finally won the right to vote in the United States in 1920, but problems of inequality remained.

In the United States, women began to venture into occupations that were traditionally held by men. Women became pilots and steelworkers during World War II and proved that they could perform tasks that had traditionally been assigned only to men. Gradually, it became more common for women to be seen in occupations that had previously been forbidden to them, but official, constitutional recognition of women's equality was defeated with the failed ratification of the Equal Rights Act in 1982. Despite this fact, by the 1990s it was not uncommon to see women, like former secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, in positions of great power and authority.



A woman in a traditional Muslim dress.

The Women's Rights Movement has had many successes in the United States, but in other countries the basic human rights of women have been routinely violated. One of the most oppressive regimes on Earth was the Taliban of Afghanistan. Under the Taliban, women were not allowed to hold most jobs or get an education. In fact, women were not allowed to be seen in public without the constrictive *burqa*, a garment that hid virtually every feature of the woman under it.

Women around the world continue to grapple with traditional values and their desire to live as equal members of society. In Japan, for example, many women are marrying later or refusing to get married at all, because they do not ascribe to the traditional notions of the role of women in Japanese society.

Women from many countries and backgrounds continue to strive for better treatment, and are talking and sharing ideas. An example of this was the UN Women's Conference held in Beijing, China, in 1995. In the 200 years since Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her *Vindication on the Rights of Women*, the status of women in many societies has greatly improved.

The learning materials in this unit contain instructional strategies designed to engage students in an inquiry lesson devoted to understanding women's attempts to confront the inequality in their societies and improve the treatment of women in their respective countries. During their investigation, students will access the women's rights videos from the *ABC News: Classroom Edition*. This teacher's guide uses the videos as resources throughout the unit of study.

AT A GLANCE

In this unit on the worldwide Women's Rights Movement, students explore, in a class discussion, issues of equality in the United States and the world to elicit prior knowledge and beliefs. After viewing the videos, students engage in comparing different women's rights leaders and women's rights movements in different countries in order to demonstrate their growing knowledge of the worldwide struggle for equality. Finally, in the "Extend" section, students apply their knowledge in several investigations and problem-solving activities. In the post-unit assessment, students write a short paper on the continuing need for a global women's rights movement.

THE BIG QUESTION

What impact has the fight for women's rights had on various world societies?

SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS ADDRESSED¹

United States History

Part 1: The United States

[Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties.](#)

Grades 5-6

- Understands the development of the post-World War II women's movement (e.g., the major issues affecting women and the conflicts these issues engendered, the emergence of the National Organization for Women, post-World War II attitudes toward women)

Grades 7-8

- Understands factors that shaped the women's rights movement after World War II (e.g., the factors that contributed to the development of modern feminism; the ideas, agendas, and strategies of feminist and counter-feminist organizations; conflicts originating from within and outside of the women's movement)

Grades 9-12

- Understands conflicting perspectives on different issues addressed by the women's rights movement (e.g., the Equal Rights Amendment, Title VII, and Roe v. Wade)

Civics

[Understands how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals.](#)

Grades 6-8

- Knows historical and contemporary examples of citizen movements seeking to promote individual rights and the common good
- Understands what civil disobedience is, how it differs from other forms of protest, what its consequences might be, and circumstances under which it might be justified

Grades 9-12

- Understands conflicting perspectives on different issues addressed by the women's rights movement (e.g., the Equal Rights Amendment, Title VII, and Roe v. Wade)

United States History

[Understands the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II United States](#)

Grades 7-8

- Understands how American society changed after World War II (e.g., reasons for the "return to domesticity" and the effect on family life and women's careers)

Grades 9-12

- Understands social, religious, cultural, and economic changes at the onset of the Cold War era (e.g., how the Cold War influenced the lives and roles of women)

[Understands the causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs](#)

Grades 7-8

- Understands how World War II influenced American society (e.g., how the war fostered cultural exchange and promoted nationalism and American identity, the effects on gender roles and the American family)

SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS ADDRESSED¹

Understands how the United States changed between the post-World War I years and the eve of the Great Depression

Grades 5-6

- Understands the effects of women's suffrage on politics (e.g., the major events of women's suffrage movement from the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 to the ratification of the 19th amendment; how the 19th Amendment changed political life in America)
- Understands how women's lives changed after World War I (e.g., their contributions in schools, hospitals, settlement houses, and social agencies; how the spread of electrification and household appliances improved the life of homemakers)

Grades 7-8

- Understands changing attitudes toward women in the post-World War I era (e.g., changing values and new ideas regarding employment opportunities, appearance standards, leisure activities, and political participation)

