

# Challenging Histories

## Guiding principles for good historical learning:

- To be conscious that we each have a unique perspective based on our own circumstances, but that nobody has more or less importance in this class.
- To let the facts inform you and lead your learning, rather than finding facts to support a prior viewpoint.
- Avoid the use terms like 'we' to refer to historical figures, peoples – as historians it is necessary to be impartial, so language is important.
  - i.e. refer to 'the British' rather than 'we'. This helps to separate ourselves from the study and avoids unintentional othering or subconscious bias.
- Accept that interpretations and feelings about what we study can and will differ. This is ok!
- Discussion should be based on the facts. Use evidence to support your points to avoid making unfair or inaccurate assertions.

# A shared space for learning

To make the class respectful, fair, inclusive, kind and supportive, we will:

- Listen to one another without interrupting
- Ensure that everyone in the class has a chance to have their say
- Avoid using language which might hurt other people
- Ask questions and give our views, knowing that others won't judge

# Starter: Discussion

Are boys and girls equal in Britain today?



# A Dramatic Transformation

| 1970/71 UK   | 2023/24 UK  |
|--|---|
| <p>~<b>16%</b> of men enrolled in higher education<br/> ~<b>13</b> of women enrolled in higher education</p> | <p><b>40.4%</b> of men enrolled in higher education<br/> <b>53.6%</b> of women enrolled in higher education</p> |
| <p><b>92.1%</b> of men in labour force<br/> <b>52.8%</b> of women in labour force</p>                        | <p><b>77.9%</b> of men in labour force<br/> <b>72%</b> of women in labour force</p>                             |
| <p><b>4.1%</b> of MPs are women (1970)<br/> <b>95.9%</b> of MPs are men (1970)</p>                           | <p><b>40%</b> of MPs are women (2024)<br/> <b>60%</b> of MPs are men (2024)</p>                                 |

Have men and women become more equal over time? Have we reached full equality?

Enquiry Question:  
**How did the women's rights  
movement shape modern  
Britain?**

Lesson Title:  
How did the women's rights  
movement develop?



Evert F. Baumgardner, Family watching television in their home, c. 1958, public domain.



# Timeline and Terminology Handout

## TIMELINE

**1918:** Women gain the right to vote in the UK

**1921:** Marie Stopes opens the UK's first birth control clinic in London

**1939-1945:** Women play a major role in the war effort during World War II

**1961:** The birth control bill is introduced under the NHS in the UK for married women

**1967:** The NHS Family Planning Act allowed doctors to give contraceptive advice to unmarried women

**1968:** Women sewing machinists at the Dagenham Ford Factory go on strike, demanding to be classed as skilled labourers

**1970:** The first National Women's Liberation Conference is held at Ruskin College, Oxford. The Equal Pay Act is introduced by Barbara Castle.

**1971:** The first women's shelter in the UK is created in London

**1973:** The Brixton Black Women's Group is founded

**1974:** Contraception becomes free under the NHS for all women regardless of age or marital status

**1975:** The Sex Discrimination Act is introduced in Parliament. The Manchester Black Women's Co-operative is founded.

**1976-1978:** Jayaben Desai leads the Grunwick factory strike

**1979:** The Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) holds their first conference. The Liverpool Black Sisters and Southall Black Sisters organisations are founded in this year.

## TERMINOLOGY

**Activism:** Activism refers to actions taken to create social or political change.

**Contraception:** Also known as 'birth control', contraception is the use of medicine or healthcare to prevent pregnancy.

**Equal Pay:** The notion that all people, regardless of gender, should be paid the same for doing equal kinds of work

**Feminism:** A political movement dedicated to ending sexism against women

**Intersectionality:** The interlocking and overlapping identities we all have, which shape how we view and engage with our society

**Strike:** Refusing to work in protest of working conditions or standards

**Suffrage:** The right to vote

## SHORT ANSWERS

Who introduced the Equal Pay Act? \_\_\_\_\_

What does OWAAD stand for? \_\_\_\_\_

When & where did the first National Women's Liberation Conference take place? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do workers go on strike? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the goal of activism? \_\_\_\_\_

# Emmeline Pankhurst, Suffragette

Reflect:

- What do you know about the women's suffrage movement?
- What arguments does Emmeline Pankhurst make in favour of militant activism in her speech?



