

1. Title: Contextualizing Marie Olympe de Gouges and *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen*

2. Knowledge and didactic objectives

- To understand that historical actors live in a context that gives them a framework to understand the world and act.
- To gain knowledge about the role of women during the French revolution.

3. Timing

80 minutes

4. Grouping of students

1. Individual
2. Couples
3. Large group

5. Historical thinking skills

Historical empathy

Structure and agency

6. Development or sequence of the activity

1. Students should have knowledge of the early ideals of the French Revolution before they do this activity.
2. The teacher tells about *The Declaration of the Rights of Man* (<https://revolution.chnm.org/d/295>) and *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen* (<https://revolution.chnm.org/d/293>).
3. The teachers tells the students how former actors' act and work and what structures could have inspired Marie Olympe de Gouges to write *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen*.
4. The students work individually with the working sheet and documents.
5. The students compare their findings in groups and try to rank their findings in importance.
6. The teacher collects the students' findings and comments them in the

large group.

7. Assessment techniques and instruments

What to assess:

- Student explains or illustrates Marie Olympe de Gouges in her historical context.
- Student can differ between structures and actors in a historical context.
- Student can see a variety of different kind of influencing factors.

When to assess:

- While the students discuss in pairs.
- During the joint discussion at the end.

How to assess:

- Formative, with the help of feedback during the work.

8. Complementary resources

A working sheet

Documents A-J

9. Annexes

The web resources from the History Lab project about *Women and the change for gender equality in Europe*.

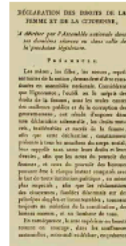
Contextualizing Marie Olympe de Gouges and *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen*

Marie Olympe de Gouges lived in a historical context that gave her inspiration to write *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen* in September 1791. Read document A-J and discuss what inspired her. In the first box you fill examples of historical actors and their actions and work that can have inspired her. In the second box you fill examples of structures and prerequisites that can have inspired and helped her.

1. Actors:



Marie Olympe de Gouges, 1743-1793.



Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen, 1791

2. Structures:

Document A.

Marie Olympe de Gouges

Marie Olympe de Gouges was born as Marie Gouze in Montauban, France in 1748. Her parents Anne Olympe Moisset Gouze, a maidservant, and Pierre Gouze, a butcher, belonged to the petite-bourgeois. She was married young in 1765, 17 year old, to Louis Aubrey. They had a son, Pierre. After just a few years she became a widow. At that time, she adopted her mother's middle name and the more aristocratic-sounding "de Gouges" and moved to Paris as Marie Olympe de Gouges.



In Paris she was economically supported by Jacques Biérix de Rozières, a wealthy merchant until 1788, as his resources declined. In Paris she spent time informing herself on intellectual and political matters and integrating into the Parisian society.



1778 her first work was published. All of her plays and novels carry a theme of indignation at injustice, for example about slavery and woman's role in marriage.

By far her most well-known and distinctly feminist work, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen* (1791) was written as a response to *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, written in 1789 but officially the preamble to the French Constitution in September 1791. Modeled after the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, de Gouge's declaration echoed the same language but extended it to women.



For associating with the Girondists, and criticizing the Jacobins, as the Revolution had new conflicts, Olympe de Gouges was arrested in July 1793, and was a few months later sent to the guillotine.

For more information:
<https://iep.utm.edu/gouges/>

Can you find structural circumstances that could have influenced madame Olympe in the document?

Can you find actors in the document that can have worked as inspiration for madame Olympe de Gouges? In what way?



Can you find actors in the documents that madame Olympe de Gouges can have wanted to rebut? In what way?

Document B

Olympe de Gouges' *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen*

By far de Gouge's most well-known work is the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen* (1791), written as a response to *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. De Gouge's declaration echoed the same language but extended it to women.

Read the three first articles.

1. Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights. Social distinctions may be based only on common utility.
2. The purpose of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of woman and man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and especially resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially in the nation, which is but the reuniting of woman and man. No body and no individual may exercise authority which does not emanate expressly from the nation.





For more information:

<https://revolution.chnm.org/d/293>

Can you find structural circumstances that could have influenced madame Olympe in the document?

Document C

Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, is one of the basic charters of human liberties, containing the principles that inspired the French Revolution. Its 17 articles, adopted 1789 by France's National Assembly, served as the preamble to the Constitution of 1791.

Read the three first articles.

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be based only on common utility.
2. The purpose of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially in the nation. No body and no individual may exercise authority which does not emanate expressly from the nation.

