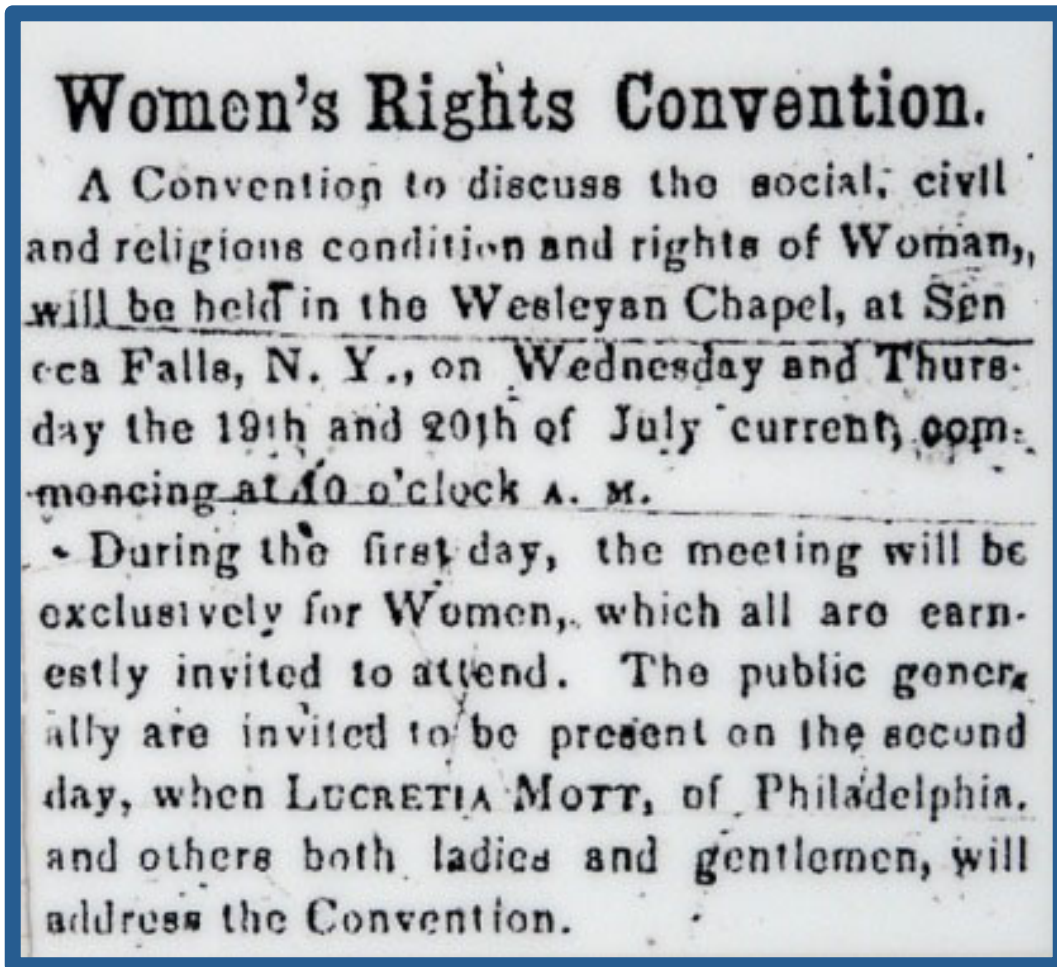


7th Grade Women's Rights Inquiry

What Does It Mean to Be Equal?



Seneca County Courier announcement of the First Women's Rights Convention, Seneca Falls, New York, July 14, 1848. Public domain.

Supporting Questions

1. What legal limitations did women face in the 19th century and what gender-inequality issues do women face today?
2. What rights did women seek in the 19th century and what gender-equality issues are women fighting for today?
3. What actions did women take to obtain rights at the Seneca Falls Convention and how might we address gender equality today?