# Paired Discussion I

What arguments  
does Emmeline  
Pankhurst make  
in favour of  
militant activism  
in her speech?

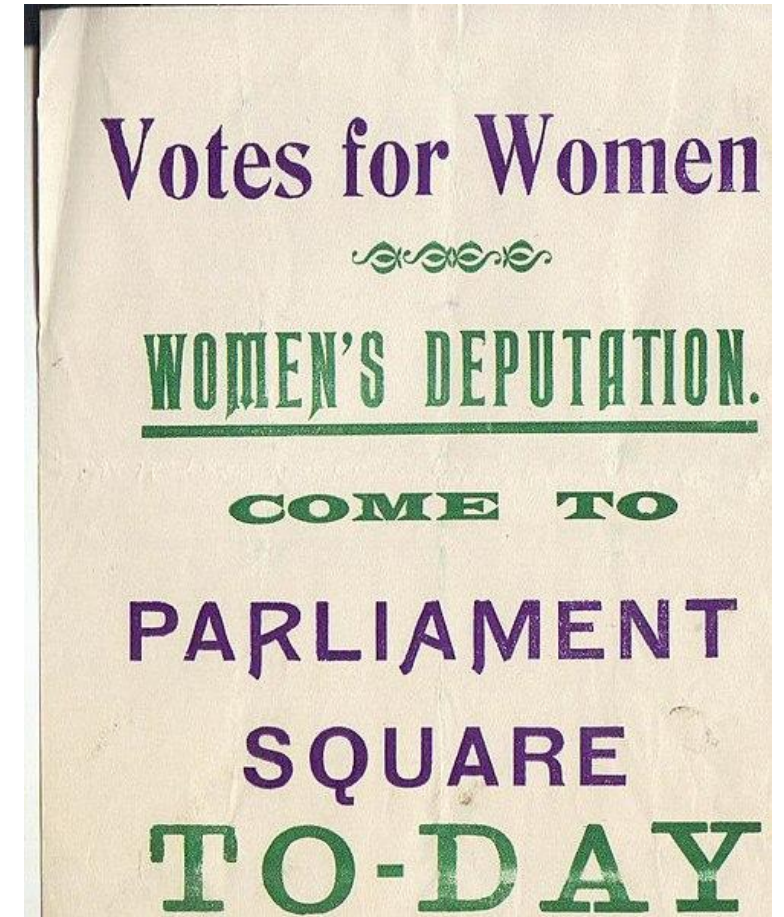




# The women's suffrage movement

- The women's suffrage movement fought to gain women the right to vote
- Suffragists used peaceful activism to achieve their goals while suffragettes like Emmeline Pankhurst used more militant methods
- Women gained the right to vote in the UK in 1918

**How did women's lives change by gaining the right to vote?**



# Mona McLeod, Women's Land Army

- Reflect: What do you know about women's contributions to the World War II effort?
- What struggles does Mona describe dealing with during her wartime service?