Grades 9-12

- Understands the major social issues of 1920s America (e.g., the emergence of the "New Woman" and challenges to Victorian values)

Understands how Progressives and others addressed problems of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption

Grades 5-6

- Understands political and legislative elements of the Progressive movement (e.g., how the Progressives promoted political change and expanded democracy at state and local levels; the leadership of Presidents Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson and their ideas for reform; the 16th, 17th, and 18th amendments; the movement for women's suffrage)
- Understands issues and perspectives of different groups during the Progressive era (e.g., African Americans and their alternative programs; women, Native Americans, organized workers)

Grades 9-12

- Understands efforts to achieve women's suffrage in the early twentieth century (e.g., methods used by Carrie Chapman Catt in her leadership of the National Women's Suffrage Association to get the 19th amendment passed and ratified, why President Wilson changed his mind about the amendment, which of Catt's tactics were most successful)

Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States

Grades 5-6

- Understands contemporary issues concerning gender and ethnicity (e.g., the range of women's organizations, the changing goals of the women's movement, and the issues currently dividing women; issues involving justice and common welfare; how interest groups attempted to achieve their goals of equality and justice; how African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native Americans have shaped American life and retained their cultural heritage)

Grades 7-8

- Understands changes in the workplace and the economy in contemporary America (e.g., the effects of a sharp increase in labor force participation of women and new immigrants; the shift of the labor force from manufacturing to service industries)

Grades 9-12

- Understands the influence of social change and the entertainment industry in shaping views on art, gender, and culture (e.g., how social change and renewed ethnic diversity affects artistic expression in contemporary American society, the reflection of values in popular TV shows, the effects of women's participation in sports on gender roles and career choices)

SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS ADDRESSED¹

Civics

[Understands issues concerning the disparities between ideals and reality in American political and social life](#)

Grades 7-8

- Knows some of the efforts that have been put forth to reduce discrepancies between ideals and the reality of American public life (e.g., abolition, suffrage, civil rights, environmental protection movements)

Grades 9-12

- Knows historical and contemporary efforts to reduce discrepancies between ideals and reality in American public life (e.g., union movements, government programs such as Head Start, civil rights legislation and enforcement)

World History

Video: Part 2: The World

[Understands patterns of nationalism, state-building, and social reform in Europe and the Americas from 1830 to 1914](#)

Grades 7-8

- Understands movements and ideas that contributed to social change in 19th-century North America and Europe (e.g., the leading ideas of Karl Marx and the impact of Marxist beliefs and programs on politics, industry, and labor relations in Europe; the origins of women's suffrage in North America and Europe, leading figures on both continents, and their success until World War I)

Grades 9-12

- Understands the status of different groups in 19th-century Europe (e.g., the changing roles and status of European Jews and the rise of new forms of anti-Semitism; the goals of the women's movement in the 19th century, and the essential ideas outlined by Mary Wollstonecraft in *Vindication of the Rights of Women*; support for and opposition to women's suffrage in the late 19th century)

[Understands how post-World War II reconstruction occurred, new international power relations took shape, and colonial empires broke up](#)

Grades 5-6

- Understands the position of women in developing countries (e.g., as compared to their position in industrialized countries, how change has occurred in different societies)

[Understands the search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world](#)

Grades 5-6

- Understands how feminist movements and social conditions have affected the lives of women around the world, and the extent of women's progress toward social equality, economic opportunity, and political rights in various countries

Grades 9-12

- Understands gender roles across the globe (e.g., conflicts in the perception of gender roles in various religions, especially the role of women; how the legal status of women varies around the world in Muslim societies, and how the status of women from different classes has changed in the past century)

¹Kendall, J.S. & Marzano, R.J. (2000). *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education*. (3rd ed.). Reston, VA.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

MATERIALS

Videos:

- *ABC News: Classroom Edition* “The Women’s Rights Movement” video programs
 - “Part 1: The United States”
 - “Part 2: The World”
- Student Activity, “[Exploring Women’s Rights](#)”²
- Student Activity, “[Comparing Women](#)”²
- Student Activity, “[Definitional Investigation](#)”²
- Women’s Rights [Rubric](#)

²Certain graphic organizers on student activities adapted from: Marzano, R.J., et al. (1997). *Dimensions of learning: Teacher’s manual*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

PROCEDURE

Explore: Students explore their own knowledge and beliefs about women’s rights by participating in a K-W-L strategy. In this strategy students list what they know about a subject from their experience or the experience of others. Next, students list what they want to find out by listing questions about the topic. Prior to viewing the video programs, students discuss questions to help activate their background knowledge and establish a sense of the information that will be presented in the video programs and instructional materials.