7th Grade Women's Rights Inquiry

What Does It Mean to Be Equal?

| | |
|---|---|
| New York State Social Studies Framework Key Idea & Practices | 7.7 REFORM MOVEMENTS: Social, political, and economic inequalities sparked various reform movements and resistance efforts. Influenced by the Second Great Awakening, New York State played a key role in major reform efforts. ✔ Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence ✔ Geographic Reasoning ✔ Economics and Economic Systems ✔ Comparison and Contextualization |
| Staging the Compelling Question | Examine the extent to which women are involved in governmental leadership today. |

| Supporting Question 1 |
|---|
| What legal limitations did women face in the 19th century and what gender-inequality issues do women face today? |
| Formative Performance Task |
| Understand |
| Part 1: List some legal limitations that women faced in the 19th century that were not faced by men at the same time. Part 2: Select a topic related to present-day gender equality and conduct initial research on that topic with teacher support. |
| Featured Sources |
| Source A: Excerpt from Blackstone's Law Sources B: Excerpt from <i>Democracy in America</i> |

| Supporting Question 2 |
|---|
| What rights did women seek in the 19th century and what gender-equality issues are women fighting for today? |
| Formative Performance Task |
| Assess |
| Part 1: Write a paragraph representing the views of a woman in the 1830s on civil and social rights. Part 2: Research gender-equality issues and seek additional information from community leaders about their efforts to address the rights of women |
| Featured Sources |
| Source A: Excerpt from letter from Sarah M. Grimké to Mary S. Parker Source B: Excerpt from <i>Loom and Spindle or Life Among the Early Mill Girls</i> |

| Supporting Question 3 |
|---|
| What actions did women take to obtain rights at the Seneca Falls Convention and how might we address gender equality today? |
| Formative Performance Task |
| Act |
| Part 1: Make a claim supported by evidence from the Declaration of Sentiments for how the Seneca Falls Convention raised consciousness about the needs of women in the 1840s. Part 2: Conduct a forum inside or outside of school addressing gender equality in society today. |
| Featured Sources |
| Source A: Announcement of Seneca Falls Convention Source B: Address by Elizabeth Cady Stanton on women's rights Source C: "Declaration of Sentiments" |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Summative Performance Task | ARGUMENT What does it mean to be equal? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that discusses the issues women faced in the 19th century and those they continue to face today using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources while acknowledging competing views. |
| | EXTENSION Rewrite the lyrics to a popular present-day song from the perspective of a 19th-century women's rights activist. |



Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry examines the emergence of the women’s suffrage movement in the 19th century as an effort to expand women’s political and economic rights, and it extends that investigation into the present. The compelling question “What does it mean to be equal?” provides students with an opportunity to examine the nature of equality and the changing conditions for women in American society from the 19th century to today. Each supporting question begins by asking about 19th-century women’s rights and then asks about contemporary gender equality. The relationship between women’s rights and gender equality is a central focus of this inquiry. Students begin the inquiry by exploring the legal limits placed on women in the 19th century and how efforts to gain rights were undertaken by women at the Seneca Falls Convention.

In addition to the Key Idea listed earlier, this inquiry highlights the following Conceptual Understanding:

- (7.7c) Women joined the movements for abolition and temperance and organized to advocate for women’s property rights, fair wages, education, and political equality.

This inquiry embeds Taking Informed Action across the three formative performance tasks as a way to connect the history of the 19th-century women’s rights movement to contemporary efforts to achieve gender equality.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take four to six 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries in order to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “What does it mean to be equal?” students complete a series of tasks that focus on the changing role of women in society in the 19th century and contemporary efforts to achieve gender equality.

Staging the Compelling Question

The compelling question may be staged by having students examine the extent to which women are engaged in governmental leadership today. This staging work provides students with an opportunity to explore contemporary involvement by women in United States government as they begin an examination of the 19th-century women’s suffrage movement. The featured source for this task is a map and data from the WomanStats Project Database.



Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“What legal limitations did women face in the 19th century and what gender-inequality issues do women face today?”—begins a process in which students first investigate historical women’s rights issues and then shift their attention to contemporary gender-equality issues. In the first part of the formative performance task, students list some legal limitations imposed on women in the 19th century. Excerpts from de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* and Blackstone’s *Law*, the featured sources, provide students with information about conditions for women in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In the second part of the formative performance task, students begin the process of Taking Informed Action by selecting a topic related to gender equality and conducting initial research on the selected topic with teacher support. This action allows students to complete the *understand* portion of the Taking Informed Action task.

