



Topic: Women, Gender and the Fight for Gender Equality in Europe

Description

In this syllabus there are some starter points which could be good for teachers to think about before applying the syllabus in the classroom. The first is to avoid using the term 'women's history'. It can result in women and their roles as historical **agents** being seen as an add-on in history, rather than an integral and natural part of all the **change** processes which schools study. It can, of course, be appropriate to look in detail at women **agents**. Their history has, as a representation, its natural place in the teaching of history. However, it can be hard to apply this perspective exclusively and still be able to give explanations that do justice to the strands of **continuity and change** running throughout history. New perspectives are needed in order to understand the driving forces of history. The syllabus is therefore more in alignment with the history writing that many gender historians now favour. When we, for example, discuss **power**, sexuality and capacity for various individuals to act from a gender perspective, it is important to point out that this is always relational constructions. Changes in the **power** and influence that women have will always bear a relation to men's means to obtain these same things. The concepts **power** and **power structures** are therefore crucial for analysing and understanding the history that is described in the syllabus.

It is also important that the pupils understand that history cannot be understood in terms of simple relationships, between men and women for example. The struggle for justice and equality has created various **power** correlations throughout history, including many cases in which poorer people have come together to challenge wealthy men and women. Understanding such movements involves always putting **agents** and groups in context in the **power hierarchy** that is present in a given situation. Understanding history from the perspective of **intersectionality** makes it easier for pupils to see these movements involving various interests and different forms of injustice, vulnerability and fighting spirit. The concept also gives pupils the possibility to problematise a simplified version of history and thus understand how someone can maintain **power** in one situation but have it taken away in another.

The position that the **agents** occupy within the **power hierarchy** is determined by the underlying economic, legal and ideological **structures**. The latter can include both political and religious ideas as well as inherent doctrines of thought which steer how



a person understands their reality and how they ought to live and act. There were also individual **agents** existing within these **structures** who were influenced by them but also had the possibility to challenge them. Therefore the syllabus also looks at individual **agents** who did challenge the times they lived in. A reciprocal view of the concepts **agency and structure** is therefore important for understanding the view of history presented in the syllabus.

In order that historical **agents** should not appear as irrational or too cautious in their actions and thoughts, it is important that pupils are able to familiarise themselves with the **structures** that these people lived and acted in. In addition, the pupils need to understand the limitations that these **structures** placed on the **agents** in how they were able to affect their situation at a given time in a specific society. We believe that it is important to discuss with the pupils how language affects our understanding of people's thinking throughout history. Pupils need to understand how different concepts have been used with different meanings in different historical contexts as well as how **changes** in the meaning of a concept have led to creating new visions and utopias. One example that the syllabus covers is how women writers during the *Enlightenment* defined the term *gender equality* in a way that is likely to sound foreign to pupils nowadays, but also how the actions of those writers were still able to pave the way for a struggle that has resulted in the definitions that we understand today. Here the pupils can be aided by the concept **historical empathy** to understand the conditions that existed. The **agents'** actions and surroundings will be more comprehensible and accessible to the pupils if they realise that the **agents** were part of a different society, and one that was probably significantly different from their own. **Historical empathy** can be both the hardest and most important concept in the syllabus to work with; hard because becoming familiar with the diverseness within history is demanding work and important because ultimately it can lead to the deeper historical understanding that we all interact in, and are influenced by, a context formed by history.

With such insight it can be easier to see that many of the historical perspectives are characterised either by **continuity** or very gradual **changes**. As such it is usually **changes** that historians analyse in terms of cause and consequence. That which remains largely unchanged is given less attention. In this particular case, a blinkered focus on **continuity** hampers historical understanding in two ways. Firstly, gender history becomes very much a success story, with a gloomy start once upon a time and, thanks to present-day **changes**, a happy ending with an almost total equality of the sexes. Secondly, it is difficult for the pupils to understand why we are still experiencing





inequality of the sexes. The mechanisms and **structures** holding society back from becoming more equal become invisible when we only focus on the **changes**. There is a risk that pupils' understanding of history gets caught up in one dimensional accounts in which differences, nuances and discontinuities disappear. Another danger is that a clear-cut account is created in which women's victories and influence from earlier eras get hidden. One of the ambitions with this syllabus is to problematise such one-dimensional accounts. The two concepts **continuity and change** therefore provide structure for this syllabus.