1. Explain to your students that they are about to embark on a historical investigation of women’s rights both in the United States and around the world. Distribute page one of the Student Activity, “[Exploring Women’s Rights](#),” to each student. Instruct students to answer the first two questions individually. Explain that there are no wrong answers here. Rather, the purpose is to find out what the class knows about women’s rights, and what they want to find out.
2. Distribute page two of the Student Activity, “[Exploring Women’s Rights](#).” Explain to students that the third question will have to be completed at home. Point out that the experiences that were shared in question 1 are limited because of the age of the students. Adults, such as parents and grandparents, provide broader perspectives because of their age. Tell students that you would like them to have question 3 done for tomorrow.
3. Distribute page three of the Student Activity, “[Exploring Women’s Rights](#).” Guide students to consider the preview questions found in question number 4. Instruct them to offer responses while working in groups of 3-4 students. Tell the groups that they may use the graphic organizer to help organize their thoughts. Once students have had some time to respond to the question, play the “Women’s Movement Part 1: The United States” video program. Explain that during the video, students may take additional notes on the graphic organizer in order to further their understanding. Below are questions and possible suggested answers that you might expect to see from the students. Use student responses to assess their understanding and possible misconceptions.

Alternate Strategy Tip

Once students have provided initial responses to the questions and have watched the videos, have them use the information from the videos and resources in the library to support or reject their initial answers. See resources below for library or Internet resource starting points.

Alternate Strategy Tip

Make the graphic organizer into a transparency that can be used during the debriefing. This whole class reflection should provide a composite of student responses and potentially allow you to address some misconceptions.

“Part One: The United States”

- What are some obstacles women have overcome throughout the history of the United States of America? (Students might suggest the lack of voting rights or unequal access to jobs.)
 - How has the Women’s Rights Movement changed the traditional role of the woman? (Students might suggest that women are found in new jobs or women no longer have to be housewives.)
 - What impact did the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) have on the Women’s Rights Movement? (Students might suggest the drive for an equal rights movement united women behind a common cause; however, the demise of the ERA also symbolized the problems of thinking that all women wanted the same thing, or thought the same way; not all women thought equality was a desirable thing.)
 - Who are some current feminist role models? Why are they role models? (Students might suggest, Madeleine Albright, Janet Reno, Condoleezza Rice, or other politicians, writers, entertainers, or sports figures. Students can choose famous women and decide if they are feminist role models or not, based on their own criteria.)
4. Once the video is over, debrief some of the concepts found in the graphic organizer. You may want to ask each group to report out on one part of the graphic organizer. Once each group reports out, allow other groups to ask questions or add to what was presented. Once everyone is in agreement with part of the graphic organizer, move on to another part. Once the entire composite graphic organizer is completed, you may want to have it typed up and given to each student for future reference.
 5. Repeat procedures 3-4 above, with students working in groups in response to the questions for number 6 on the student activity sheet. This time students will find similarities and differences in the ideals about the rights of women that are expressed by the Western Hemisphere versus those ideals found in the rest of the world. Below are some possible student responses for the questions.

“Part Two: The World”

- Are feminist ideals of equality merely Western ideas of freedom? Are these ideals universal? (Students might compare attitudes of equality in different cultures—the Middle East and Asia. Are women treated better in some non-Western societies than in the West?)
 - In what ways does feminism differ in other countries? (Students may incorporate points from the video program section on Japan to evaluate similarities and differences in feminism in those countries and the United States.)
6. Show the “Women’s Rights Part 2: The World” video program to the students. As they watch, instruct them to add to their graphic organizer.
 7. Once students have completed the activity, collect the sheets and save them until you get to the “Assess” section (see “Assess” procedure 1 below). Question number 8 will be completed at that time.

Apply: Students make sense of connections between people involved in the Women’s Rights Movement both in the United States and around the world by conducting research and completing a comparison matrix.

1. Distribute the Student Activity, “[Comparing Women](#).” Explain to students that they are going to be comparing three women who were involved in the Women’s Rights Movement. Ask students to

think about three women who were mentioned or highlighted in the first video program. Encourage students to look at their questions and their graphic organizers from the “Explore” section prior to selecting the women.

