

# 7 Ways That Studying US History 1877 To Modern Times History Shapes The Way You Think About Women's Gender Roles

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## 1. Women begin working in factories and become a financial resource to the family.

Week 2: Industrialization



Women in the Industrial Workforce. (n.d.). Retrieved December 11, 2019, from [https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Women\\_in\\_the\\_Industrial\\_Workforce](https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Women_in_the_Industrial_Workforce).

The image above above demonstrates women working at the beginning of the industrial revolution. This had never been seen before and became an extremely debated topic, as women were previously seen as incapable of maintaining a job.

All types of women were in the workforce at this time, including married women. Their ability to work was often questioned, as their husbands were supposed to support them financially; however, this was more often not the case. At the time, these married women in the workplace were not liked by other women also working, as they were believed to be taking the jobs that the single women needed ([Shall Married Women Work?, 1879](#)). The need for money by the women and the need for workers in industry led to the swap in gender roles, as women were now able to be the breadwinners in their families. In [Crash Course #23: The Industrial Economy](#), the extent of their shift in gender roles is fully explored, as it such a monumental change at the time. This change in gender roles because of industry was a huge leap for women. On [September 6, 2019, the Industrialization Lecture](#) focused a lot this topic through wages. The topic of working for wages in the lecture emphasized women's invisibility at the time, while also expressing their importance in factories themselves.

## 2. Women workers become the most common employees in clothing factories.

Week 4: Social Reform



Tragedy to Triumph: The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. (2015, March 25). Retrieved December 11, 2019, from <https://www.afge.org/article/tragedy-to-triumph-the-triangle-shirtwaist-fire/>.

Pictured above are images of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire. All the workers in this factory were women and nearly all of them burned to death in the fire. This fire led to a slew of legislation changes in regulations for factories.

At this point in history (the 1910s) women had become the most common employees in textile factories. A good example of this was the Triangle Shirtwaist Co., where nearly all of their employees were

women. This made it more difficult for men to get jobs, as women had become a widely accepted group in the workforce. Although women were common in industry, they were not treated with such regard as men. The Triangle Shirtwaist Company kept their employees in dangerous work conditions and on average only paid them \$1.50 a week (Pauline Newman et al. *Conditions at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company*). Due to the hazardous conditions, a fire broke out and a majority of their workers died in the fire. A year prior to these fires, the women had protested the working conditions in the factory, but made no progress (*Triangle Shirtwaist film*). The majority of the population at this time were the working class, so the prevalence of women in this career field were tremendous. And those within the working class, “men, women, and children,” all live by a “different set of cultural rules” (McGerr, *Class, Gender, and Race at Home: The American Birthplace of Progressivism*). This set of cultural rules is what allowed women to make a change in the gender roles and become leaders in an area of the workforce.

### 3. Women’s suffrage leads to the 19th amendment and allows women to have a say in governmental affairs.

Week 5: Women’s Suffrage



Kaplan, J. (2019, April 27). Celebrating the Fight for Women's Suffrage: An Interview with Nancy Tate. Retrieved December 11, 2019, from <https://patimes.org/celebrating-the-fight-for-womens-suffrage-an-interview-with-nancy-tate/>.

The image above shows women picketing for the right to vote. This was a common sight during this time, and was often done in front of the White House. They were fighting for the right to vote, so that women could be independent from their husbands and have a say in the government.

Women fought for the 19th amendment for many years before it was ratified. A famous suffragist, Alice Paul, was known for her activity in the movement and ability to rally her fellow suffragists. She founded the National Women’s Party after being kicked out of the National American Women Suffrage

Association (September 25, 2019, Women's Suffrage Lecture). Eventually, her actions within the NWP led to her incarceration, where she was notoriously mistreated, along with some other suffragists. It was recorded that the prisoners would be choked "to the gasping point, as they sat helpless, locked in cells" (Doris Stevens, Alice Paul Inspires Her Fellow Suffragists, 1920). Their treatment in prison was leaked to the press, and ultimately led to their release and the passing of the 19th Amendment, which was shown in the movie *Iron Jawed Angels*. The passing of the amendment allowed women to become independent from men; thus, again, switching gender roles.

## 4. Women become the main workforce at home during WWII.

Week 6: WWII



Admin. (2015, November 19). Role of Women in World War 2 in Aviation - Part 2. Retrieved December 11, 2019, from <http://blog.covingtonaircraft.com/2011/09/30/role-of-women-in-world-war-2-in-aviation-part-2/>.