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question—“What rights did women seek in the 19th century and what gender-equality issues are women fighting for today”—highlights the years leading up the Seneca Falls Convention before looking at contemporary efforts to achieve gender equality. For the first part of the formative performance task, students write a paragraph representing the views of a woman in the 1830s on civil and social rights. Both featured sources—personal reflections from Sarah M. Grimké and Harriet Hanson Robinson—were written in the 1830s and provide students with insights into the perspectives of women at the time. Students continue the work of Taking Informed Action in the second part of the formative performance task by researching issues of gender equality and seeking out additional information about the efforts of community leaders to address the rights of women. Doing so allows students to complete the *assess* portion of the Taking Informed Action task.

Supporting Question 3

The third support question—“What actions did women take to obtain rights at the Seneca Falls Convention and how might we address gender equality today?”—continues to move students toward the compelling question. For the first part of the formative performance task, students make a claim supported by evidence about how the Seneca Falls Convention raised consciousness about the needs of women in the 19th century. The featured sources include an announcement of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, an excerpt from an address by Elizabeth Cady Stanton on women’s rights, and the full text of the Declaration of Sentiments. Students conclude their work on the Taking Informed Action sequence in the second part of the formative performance task by conducting a forum inside or outside of school addressing gender equality in society today. This task allows students to *act* on the issue.



Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined legal limitations women faced in the 19th century, rights that many women sought in the 19th century, and how the Seneca Falls Convention addressed these issues. In addition, students have independently explored contemporary issues of gender equality. Students should be able to demonstrate the breadth of their understanding and the ability to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students are asked to construct an evidence-based argument responding to the compelling question “What does it mean to be equal?” It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, or essay.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- Equality is the ultimate goal of a democracy, but it is very hard to accomplish.
- As women made progress toward their goal of earning the right to vote, they became more equal to men.
- While it took a long time for women to gain the right to vote, early women’s rights activists were successful.
- The concept of gender equality has been shaped in large part by leaders of the 19th-century women’s rights movement.
- Although much progress has been made in the past 150 years, gender inequality is still a problem.
- The focus of women’s rights seems to have shifted from political to social equality today.

Students could extend these arguments by rewriting the lyrics to a popular present-day song from the perspective of a 19th-century women’s rights activist.

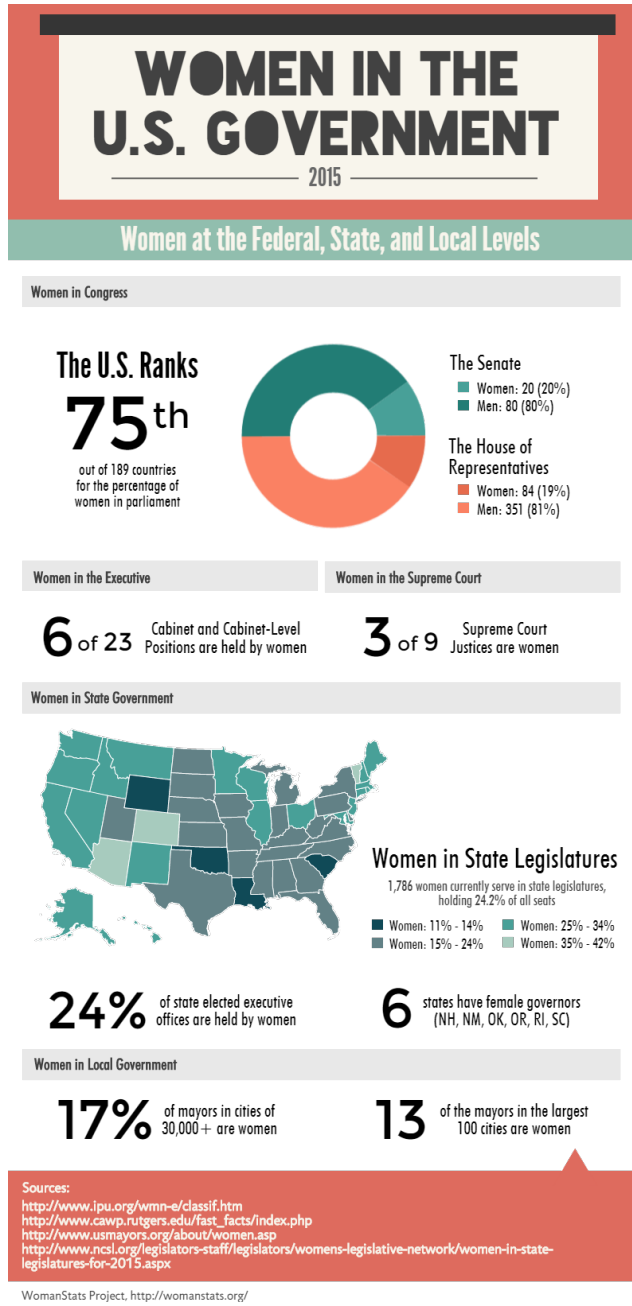
Students complete the Take Informed Action steps through the formative performance tasks.