2. Explain to students that they should write the women’s names along the top of the matrix. Next have them think about characteristics that were mentioned in the video program. These should be listed in the left-hand column. For each characteristic, students should list the similarities and differences in the middle section of the matrix. It is very possible that they will not have enough information on each woman based on the video program alone. Students should conduct library or Internet research for each woman’s background before completing the comparison.
3. Once students have completed the matrix, you may want to have students work in small groups and compare their matrices. Have students answer the “Big Question” by slightly changing it to, “What impact did these women have on various world societies?”
4. Tell students that they are going to use the comparison matrix again. This time they are going to compare women in the United States to women in other countries. On the second matrix, have the students write “Women in the United States” at the top of one column. In the middle column, they should write “Women in (*fill in name of another country*).” Students should fill in the name of one other country. Again, students may need to complete research beyond the video program to complete their matrix.

Teacher Tip

Some students might be interested in making a comparison with the status of women in three countries. You may want to offer this as extra credit.

Extend: Option 1 — Individual Assignments. Provide students with the following assignments. Tell them they may choose one or more to complete individually. Explain that once students have completed the assignment, it will be subjected to both teacher and peer review.

Individual Assignments

1. The status of women during the antebellum period, those years from the formation of the Union until the Civil War, was not much different than it had been in colonial times. Legally, socially, and politically, women had little or no power, and were essentially limited to the domestic environment. Known as the “cult of true womanhood,” the home has been characterized as both a “trap” and a “sphere of independence” for women of that period. Identify what is known about the “cult of true womanhood.” Find any confusion or contradiction concerning this phrase. Develop your own resolution to the confusion surrounding the “cult of true womanhood.” Use the graphic organizer provided.
2. Ask students to describe what is known as the “cult of true womanhood.” Find any confusion or contradiction concerning this phrase. Develop your own resolution to the confusion surrounding the “cult of true womanhood.” Use the “[Definitional Investigation](#)” graphic organizer to assist you.

Individual Assignments (cont'd.)

3. Women's roles changed significantly during World War II and immediately following that conflict. During the war, women entered the workforce, taking jobs left behind by men who went to war. After the war, society expected women to return to their domestic roles. Identify the obstacles women faced after the war and how these obstacles prevented them from achieving their goals. How did women overcome these obstacles? Or, did they?
4. In Morocco, men over the age of 18 are not required to seek authorization to marry, women of any age must obtain the authorization of a male guardian in contracting marriage. Moroccan law further discriminates against women by allowing men to have up to four wives simultaneously. How would you recommend that these practices be changed in Morocco? What challenges would there be in implementing your recommendations?
5. What are some of the constraints women from other countries struggle with in terms of their rights? What are some possible solutions for them to overcome these constraints and accomplish the goal of equality? Reviewing the possible solutions, what would be your number one solution for addressing a particular constraint? Why?

Extend: Option 2—Class Debate using “Silent Debate” or “Philosophical Chairs”

“Silent Debate” and “Philosophical Chairs” are two possible strategies for getting students to think and react to the questions raised in the video programs. Use the following descriptions to explain the debate procedure to your class. Then choose, or have the class choose, the topic for the debate from the list below.

Philosophical Chairs: Discover the mid-point of an issue that divides the students (i.e., the point where roughly half of the students fall into either the “for” or “against” categories). Let students decide where they stand on an issue. Those in favor of one position will form one group; those of an opposing position will form another; and those students who are undecided will form an undecided group. Use Figure 1 as a guide for setting up the room and positioning the students for the debate. Let the students explain their perspectives on an issue. Make sure that the arguments use evidence, have a logical line of reasoning, and do not attack another student personally. As the debate progresses, students are allowed to shift from group to group if they change their minds. Thus, undecided students may shift into either of the opposing groups, and students in those groups may shift to another group if they change their minds. Ensure that the debate remains orderly by having students raise their hands before speaking. Allow the debate to continue until all points have been exhausted. As a class, have students discuss what they learned, or have them engage in a persuasive-writing essay activity if desired.