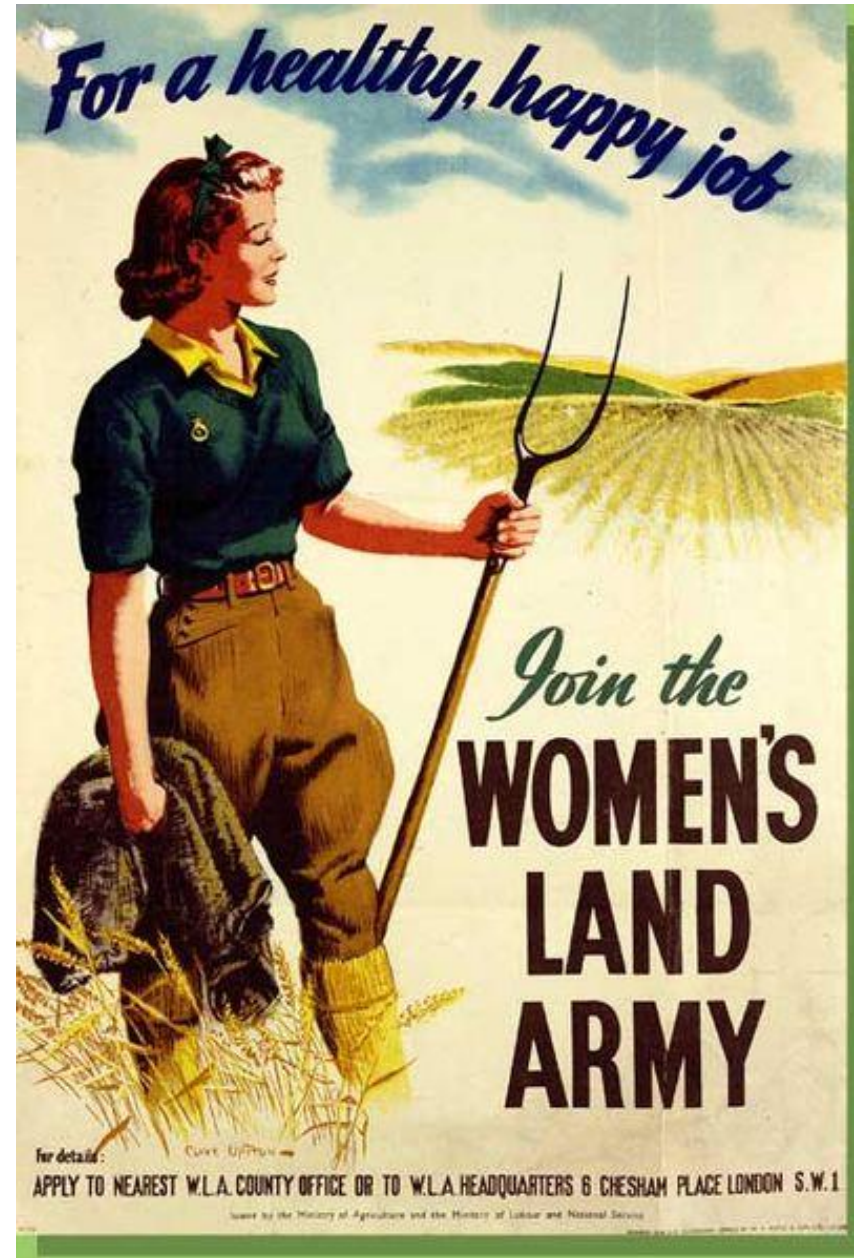
The women who  
kept Britain fed  
during WWII

**BBC** NEWS | WORLD SERVICE



# Paired Discussion II

What struggles  
does Mona  
describe dealing  
with during her  
wartime service?

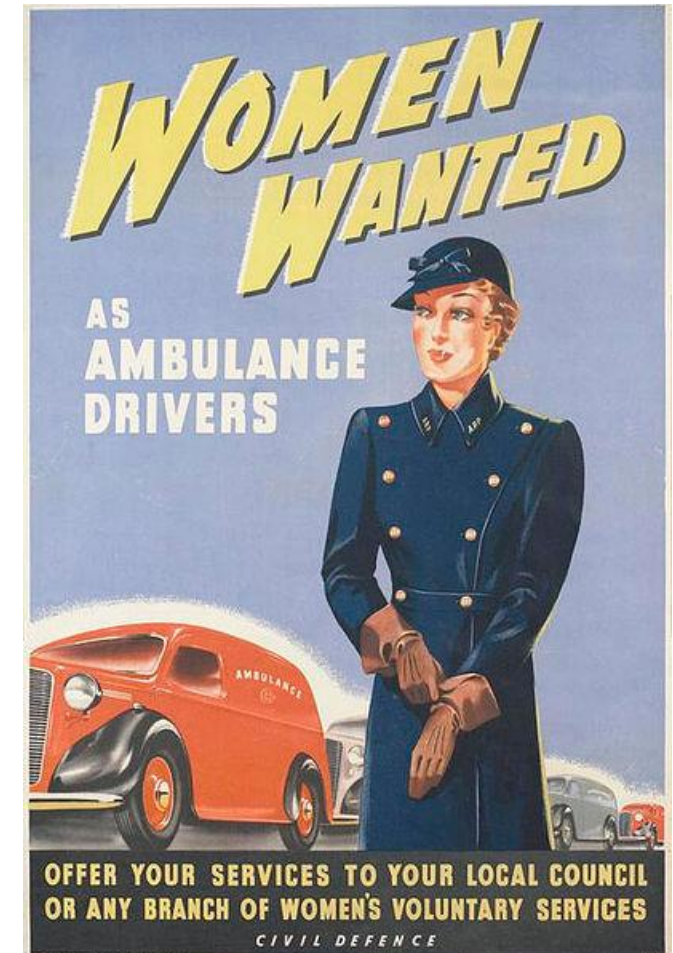




# How did women contribute to the WWII effort?

- More than 80% of all British women contributed to the World War II effort, often taking traditionally 'male' jobs
- Women worked in factories, in the land army, or in the armed forces