Staging the Compelling Question

Featured Source

Source A: WomanStats Project, map depicting the levels of women’s participation in government throughout the United States, “Women in the U.S. Government,” 2015



Courtesy of the WomanStats Project, <http://womanstats.org/>.



Supporting Question 1

Featured Source

Source A: Sir William Blackstone, description of common law marriage rights in England, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (excerpt), 1765

NOTE: In the 19th century, American and British women's rights—or lack of them—depended heavily on the commentaries of William Blackstone, who defined a married woman and man as one person under common law.

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and is therefore called in our law-French a *feme-covert*, *foemina viro co-operta*; is said to be *covert-baron*, or under the protection and influence of her husband, her *baron*, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her *coverture*. Upon this principle, of a union of person in husband and wife, depend almost all the legal rights, duties, and disabilities, that either of them acquire by the marriage. I speak not at present of the rights of property, but of such as are merely *personal*. For this reason, a man cannot grant anything to his wife, or enter into covenant with her: for the grant would be to suppose her separate existence; and to covenant with her, would be only to covenant with himself: and therefore it is also generally true, that all compacts made between husband and wife, when single, are voided by the intermarriage...

From *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Volume 1, William Blackstone. 1765. pp. 442–445. Available at http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30802/30802-h/30802-h.htm#Page_434.



Supporting Question 1

Featured Source

Source B: Alexis de Tocqueville, a description of the role of women in marriage in America, *Democracy in America, Volume 2* (excerpt), 1840

NOTE: Alexis de Tocqueville was a French historian and political thinker who traveled the United States studying the political and social culture in the early 1800s. In 1835, he published the findings of his research in the book, Democracy in America.

In America the independence of woman is irrevocably lost in the bonds of matrimony: if an unmarried woman is less constrained there than elsewhere, a wife is subjected to stricter obligations. The former makes her father's house an abode of freedom and of pleasure; the latter lives in the home of her husband as if it were a cloister. Yet these two different conditions of life are perhaps not so contrary as may be supposed, and it is natural that the American women should pass through the one to arrive at the other.

Public domain. Available from Project Gutenberg. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/816/816-h/816-h.htm - link2HCH0050>.



Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source A: Sarah M. Grimké, letter to Mary S. Parker, "The Original Equality of Woman" (excerpts), July 11, 1837

Amesbury, 7th Mo., 11th, 1837

My Dear Friend,

In attempting to comply with thy request to give my views on the Province of Woman, I feel that I am venturing on nearly untrodden ground, and that I shall advance arguments in opposition to a corrupt public opinion, and to the perverted interpretation of Holy Writ, which has so universally obtained. But I am in search of truth; and no obstacle shall prevent my prosecuting that search, because I believe the welfare of the world will be materially advanced by every new discovery we make of the designs of Jehovah in the creation of woman. It is impossible that we can answer the purpose of our being, unless we understand that purpose. It is impossible that we should fulfill our duties, unless we comprehend them or live up to our privileges, unless we know what they are....

We must first view woman at the period of her creation. "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female, created he them." [Gen. 1:26-27]. In all this sublime description of the creation of man, (which is a generic term including man and woman), there is not one particle of difference intimated as existing between them. They were both made in the image of God; dominion was given to both over every other creature, but not over each other. Created in perfect equality, they were expected to exercise the vicegerence intrusted to them by their Maker, in harmony and love....