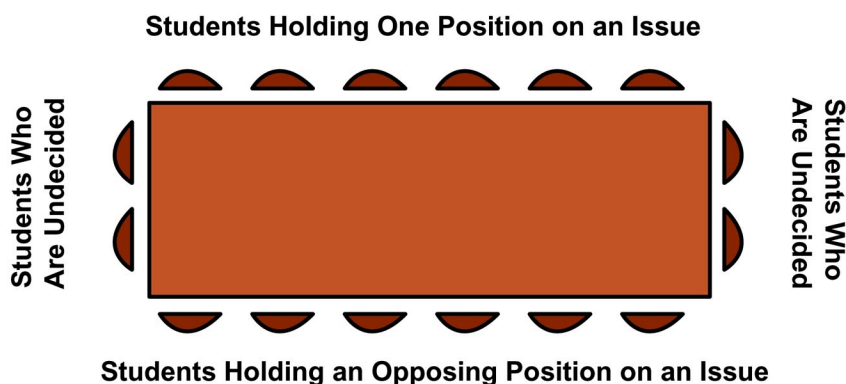


Figure 1: Room Set-Up for Philosophical Chairs

Silent Debate: Divide the class into pairs. Assign each student a side of an issue—either “for” or “against.” Instruct the class that this will be a silent debate; students will not be allowed to talk, but must write their argument down on paper. Let each student write his or her argument for three minutes. Next, instruct students to switch papers and let the student read the previous student’s argument and respond. Allow this writing and responding to continue until it appears that the students are running out of arguments to write about. While the activity is going on, have students take brief notes on the main points of the other student’s argument. After the exercise, have each student summarize the position of the other student to his or her partner or to the class. Their notes will be critical for accomplishing this brief summation. The teacher may want to list the points on both sides of the issue on the chalkboard and engage in a class discussion about what was learned in the exercise.

Some possible topics from the women’s rights unit for these debates:

- Do Western countries, like the United States, have the right to tell other countries how to treat their women?
- Are famous women celebrities, singers, actresses, and stateswomen good role models for girls today?
- Should the woman or the man stay at home when couples have small children that need care?
- Should women soldiers be allowed to participate in combat situations with men?
- Should women receive special on-the-job training for typically male-dominated jobs?
- In many Middle Eastern countries, women are required to cover their hair or sometimes their whole bodies, as in the Taliban regime, so that men do not stare at them or treat them as objects. Should women have to cover up in this way? Some Middle Eastern thinkers believe it is better for women to cover themselves than to be judged based on their looks and treated as objects instead of people. For this reason, Middle Eastern thinkers say women are treated better in the Middle East than they are in the United States. Are women treated as objects and judged solely on their looks in Western countries like the United States? What do you think of the assertion that women are treated better in countries like Afghanistan and Iran than the United States?
- Are there some jobs that women should not be allowed to do (i.e. firefighter, coal miner, soldier) because they are too dangerous or too physically demanding?
- Should governments force companies to hire women for jobs that are traditionally the domain of men?

Assess: Rubric for Problem-Solving Exercises

1. Return the completed Student Activity, “[Exploring Women’s Rights](#),” to each student. Ask them to look at the responses they made at the beginning of the unit for numbers 1 and 2. Explain that they are to reflect on the experiences and assignments from this unit and list what they have learned in their answers to question 8 on page 5 of the activity sheet. Once students have completed this, collect the sheets. This will allow you to read students’ self-perceptions of what they learned from this unit.
2. Explain to your students, that in the assessment for this unit, they will be writing a paper constructing support for the need to continue the Women’s Rights Movement worldwide. This paper should be of a quality such that it could be submitted to a national conference on women’s rights. They should state their position and provide evidence to support this position. Students should also consider, and possibly write arguments that critics might have against their position.

3. Distribute the rubric for this assignment. Allow students to read over the rubric and ask questions about how they will be assessed. Once students have a working understanding of this, allow them to begin. Provide guidance for them by reminding them to use the rubric, along with their notes and assignments from this unit, in order to construct the most convincing paper possible.

RESOURCES

- Fujimura-Fanselow, K. & Kameda, A. (Eds.). (1995). *Japanese Women: New Feminist Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future*. New York: The Feminist Press.
- Harik, R. M. & Marston, E. (n.d.). *Women in the Middle East: Tradition and Change*. New York: Franklin Watts.
- Skaine, R. (2002). *The Women of Afghanistan Under the Taliban*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co.
- Todd, J. (2000). *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Baker Wise, N. & Wise, C. (1994). *A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

URLs

<http://www.gate.net/~liz/suffrage/abigail.htm>

“Don’t Forget the Ladies” Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams

<http://www.bartleby.com/144/>

Excerpt from *Vindication on the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft (1792)

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/76mclintock/76m'clintock.htm>

National Register of Historic Places: The M’Clintock House: A Home to the Women’s Rights Movement

<http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/>

Text of the Equal Rights Amendment

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/world/morocco-pubs.php>

Human Rights Watch—Morocco Women’s Rights

<http://www.mcneilmusic.com/calif2.html>

“Rosie the Riveter” information and music

<http://www.nps.gov/wori/>

Women’s Rights National Historic Park

<http://www.womensrightsfriendsforever.org/>

Friends of Women’s Rights National Park, Inc.

<http://www.rosietheriveter.org/>

Rosie the Riveter Trust

<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~hst203/documents/friedan1.html>

Chapter 1, *The Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Freidan