



Shifting Gender Roles in the US

1870 Until Now

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Subject: History

Topic: Integrated

Grade Levels: High school, 9+

Overview

This lesson seeks to explore how the industrial revolution changed perceptions of gender roles during the Victorian era. This lesson also seeks to have students observe changes and continuities over time in regards to gender roles in the United States.

Time: 50 minutes

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will learn about how gender roles and stereotypes are shaped by times, and political agenda
- Students will examine the perception of gender roles in the U.S. from the Victorian Era to the modern day
- Students will discuss gender inequality in contemporary US and propose and discuss possible solutions.

Essential Questions:

What roles were expected of women during the Victorian Era? What were the expected roles for women during the Industrial Revolution? How were they the same? How were they different? How do they compare with today?

How do women's roles during these time periods compare and contrast with roles expected for men?

How could these expectations of men and women affect the choices that a person made about their life? Do you think they might have made different choices under different circumstances?

Standards:

HSS 9-12.1. 1. Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.

HSS 11.11.3. 3. Describe the changing roles of women in society as reflected in the entry of more women into the labor force and the changing family structure.

Vocabulary:

Gender: a person's internal sense of self as male, female, both or neither, as well as one's outward presentation and behaviors

Gender Role: a set of social and cultural beliefs or expectations about appropriate behavior for men/boys or women/girls - gender roles can vary from culture to culture

Stereotype: a widely held but fixed and oversimplified idea about a particular type of person or thing

Colonialism: the acquisition of full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically

Industrialization: the large-scale introduction of manufacturing, advanced technical enterprises, and other productive economic activity into an area/society/country

Mechanization: the process of changing from working largely or exclusively by hand or with animals to doing that work with machinery

Urbanization: an increase in a population in cities and towns versus rural areas

Teacher Background: In order to teach this lesson, the teacher should have a functional knowledge of Victorian gender roles especially the "Separate Spheres Model."

Materials:

- Projector
- Computer
- Print copies of "Women's Rights" (find here: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/a-19th-century-verse-on-womans-rights>) for each student
- Print copies of [timeline worksheet](#)

Instruction:

1. Before beginning the slideshow, hand out copies of the timeline worksheet (see Materials), and encourage students to take notes on each part of the slideshow on their timeline.
2. Introduce the topic and let the students know that you will be discussing Gender Roles in the US. Use the projector to show the "[Gender Roles in the US](#)" slideshow (30 min).
3. When arriving at the slides on "Separate Spheres," hand out copies of "Women's Rights" (see Materials) to each student to read and analyze on their own when the slides prompt this.
 - a. Have a short discussion about "Women's Rights," guided by the questions on the slideshow.
4. When reaching the last slide of the slideshow, students' timelines should have two spots left that have not yet been filled in. Have students fill out the last two sections of the timeline on their own. (10 minutes)

- a. Ask students to think about their own personal experiences with gender inequality to consider how they themselves fit into the timeline. Ask students to write an example of an encounter they have had with gender inequality in their own life, and to write it on their timeline.
 - b. Ask students to reflect on what they have learned about the way gender roles have shifted and changed across history to fill out the last section of the timeline. Tell students to think about the past to consider what the future holds for gender roles.
5. Have students share out in groups of 3-4 what they filled out for the last two sections of the timeline. Encourage students to compare and contrast what they wrote with what others wrote. (10 minutes)

Relevant Resources:

Benner, Louise. "Women in the 1920s." *Neuse River* | *NCpedia*, NCPEDIA, 2004, www.ncpedia.org/history/20th-Century/1920s-women.

Berlatsky, Noah. "Hey, the Gender-Role Revolution Started Way Before the Millennial Generation." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 20 May 2013, www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/05/hey-the-gender-role-revolution-started-way-before-the-millennial-generation/276033/.

Dastagir, Alia E. "What Do Men Get That Women Don't? Here Are a Few Things." *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 1 Mar. 2017, www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/03/01/2017-womens-history-month/98247518/.

Hughes, Kathryn. "Gender Roles in the 19th Century." *The British Library*, The British Library, 15 May 2014, www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century.

Marsh, Jan. "Gender Ideology & Separate Spheres." *Introduction to 19th-Century Fashion*, Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London SW7 2RL. Telephone 44 (0)20 7942 2000. Email Vanda@Vam.ac.uk, 4 Apr. 2013, www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/g/gender-ideology-and-separate-spheres-19th-century/

Alissa Scheller and Cameron Love, "Transgender People Are More Visible Than Ever, But It's Still Legal To Discriminate Against Them In Most States" https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/03/transgender-discrimination-laws_n_7502266.html

McLaughlin, Katie. "5 Things Women Couldn't Do in the 1960s." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 25 Aug. 2014, www.cnn.com/2014/08/07/living/sixties-women-5-things/index.html.

Oostdyk, Jessica. "Feminism and Changing Gender Roles in the 1960s and 1970s." *Impact on Brazilian Culture*, Hist150, Mar. 26AD, 2017, sites.jmu.edu/HIST150/feminism-and-changing-gender-roles-in-the-1960s-and-1970s/.

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