For more information:

<https://revolution.chnm.org/d/295>

Can you find structural circumstances that could have influenced madame Olympe in the document?





Document D

Womens' March on Versailles October 5, 1789

The Women's March to Versailles was one of the earliest and most significant events of the French Revolution. On the morning of October 5, 1789, women were upset in the Paris marketplace over the high price of bread. Revolutionaries in the crowd suggested they head to the palace in Versailles and confront King Louis XVI. They called the king the "Baker" and the queen the "Baker's wife."

After six hours of marching, the crowd arrived at the king's palace in Versailles. The revolutionaries demanded the king and queen to return to Paris with them, and the king agreed.

The march symbolized a new balance of power that displaced the ancient privileged orders of the French nobility and favored the nation's common people, collectively termed the Third Estate.



Painting of the march to Versailles, artist unknown. Public domain.

<https://revolution.chnm.org/files/original/d03d1a219071607aa26f34fa8fbefa82.jpg>

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Document E

Encyclopédie

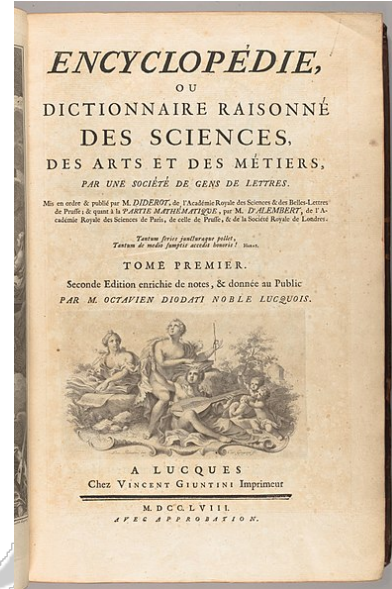
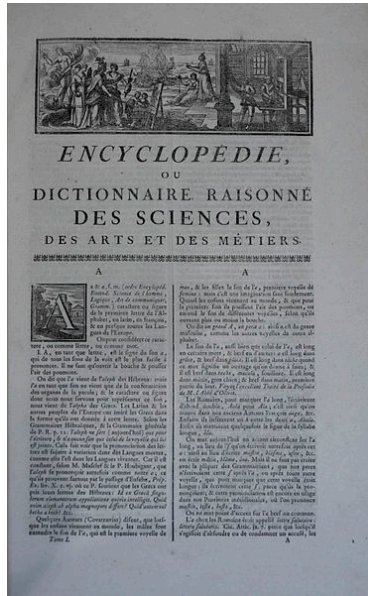
The 18th-century French encyclopedia was one of the chief works of the Philosophes.

Processed text about the encyclopedia from Britannica.com:
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Encyclopedie>

The French encyclopedia was a work of the Philosophes, men dedicated to the advancement of science and secular thought and the new tolerance and open-mindedness of the Enlightenment. The encyclopedia was a literary and philosophical enterprise with profound political, social, and intellectual repercussions in France just prior to the Revolution. Its contributors were called Encyclopédistes.

The encyclopedia was a showcase for representatives of the new schools of thought in all branches of intellectual activity. The work was notable for its attitude of tolerance and liberalism and also for its innovative coverage of the trades and mechanical arts. In its skepticism, its emphasis on science, and its criticism of the abuses perpetrated by contemporary legal, judicial, and clerical institutions, the encyclopedia had widespread

influence as an expression of progressive thought and served in effect as an intellectual prologue to the French Revolution.



For more information:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Encyclopedie>

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Can you find actors in the document that can have worked as inspiration for madame Olympe de Gouges? In what way?

Document F

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

Lady Montagu (1689-1762), was from London but spent a lot of time travelling. She is remembered as a letter writer, but she was also a poet. She is further remembered as an essayist, feminist, and traveler.

- A) A processed excerpt from the text *Woman not inferior to man* from 1739. The text is attributed to Lady Montagu.

However, if truth may be spoken, it is undeniable that the blame lies chiefly and originally in the *Men*. Since if they wou'd but allow *Women* the advantages of education and learning; they would learn to despise those follies and trifles, for which they are at present unjustly despised. They wou'd be enabled to give the *Men*, a better opinion of their capacity of head and disposition of heart: And the *Men*, in proportion to the encrease of their esteem for us, wou'd lessen, and by degrees reform, their ill-treatment of us. The *Women* wou'd make it their study to improve their parts, and with encrease of knowledge they must grow good. Their pleasure and study wou'd be to entertain the *Men* with sense, and to add solidity to their charms. By which means *both* sexes wou'd be happy, and *neither* have cause to blame the *other*. But while they lock up from us all the avenues to knowledge, they cannot without reproach to themselves blame us for any misconduct which ignorance may be mother of: And we cannot but accuse them of the most cruel injustice in disesteeming and ill using us for faults they put out of our power to correct.