In the syllabus there are a number of deep dives into history which are meant to enable pupils to see **continuities and change** processes over time. Pupils look in depth at Prehistory, Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the 1700s and the Age of Enlightenment, the 1800s and the 1900s. Selecting which periods in history to include is always problematic and this syllabus is no exception. There is absolutely no intention to cover large parts of gender history with this selection. It is also important to emphasise that the global perspective is not very well represented either. Instead, the ambition is to point to large **changes** and slow **continuous** processes which are at times relevant in large parts of Europe and at times only in a limited area. As described above, concepts provide a starting point for the pupils' understanding of history and can be the glue keeping the different themes, epochs and geographical areas together.

Although European history dominates in the periods selected, there are also in depth looks at other places around the world to provide occasional opportunities for comparisons with the historical development in Europe. In order to create structure in the extensive material we have chosen to focus on several themes that act as a common thread throughout the syllabus. One such theme is the view of gender, reproduction and sexuality. Another theme is linked to food production, earning a living and working life. Working roles have been designated as male and female depending on various factors such as distance between workplace and home, as well as whether equipment and more advanced machinery is needed for carrying out the work. This is connected to views about which roles are considered to be public and private throughout history and how these have become charged with different levels of social status. The selection of material in the syllabus is also intended to open up ways for taking the teaching to a deeper level. Therefore at the end of this information sheet there is a list of websites and resources that can be used in the classroom.

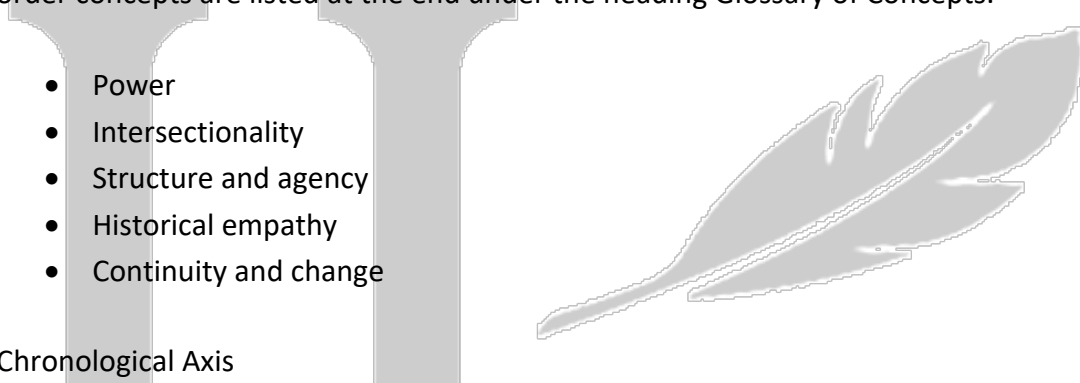
The syllabus is divided up into historical periods in order to create order and structure. This does create a simplified picture of historical **change** processes but also makes it



