

7 Ways that Studying U.S. History 1877 to Modern Times History Shapes the Way You Think About WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND HOW THEY WERE TREATED.

1. During pre-industrial societies, women were made to feel guilty for having jobs and were expected to stay at home.

Industrialization 01.24.20



“Making of a Homemaker”, Available:

<https://www.sil.si.edu/ondisplay/making-homemaker/intro.htm>, From: Smithsonian Libraries,

Date Accessed: April 27, 2020.

This picture shows a woman, a mother, preparing food for her family while she is surrounded by household appliances in the room such as irons and a tea kettle. While she is preparing food, there is a child tugging at her dress. This picture demonstrates what society thought to be how women should “work” during pre-industrial societies. Workers in shoe

factories expressed their conflicts with women working in factories in letters to a newspaper editor, which can be seen in the document “Shall Married Women Work?” (Blewett, Shall Married Women Work, 1879). Within this document, it is apparent that the idea of married women working angers other workers. It is believed that when married women work, they are only working to pay for desires such as extra dresses. If they are married, they already have all of their necessities so they should just stay home and stop being greedy. Without knowing each individual woman's financial situations, men accuse them of taking jobs away from others who have a greater need than them. These thoughts mainly came from the idea that a “family wage” existed. This implied that the man in the family would be making enough to provide for the entire family, which was never the case (Industrialization, Jan. 29, 2020). The reality was that workers were working long hours for low wages in bad working conditions (Crash Course #23: The Industrial Economy). With these types of working conditions, no one man would be able to provide for their entire family without falling into financial problems. A woman’s job isn’t just cooking and cleaning, a woman’s job is helping in any way they can to provide for her family as well as herself.

2. Women were placed in factories and workshops with terrible working conditions and had to rally for their rights.

Social Reform 02.07.20



“The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire”. Available:

<https://www.ehstoday.com/safety/media-gallery/21916204/the-triangle-shirtwaist-factory-fire-march-25-1911-photo-gallery/slideshow?slide=12>, Author: Sandy Smith, Date Accessed: April 27, 2020.

The picture above shows women marching through the streets with signs demanding better working conditions. As you can see, one of the signs in the picture mentions fire traps. In the early 1900's women often worked in fourteen or fifteen story buildings that were called workshops. There were large numbers of women working in these workshops within buildings with no fire protection and on floors that were out of reach of firefighters ladders. Shirtwaist makers began to demand improved safety and sanitary conditions along with better wages, but didn't win any of their demands ([Newman, Conditions at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, 2007](#)). On March 25, 1911, the public became aware of how terrible the safety conditions of these workshops really were when a fire broke out in the triangle shirtwaist factory. 146 workers died during this fire due to these conditions. The only doors that were accessible in the workshop were locked from the outside to supposedly "keep out union organizers" and only few were able to escape by climbing from roof to roof. The fire escapes failed and the fire department was not able to help because it's tallest ladder only reached the 6th floor. Women began jumping out of the windows to their death, knowing that was their only choice other than being burned alive. After the incident, the owners were tried for manslaughter. However, they were acquitted because there was no "proof" that they knew about the condition of the fire exits and within weeks after the trial the factory was reopened ([Triangle Shirtwaist Film, 2017](#)). While the government wasn't planning to fight for these women, the public could no longer ignore the conditions of sweatshops. Mass meeting of citizens began to be seen fighting for reform legislation. Eventually laws were created for the safety conditions of these workshops and Rose Shniderman even convinced Franklin Roosevelt to control working hours. He made it so if anyone worked over 54 hours a week they were paid overtime by the Wagner law ([Social Reform, Feb. 3, 2020](#)). Workplaces such as the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory were not uncommon when it came to employing women. They were often desperate to support their families and were willing to work anywhere for a small amount of money to bring home to their families.

3. Women were not allowed to vote by law, and when they fought for this right they were punished by the government.

Women's Suffrage 02.12.20 - 02.14.20



“American Women’s Suffrage Came Down to One Man’s Vote”, Available: <https://www.history.com/news/american-womens-suffrage-19th-amendment-one-mans-vote>, From: Bettmann Archive/Getty Images, Date Accessed: April 28, 2020.

The picture above shows women including Alice Paul picketing for women’s suffrage. One of the signs being held directly targets the President by stating “Mr. President how long must women wait for liberty?”. The fight for women’s suffrage was almost 70 years old when America entered WW1. Members of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) believed that in order to succeed they needed to work on suffrage by gaining support state by state. Alice Paul believed this was too slow and formed her own group called the National Women’s Party (NWP). Paul organized marches and rallies and even picketed outside of the White House targeting the President because he opposed women’s suffrage ([Suffragist, Alice Paul Inspires Her Fellow Suffragists, 1917-1918](#)). Women argued that receiving the right to vote would balance out the mens votes, as they think differently than men. Black suffragists argued that they would be able to vote against racism and help to end it. There are many different arguments used to persuade the public to join them in their fight and were able to gain some supporters. Many people refused to support the 15th Amendment because it didn’t include women, while others supported it but still pushed for women's rights ([Women’s Suffrage, Feb. 12, 2020](#)). On the path to gain these rights, the suffragists were arrested and mistreated within the prisons. Instead of being treated like political prisoners, they were treated as criminals and stripped of many of their basic rights. They were not allowed to wear their own clothes, were not provided proper food and water, and were physically abused by many of the prison guards ([Iron Jawed Angels Video, 2016](#)). Women were seen as weak by many and it was believed they shouldn’t have the right to vote. Instead of giving up, suffragists continued to fight for their right

and finally were granted the right to vote under the ratification of the nineteenth amendment in 1920.