## How did the role of women in British society change during World War II?



# Now We Are Married

- Listen and watch the first five minutes of this 1958 BBC documentary
- Follow along with the guided notes handout and consider the following questions:
  - What is the societal issue this documentary is investigating?
  - How do the husbands spend their time, and what do they think about?
  - How do the wives spend their time, and what do they think about?



# Now We Are Married worksheet

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| What is the societal issue the documentary is highlighting?  |  |   |  |
|  |  |   |  |
| What do the men do for work/during the day?  |  | What do the men think about in the morning?   |  |
| What do the women do for work/during the day?  |  | What do the women think about in the morning? |  |
|  |  |   |  |
| At the conclusion of the clip, Mr. Findlater says the saying goes:<br><br>“Men must _____ and women must _____.” |  | What does this phrase imply?                  |  |

# Now We Are Married

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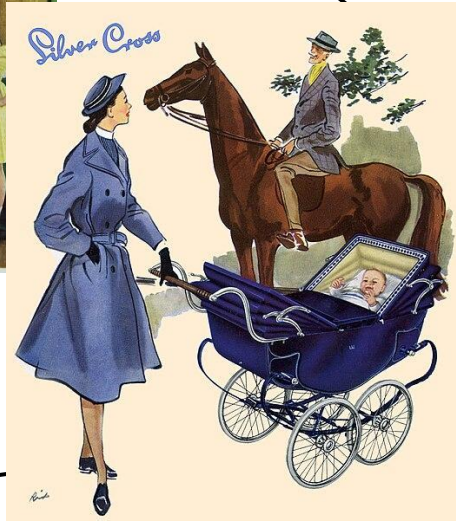


BBC Eye to Eye (1958): Now We Are Married

# Now We Are Married sample notes

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| What is the societal issue the documentary is highlighting?   | In 1950s Britain, most husbands and wives spent every day from 9-6 apart: with most men working, and most women taking care of the household. They lived their lives in totally separate “worlds.” |   |   |
| What do the men do for work/during the day?   | Lorry driver, journalist, businessman  | What do the men think about in the morning?   | Their responsibilities at work, their commute, upcoming conferences |
| What do the women do for work/during the day?   | Charring (cleaning), shopping, cooking,  | What do the women think about in the morning? | Their shopping lists, their cooking over the weekend                |
| At the conclusion of the clip, Mr. Findlater says the saying goes:<br><br>“Men must <b>work</b> , and women must <b>weep</b> .” | What does this phrase imply?<br><br>Men earn money for a household while women are the emotional center of the household and do not participate in typical jobs.                                   |   |   |