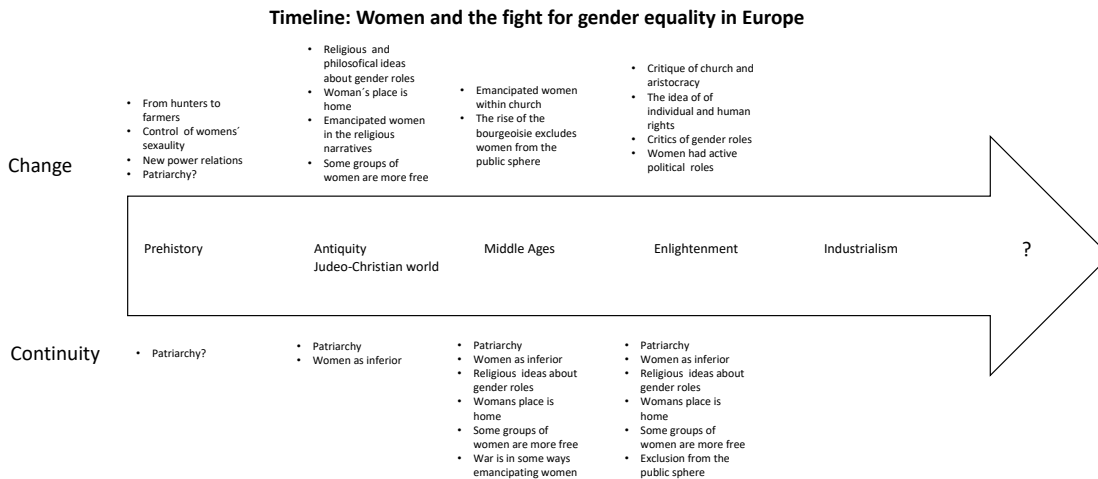
easier for the reader and creates an overview. This means, for example, that certain periods overlap each other thematically. The design and function of the timeline should be viewed in this way too.

Concepts (Second Order)

The **second order concepts** listed below are used consistently throughout the syllabus. In this information sheet, these concepts are in **bold** and the *first order concepts*, which are central to the pupils' understanding of different historical periods and events, are in *italics*. Second order concepts are listed in this section and first order concepts are listed at the end under the heading Glossary of Concepts.



Chronological Axis





Prehistory

In the last few decades, researchers have published theories about the emergence of the *patriarchal structures* which throughout history have shaped and still shape our society today. Older research has claimed that these were a result of social **changes** which occurred in the transition from hunter-gatherer societies to agricultural societies about 12,000 years ago. When the surplus that certain people could gather together started increasing, so too did the need to control how this surplus was distributed across the generation divides. As the men demanded more control over the passing on of possessions and **power** this also led to demands from them to control the lives of the women in general and their sexuality in particular. In other words, a need developed about being certain that a man really was the father of the son who was due to benefit from the inheritance in the future. More recent research has instead emphasised that these processes have varied greatly in different areas and that the **structure** of the gender relations has been much more multifaceted than was previously thought. There is, however, still relative agreement that the *Neolithic Period* brought a change in how work was divided between the sexes and that this led to shifts in status, emergence of new rituals and more of a struggle for **power** and prestige. In the long term this resulted in an institutionalisation of asymmetrical **power relationships** in general. The concept of **intersectionality** is therefore significant in the analysis of the prehistoric cultures too. How the gender relations were influenced is unclear and much-debated but the fact remains that *patriarchal* systems emerged around the world during this time. However, due to the availability of sources, the cause and effect in these **change processes** is harder to prove.

The teaching must, of course, also draw attention to the problems that exist in source criticism about the earliest developments. Our knowledge is based on *archaeological finds*, especially at burial sites. Whether or not there was a small-scale patriarchal society during the hunter-gatherer economy, which preceded the neolithic revolution, is of course impossible to prove. The degree of speculation, and disagreement amongst researchers, should therefore be brought up. It may be appropriate to use the concepts **continuity and change** as a starting point here too.

Antiquity

Antiquity's view of gender roles and gender relations emerged during the end of the fifth century BC when the gender roles in the Greek city-states were beginning to change. During this time it became more and more important to differentiate





between behaviour for men and women, which resulted in limiting women's freedom of movement, for example. The image of the ideal man also **changed**, from the *Dionysian* emotional expressiveness towards the more *Apollonian* restraint, which would take over later on. Expressions of emotion were less desirable and became more and more associated with femininity.