4. When women were finally allowed to work, they were not given the same opportunities as men.

Feminism and Women's Movements 03.23.20 - 03.27.20



“The Wage Gap: A History of Pay Inequity and the Equal Pay Act”, Available: <https://www.infoplease.com/equal-pay-act>, Author: Beth Rowan, Date Accessed: April 28,2020.

This picture shows John F. Kennedy signed the Equal Pay act into law surrounded by a group of women who were fighting for fair wages. This was one win for the feminist movement as they fought for many different rights. In every aspect of life, women were seen as less than when compared to men. In the economy women were expected to work different jobs from men with lower wages or stay on the house. In the “Declaration of Women’s Independence”, women declare that they should have equal rights in many different aspects of life, specifically the economy and their family. Within the document, it is stated that women should have equal job opportunities and equal pay. They should not be denied any of their economical rights based on their gender. Within the family, women should not have to make the choice between their family and their independent lives (**Bread and Roses, Declaration of Women’s Independence, 1970**). In order to reach their goals, women involved in the feminist movements participated in many different rallies and public demonstrations. Along with the normal protests, women did things other things to reach their goals: burned degrees in public to get women’s history to be taught in

schools, burned undergarments and hung a women's liberation poster at the Miss America crowning to change beauty standards, and stormed a law classroom of a professor who preached that women couldn't be lawyers to prove women could have the same jobs as men ([She's Beautiful When She's Angry, 2014](#)). Women proved they could have the same jobs as men by joining the military and succeeding in their military careers. When women were first able to join the military it was only as nurses, they were not given any training to defend themselves in the field. Eventually, they were able to actually train with the men. For a long time women were not allowed to be promoted past a certain position. Instead of dealing with this reality, women continued to prove their worth and eventually were able to thrive in the military ([Makers, Season 2 Episode: Women in War, 2014](#)). While the most common conception of women is that they can't do as much as men can do, women are continuing to prove that as a misconception as they succeed at their jobs.

5. During WW2 Women were encouraged to take over the jobs of soldiers, then expected to stop working when they returned.

World War 2 02.17.20 - 02.21.20

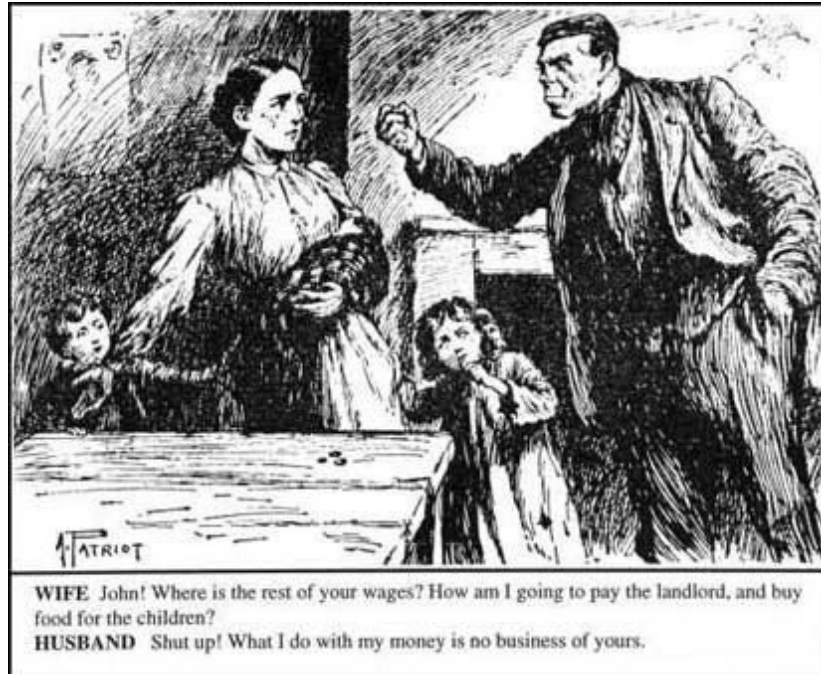


“Women of WW2: Women in the Workplace”, Available: <https://www.thoughtco.com/world-war-ii-women-at-work-3530690>, From: Hulton Archive/Getty Images, Date Accessed: April 28, 2020.