Here then I plant myself. God created us equal; - he created us free agents; - he is our Lawgiver, our King, and our Judge, and to him alone is woman bound to be in subjection, and to him alone is she accountable for the use of those talents with which her Heavenly Father has entrusted her. One is her Master even Christ.

Thine for the oppressed in the bonds of womanhood,

Sarah M. Grimké

Public domain. Available from the Institute of World Culture website: [http://www.worldculture.org/articles/12-Grimke Letters, 1-3.pdf](http://www.worldculture.org/articles/12-Grimke%20Letters,%201-3.pdf).



Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source B: Harriet Hanson Robinson, passage describing the Lowell Mill girls strike of 1836, *Loom and Spindle or Life Among the Early Mill Girls* (excerpt), 1898

*NOTE: A group of Boston capitalists built a major textile manufacturing center in Lowell, Massachusetts, in the second quarter of the 19th century. The first factories recruited women from rural New England as their labor force. These young women, far from home, lived in rows of boardinghouses adjacent to the growing number of mills. The industrial production of textiles was highly profitable, and the number of factories in Lowell and other mill towns increased. More mills led to overproduction, which led to a drop in prices and profits. Mill owners reduced wages and speeded up the pace of work. The young female operatives organized to protest these wage cuts in 1834 and 1836. Harriet Hanson Robinson was one of those factory operatives; she began work in Lowell at the age of ten, later becoming an author and advocate of women's suffrage. In 1898 she published *Loom and Spindle*, a memoir of her Lowell experiences, where she recounted the strike of 1836.*

One of the first strikes of cotton-factory operatives that ever took place in this country was that in Lowell, in October, 1836. When it was announced that the wages were to be cut down, great indignation was felt, and it was decided to strike, en masse. This was done. The mills were shut down, and the girls went in procession from their several corporations to the "grove" on Chapel Hill, and listened to "incendiary" speeches from early labor reformers.

One of the girls stood on a pump, and gave vent to the feelings of her companions in a neat speech, declaring that it was their duty to resist all attempts at cutting down the wages. This was the first time a woman had spoken in public in Lowell, and the event caused surprise and consternation among her audience.

Cutting down the wages was not their only grievance, nor the only cause of this strike. Hitherto the corporations had paid twenty-five cents a week towards the board of each operative, and now it was their purpose to have the girls pay the sum; and this, in addition to the cut in the wages, would make a difference of at least one dollar a week. It was estimated that as many as twelve or fifteen hundred girls turned out, and walked in procession through the streets. They had neither flags nor music, but sang songs, a favorite (but rather inappropriate) one being a parody on "I won't be a nun."

"Oh! isn't it a pity, such a pretty girl as I-

Should be sent to the factory to pine away and die?

Oh! I cannot be a slave,

I will not be a slave,

For I'm so fond of liberty

That I cannot be a slave."

My own recollection of this first strike (or "turn out" as it was called) is very vivid. I worked in a lower room, where I had heard the proposed strike fully, if not vehemently, discussed; I had been an ardent listener to what was said against this attempt at "oppression" on the part of the corporation, and naturally I took sides with the strikers. When the day came on which the girls were to turn out, those in the upper rooms started first, and so many of them left that our mill was at once shut down. Then, when the girls in my room stood irresolute, uncertain what to do,



asking each other, “Would you?” or “Shall we turn out?” and not one of them having the courage to lead off, I, who began to think they would not go out, after all their talk, became impatient, and started on ahead, saying, with childish bravado, “I don’t care what you do, I am going to turn out, whether any one else does or not;” and I marched out, and was followed by the others.

As I looked back at the long line that followed me, I was more proud than I have ever been since at any success I may have achieved, and more proud than I shall ever be again until my own beloved State gives to its women citizens the right of suffrage.

The agent of the corporation where I then worked took some small revenges on the supposed ringleaders; on the principle of sending the weaker to the wall, my mother was turned away from her boarding-house, that functionary saying, “Mrs. Hanson, you could not prevent the older girls from turning out, but your daughter is a child, and her you could control.”