Painting of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu from 1725, by Jonathan Richardson the younger. Public Domain.



For more information:

<https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/sophia/woman/woman.html>

B) A short video about Lady Montagu:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbNUG6T-7UA>

Can you find actors in the document that can have worked as inspiration for madame Olympe de Gouges? In what way?

Document G

On the Influence of the Revolution on Women

Louis-Marie Prudhomme founded the *Révolutions of Paris*, one of the best-known radical newspapers during the French Revolution. In this text from 12 February 1791, he responds to women's criticisms of the Revolution and outlines a theory of women's "natural" domesticity.

Excerpts from the article.

Many women have complained to us about the revolution. In numerous letters they report to us that for two years now it seems there is but one sex in France. In the primary assemblies [for voting], in the sections, in the clubs, etc., there is no longer any discussion about women, as if they no longer existed.

[...]

Solemn publicists have seriously proposed taking the road of conciliation; they have maintained that women enjoy the rights of citizenship like men and should have entry



to all public assemblies, even to those that constitute or legislate for the nation. They have claimed that women have the right to speak as much as men.

No doubt, and this power has never been denied them. But nature, from which society should not depart except in spite of itself, has prescribed to each sex its respective functions; a household should never remain deserted for a single instant. When the father of a family leaves to defend or lay claim to the rights of property, security, equality, or liberty in a public assembly, the mother of the family, focused on her domestic duties, must make order and cleanliness, ease and peace reign at home.

More information:

<https://revolution.chnm.org/d/483>



Louis Marie Prudhomme, unknown author.
Public Domain

Can you find actors in the documents that madame Olympe de Gouges can have wanted to rebut? In what way?

Document H

Account of a Session of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women

The Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women was the most famous female-led revolutionary organization during the French Revolution. It was formed May 10, 1793.



It lasted less than five months, but in this brief period of time the Society managed to draw interest within a national political scene and advocate for gender equality.

The document is notes taken by Pierre-Joseph-Alexis Roussel who visited a session, where Olympe de Gouges also took part.

Roussel makes fun of the women's club for discussing the virtues of women as warriors and administrators. This is an excerpt from Roussel's notes from the session.

Sister Monic speaks:

In 1788, during the siege of the Palace, women exposed themselves to the brutality of soldiers hired by the court, in order to hail stones down upon them. At the storming of the Bastille, women familiar only with fireworks exposed themselves to cannon and musket fire on the ramparts to bring ammunition to the assailants. It was a battalion of women, commanded by the brave Reine Audu, who went to seek the despot at Versailles and led him triumphantly back to Paris, after having battled the arms of the gardes-de-corps and made them put them down.

[...]

If women are suited for combat, they are no less suited for government.

For more information:

<https://revolution.chnm.org/d/482>

Can you find actors in the document that can have worked as inspiration for madame Olympe de Gouges? In what way?



Document I

Condorcet, On the Admission of Women to the Rights Of Citizenship (1790)

In a newspaper article Condorcet, a famous French philosopher, argued 1790 that if rights were indeed universal, as the doctrine of natural rights and the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* both seemed to imply, then they must apply to all adults, also women.

An excerpt from the article

For this exclusion not to be an act of tyranny one would have to prove that the natural rights of women are not absolutely the same as those of men or show that they are not capable of exercising them. Now the rights of men follow only from the fact that they are feeling beings, capable of acquiring moral ideas and of reasoning about these ideas. Since women have the same qualities, they necessarily have equal rights. Either no individual in mankind has true rights, or all have the same ones; and whoever votes against the right of another, whatever be his religion, his color, or his sex, has from that moment abjured his own rights.



More information:

<https://revolution.chnm.org/d/475>

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Document J

Article from the *Encyclopedia*: "Woman" (1756)

An excerpt from the article about women in the Encyclopedia published 1756.

Men, by the prerogative of their sex and by the strength of their temperament, are naturally capable of all sorts of uses and commitments, whereas women, either because of the fragility and delicate disposition of their sex are excluded from several roles, and are incapable of certain commitments.

More information:

<https://revolution.chnm.org/d/469>

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