This picture shows one of many posters that were made to target women during WW2. Posters such as these were created to persuade women to do whatever they could to help the men fighting in the war. Most commonly, this led to the women working in factories. Posters took many different approaches to reach women: showing soldiers at war that needed more ammunition, claiming these were jobs women belonged at, implying women are equal to men, and promising better wages ([WW2 Poster Collection at Northwestern University Library](#)). What women didn't know was that they were going to be expected to go back to their low paying jobs when the men returned from war. By 1944 women made up 1/3 of the civilian labor force in addition to the thousands that were serving in the military. While these women played a huge role in the war, the government and their employers only saw their jobs as temporary. When the war ended, the women were let go not thinking about what the women needed. Most of the women that were let go were those in high paying industrial jobs so men could receive the better jobs. This was especially hard on middle class women who needed to work to survive as they were forced to return to their low paying jobs ([Crash Course #36: WW2 Part 2 - The Homefront](#)). Along with these temporary jobs in factories, women were asked not to buy anything more than they need to survive. If they bought more they were seen as greedy because the men at war needed these goods more than they did ([WW2, Feb. 19, 2020](#)). Even while holding down the homefront while men were at war, women were seen as temporary and disposable. As soon as the men returned everything returned to how it was before. Despite their help, they were sent back to their low paying jobs to continue living in the shadow of men.

6. It was seen as wrong for women to not get married or leave if they were unhappy in their marriage.

The New Right 04.10.20



“Marriage in the 19th Century”, Available: <https://spartacus-educational.com/Wmarriage.htm>,
From: *The Vote*, Date Accessed: April 28, 2020.

In this picture, a man is yelling at his wife while she protects her three kids from his wrath. Women often dealt with this treatment, as they were afraid to end their marriage. During the 1970's there was an increased fear of communism reaching America. It was thought that there were communists among them and they were there to turn the “weak” people towards communism. Unmarried or single women were seen as one of these “weak” people. It was thought that they could easily be seduced to turn communist. Due to these accusations, women who were not married were not trusted by society and were looked down upon. Many of these outcasts were persecuted after being accused of being different from the norm which could mean they were communists (May, *Men and Women: Life in the Nuclear Cocoon*, 332). To avoid these things, women often rushed into marriage and were afraid to leave unhappy ones. They were made to think that any problems in the marriage were their fault and it was their responsibility to fix them. Wives were expected to submit to their husbands leadership and serve his every need. A document titled “The Total Woman” was written in 1973 by Marabel Morgan to give women advice on how to make their marriages work. Instead of supporting women, Morgan continued to state in the document that the women could fix their marriages by submitting to their husbands as they submit to the Lord. She was drilling the thought that the wives were the problem and that they were only there to support their husband (Morgan, *The Total Woman*, 1973). Oftentimes marriages began to falter when women's husbands disagreed with how they spent their days. If they were not home taking care of the house and children, they were seen as selfish. An example of this can be seen within a video titled “Iron Jawed Angels”.

A woman wanted to participate in the fight for women's suffrage and decided to go to demonstrations and watch the suffragists speak. On one occasion, the woman decided to bring her eleven year old daughter along and her husband found out. In response her husband sent their kids away to a relatives house and threatened to fight for custody if she didn't stop going to demonstrations (Iron Jawed Angels Video, 2016). Men often became upset when they were not able to control their wives. Instead of enjoying their lives, women were stuck in unhappy marriages due to the fear of being seen as weak by their society.

7. Despite the societal image of an “ideal woman”, during the 1920's women defied gender roles and shocked the world.

The “Modern” 1920's 02.10.20 - 02.14.20



“1920's Gender Roles”, Available:

<https://www.sutori.com/story/1920-s-gender-roles--PRb3DxXk1FC1WWoTPbVgqHHy>, From:

Sutori, Date Accessed: April 28, 2020.

In this picture women who were known as flappers are drinking beer together in public during what is now known as the “roaring 20's”.. Throughout the 20's, women began to gain more independence while the men were at war. They became more liberated and broke rules that were set by society for women (Crash Course #32: The Roaring 20's). Women began drinking and smoking in public along with gambling, which were only considered acceptable actions of men. They also began to change their looks from what was expected of them. Short hair and short dresses became popular and instead of dressing more conservative, women began to expose more of their skin. To go along with their new styles, women started wearing a lot of makeup such as brighter lipstick which was largely uncommon. There was also an increased amount of

PDA from women and a new found love for dancing. These new women shocked the men and even the government, as they wanted the women to stay within the home. Advertisements began to be created that were directed towards women to keep them at home. The advertisements often included women who were portrayed as happy to be doing chores in the house. Taking advantage of the change of these women, other advertisements were created to sell beauty products and new household appliances ([The “Modern” 1920’s, Feb. 10, 2020](#)). With these new appliances, the job of women leaned more towards shopping than actual housework. They were encouraged by advertisements to seek fulfillment through purchases. Many of the ad’s encouraged the use of these new appliances so that the women could have more free time. However, this so-called “free time” was expected to be spent with the family instead of on their own ([Changes in Housework, 1929](#)). While the government attempted to stifle the women’s new found independence, the 20’s were a time of liberation and change.