It is hardly necessary to say that so far as results were concerned this strike did no good. The dissatisfaction of the operatives subsided, or burned itself out, and though the authorities did not accede to their demands, the majority returned to their work, and the corporation went on cutting down the wages.

And after a time, as the wages became more and more reduced, the best portion of the girls left and went to their homes, or to the other employments that were fast opening to women, until there were very few of the old guard left; and thus the status of the factory population of New England gradually became what we know it to be to-day....

From Harriet Hanson Robinson. *Loom and Spindle or Life Among the Early Mill Girls*. New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1898: 83–86. Public domain. Excerpt and introduction reprinted with permission from the History Matters website:

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5714/>.



Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source A: Newspaper announcement of the First Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York, *Seneca County Courier*, July 14, 1848

Women's Rights Convention.

A Convention to discuss the social, civil and religious condition and rights of Woman, will be held in the Wesleyan Chapel, at Seneca Falls, N. Y., on Wednesday and Thursday the 19th and 20th of July current, commencing at 10 o'clock A. M.

During the first day, the meeting will be exclusively for Women, which all are earnestly invited to attend. The public generally are invited to be present on the second day, when LUCRETIA MOTT, of Philadelphia, and others both ladies and gentlemen, will address the Convention.

Public domain. Available from the National Park Service, Women's Rights National Historical Park.

<http://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/participants-of-the-first-womens-rights-convention.htm>.



Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source B: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, speech made after the Seneca Falls convention, “Address on Woman’s Rights” (excerpt), 1848

But what would you gain by voting. Man must know the advantages of voting for they all seem very tenacious about the right. Think you if woman had a voice in this government, that all those laws affecting her interests would so entirely violate every principle of right and justice? Had we a vote to give might not the office holders and seekers propose some change in woman's condition? Might not "woman's rights" come to be as great a question as "free soil"? But are you not already sufficiently represented by your Fathers, Husbands, Brothers and Sons. Let your statute books answer the question. We have had enough of such representation. In nothing is woman's true happiness consulted, men like to call her an angel—to feed her with what they think sweet food nourishing her vanity, to induce her to believe her organization is so much finer more delicate than theirs, that she is not fitted to struggle with the tempests of public life but needs their care and protection. Care and protection? such as the wolf gives the lamb—such as the eagle the hare he carries to his eyrie. Most cunningly he entraps her and then takes from her all those rights which are dearer to him than life itself, rights which have been baptized in blood and the maintenance of which is even now rocking to their foundations the kingdoms of the old world. The most discouraging, the most lamentable aspect our cause wears is the indifference indeed the contempt with which women themselves regard our movement. When the subject is introduced among our young ladies among those even who claim to be intelligent and educated it is met by the scornful curl of the lip and by expressions of disgust and ridicule. But we shall hope better things of them when they are enlightened in regard to their present position, to the laws under which they live—they will not then publish their degradation by declaring themselves satisfied nor their ignorance by declaring they have all the rights they want.

Public domain. Available from the Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Papers Project, Rutgers University.

<http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/ecswoman3.html>.



Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source C: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Declaration of Sentiments outlined in the *Report of the Women's Rights Convention* held at Seneca Falls, New York July 19 and 20, 1848

The Convention assembled at the hour appointed, James Mott, of Philadelphia, in the Chair. The minutes of the previous day having been read, E. C. Stanton again read the Declaration of Sentiments, which was freely discussed ...and was unanimously adopted, as follows:

Declaration of Sentiments.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.



He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes of divorce; in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given; as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women—the law, in all cases, going upon the false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration.

He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction, which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education—all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in Church as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment, by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation,—in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States. In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country. Firmly relying upon the final triumph of the Right and the True, we do this day affix our signatures to this declaration.

At the appointed hour the meeting convened. The minutes having been read, the resolutions of the day before were read and taken up separately. Some, from their self-evident truth, elicited but little remark; others, after some criticism, much debate, and some slight alterations, were finally passed by a large majority.

[At an evening session] Lucretia Mott offered and spoke to the following resolution:

Resolved, That the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women, for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for the securing to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions and commerce.



The Resolution was adopted.

Public domain. Available from the Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Papers Project, Rutgers University:
<http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html>.