# Gender roles in the 1950s

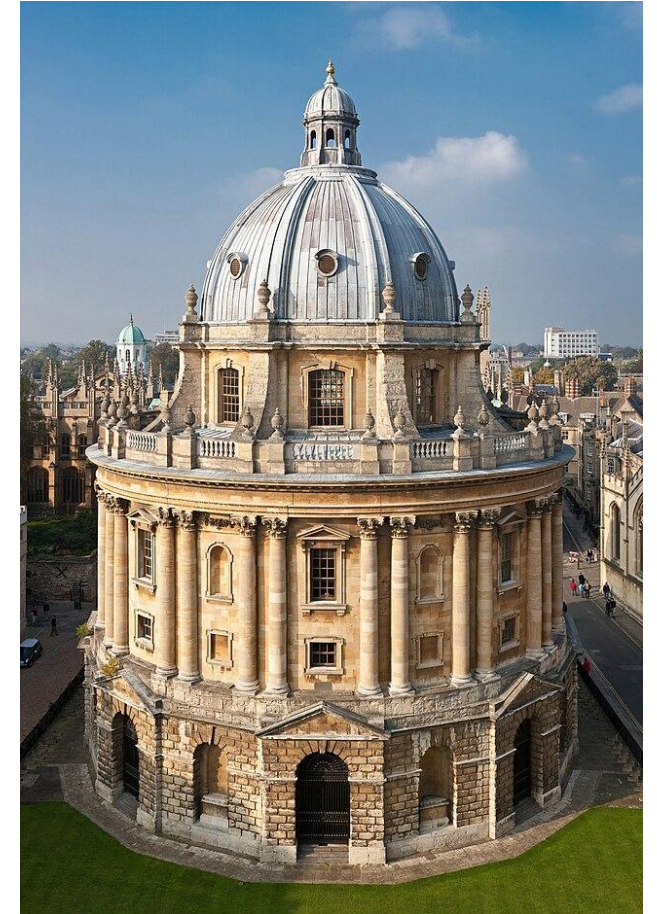


How were these different spheres restrictive for both men and women? Why did people begin to protest them?



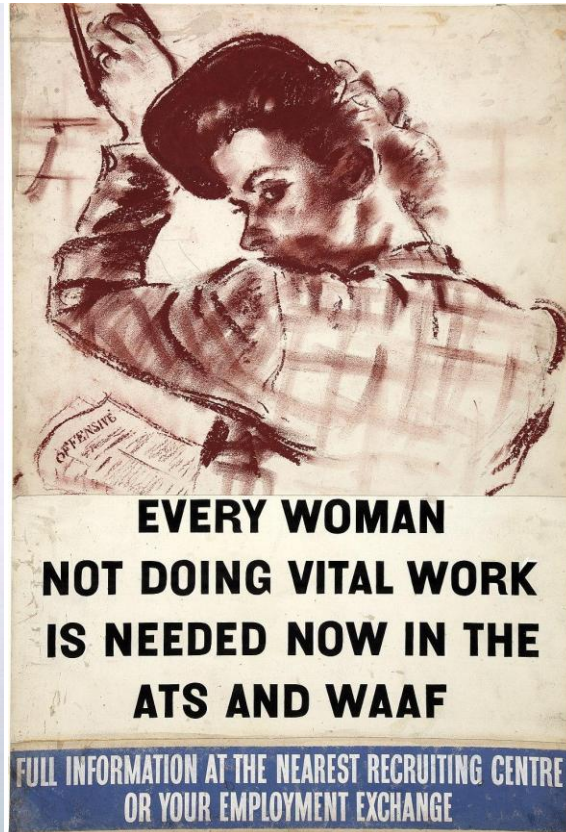
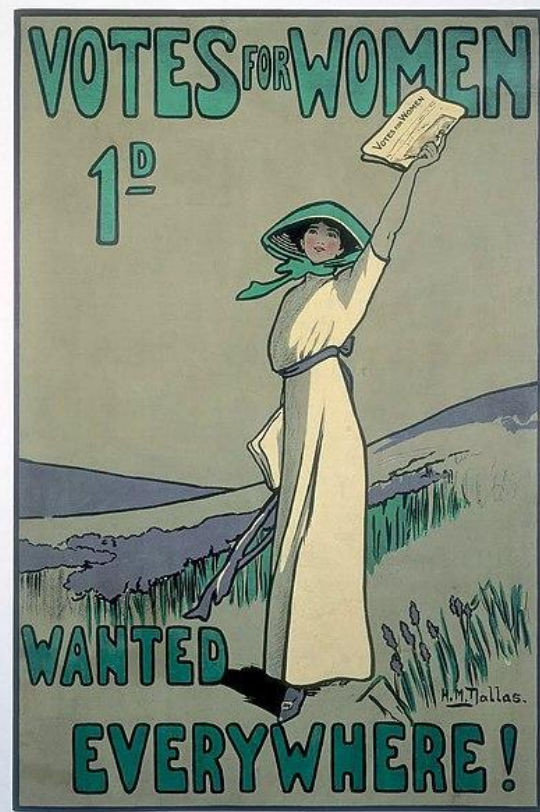
# Summary: The Rise of Postwar Feminism

- In 1970, the first **National Women's Liberation Conference** was held in Oxford to organise a new movement.
- The attendees made four demands:
  - Equal pay
  - Equal educational and job opportunities
  - Free contraception and abortion on demand
  - Free 24-hour nurseries
- This conference would shape the women's rights movement in the next decade.





# Summary: The Rise of Postwar Feminism



How did the activism of British women earlier in the twentieth century lead to the Women's Liberation movement and modern-day feminism?