Above is an image of women working to build machinery for WWII. During WWII, women became the leading workforce at home, as men went off to war. This led to the creation of Rosie the Riveter, who

performed work such as the women pictured above. Rosie also famously fashioned the same hair doo as them.

Before WWII the US was in a depression, in fact it was the worst depression in US history and became known as the Great Depression. During this time period, women's roles in the family dramatically shifted. As the men became unable to find work and financially support the family, women became the heads within the house. This role shift was so severe that "the husband could offer no objections," and women were in nearly in charge of everything in the family ([The Depression, Family Life](#)). WWII soon began after that, and most of the men went off to war. This opened up career field to women. The middle class, white, married women made up a larger percent of the workforce than single women did ([Crash Course #36: World War II Part 2 - The Homefront](#)). Women also played another key role during the time, as the men at war's motivation to come home was the women ([Blum, G.I. Joe: Fighting for Home](#)). However, the women had been doing all the "men's" work at home and were doing just fine.

## 5. Women joined in on social movements.

Week 9: Social Movements of the Late 20th Century



Cccu. (1970, January 1). The Civil Rights Movement: Race and Gender. Retrieved December 11, 2019, from <http://canterburyglobalsixties.blogspot.com/2016/11/the-civil-rights-movement-race-and.html>.

Above is an image of women in the civil rights movement. During this time period (60s), there were many social movements and women began to join many of them, thus making them a common sight in protests.

During the 1960s, there was a rise in social movements. The most memorable of those was the civil rights movement, which is picture above. In this era, women began to join these new social movements in masses. The resulting changes from the movements led to the application of “similar lessons to their own relations with men” (Casey Hayden and Mary King, *Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo*, 1965). The new involvement of women in such movements gave women more political power, that had traditionally only been possessed by men (Crash Course #40: *The 1960s in America*). The sixties were a rather chaotic time, as there were shifts “within the United States from one sense of order to another” (Cmiel, *Sixties Liberalism and the Revolution in Manners*). One of these many shifts involved the roles in which women played. They made many gains via social movements in the 60s, however they are often forgotten or overlooked.

## 6. Women fight for equal rights and control over their own bodies in the Women’s Liberation Movement.

Week 10: Feminism and Women’s Movements



Gordon, L. (2016, April 21). False Protection, Real Oppression: Opposing Anti-abortion Legislation. Retrieved December 11, 2019, from <https://www.dsausa.org/democratic-left/anti-abortion-legislation-dl/>.

Picture above is an image of protesting women during the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s in the United States. During this movement women protested for a variety of issues, some of which being: equal rights, birth control, equal pay, child care, etc.

Some women protested in public and others did so within the home. Those who protested in their home typically did so by making their husbands share the housework with them ([Pat Mainardi, The Politics of Housework, 1970](#)). The women who practice this form of protest are often forgotten in place of those who participated in large, public demonstration (as pictured above). The large, overall movement became known as the Women's Liberation Movement, but it fractured and there were many smaller groups within it. For example, the group known as WITCH had many smaller WITCH "covens" appear all throughout the nation, and many of them had absolutely no affiliation with the original ([Women's Liberation Documentary](#)). There were many large scale demonstrations throughout this time period, some of which women believed were impossible. An example of this is the march on NYC, where Betty Friedan declared that 50,000 women were going to march in the city, and it was successful ([She's Beautiful When She's Angry](#)). All of these protests did result in legislative change, women became front runners in politics. Previously, only men were in these positions.

## 7. Expectations of women in the home shift.

Week 12: The New Right



Grigg, R. (2019, March 6). Marabel Morgan and Why The Feminist Movement Had To Get Moving. Retrieved December 11, 2019, from <https://medium.com/indelible-ink/marabel-morgan-and-why-the-feminist-movement-had-to-get-moving-6577731b44e7>.

The image above is a stereotypical woman in the household in the early 1970s. Throughout the decade these expectations of women changed drastically.

In the 1970s, the rate of divorce increased dramatically, and the topic of failed marriages became a sensation. Many wrote on ways to fix or save their marriage where the blame was often placed on many irrelevant things. Most referred to the Bible and said this such as “love your husband and hold him in reverence, it says in the bible” (Marabel Morgan, *The Total Woman*, 1973). The solution to these failed marriages was often a form of servitude to the husband, this can be seen in the show *All In The Family*. Marriage was not the only debated topic of the time, but so was abortion. Traditionalists (conservatives) were pitted against liberals in the fight over the legality of abortion (*Roe v. Wade, Part 2: The Culture Wars*). In essence, in the 70s women gained control over their bodies and marriages, something that was previously only possessed by the men in their lives (typically the husbands).