These values were manifested in different ways in different parts of the Ancient Greek world. The differences in gender relations between the city-states of Athens and Sparta are already included in history education in most countries. This theme can however be extended and form the basis for more in depth discussions. Why did the women have more **power** and freedom in Sparta than in Athens? Which similarities and differences can be seen between the role of men in Athens and Sparta? This provides an important opportunity to raise the point discussed above that the view of masculinity is always included within gender history too. In this context it may also be appropriate to use the concept **intersectionality**. What the access to **power** and influence has been like is never just a matter of gender but is also about class and ethnicity, for instance. How **power relations** are constructed depends on complex relationships between these categories. One example that highlights this is the various sexual relationships that the free men in the Greek city-states were involved in. At home, the man had a wife who was often kept shut away in a *gynaikon*. The first law regulating women's freedom of movement is thought to have been drawn up by Solon during the sixth century BC. At the symposia the men held discussions with the highly educated *hetaerae*. Whether these relationships were always or often of a sexual nature as well is contested. In this context it may be appropriate to introduce a female **agent** with **power** such as Aspasia. According to the most widespread views, she was a *hetaera* in a relationship with Perikles. Others believe that they were married but that the writers of history have 'demoted' her to a *hetaera* as a result of her going against the ideas of how an Athenian wife should behave. There were also a great many prostitutes in the Ancient society and female slaves were forced to give sexual favours to their masters. In addition to these relationships, which were 'tainted' by engaging with women, the free men often had relationships with younger men. These relationships were expected to include some form of mentorship, in which the younger man was taught about the Ancient system of society and the political sphere, as well as a sexual relationship which was perceived to be purer than one with a woman. As mentioned earlier, relationships between men were not perceived to be in any kind of opposition to relationships between a man and a woman. It is important to note that women in Egypt and Rome were freer. In Rome women could for example be traders.



The view of gender in Antiquity was characterised by the *one-sex model*, which meant that differences between the genders were understood as grades on a scale. For instance, Aristotle saw men's and women's bodies as adapted to their different duties and not as opposites but as better and worse versions of each other. Anatomically the woman was seen as a man turned inside out. Opinion was divided about whether the woman had any contribution in procreation or was just a vessel for the growing child.

Another perspective that is important to raise during lessons is the **continuous** impact of the *Abrahamic religions* on gender relations in Europe over a long period. Because Judaism, Christianity and Islam are based on the view of the world, human beings and ethical rules contained in the *Old Testament* narratives, these views have great influence on gender constructions and social relations, on many levels. The European societies developed under a strong influence from Christian concepts in particular but Judaism and Islam have also influenced European societies and ways of thinking at different times. It is important that the teaching shows the major similarities between the religions in terms of views about gender relations, sexuality and **allocation of power** between the sexes. The differences and special features of the religions are usually given the most room in teaching and debate otherwise. We believe it is important that the pupils are given the opportunity to do a more in-depth analysis of the religious accounts and the influence these have on views about women, gender relations and sexuality. It is also important in this context to highlight and discuss how the **power** and values of the religious organisations have affected the lives of the LGBT population throughout history.

Be careful, however, to avoid getting caught up in anachronistic narratives based on our contemporary view that sexuality is part of a person's identity. Instead, it is important to highlight that sexual expression was regarded as one-off or repeated actions which may or may not have been categorised as sin in relation to a religious, social or cultural system of rules. This is an opportunity that could lend itself to a discussion about **historical empathy** and how this concept differs from the everyday definitions of 'empathy' and 'sympathy'. How can we comprehend how people from earlier times have looked at existential questions? How can we make sure teaching of history has relevance when our starting point is present-day issues, even if we don't assign our contemporary mindset to people from the past?

The theme can begin with the Christian narrative of creation and the accounts of how the Fall came to be associated with sexuality in the book of *Genesis*. The relationship





between knowledge, the actions of women, sexuality and God’s wrath can be a starting point for discussions on how views about gender and sexuality are constructed. One can here pay attention to the fact that there are two narratives of creation in the *Old Testament*. In the one where Eve is not created from Adam’s rib the relation between men and women is more equal. Another narrative that can generate discussion and class work is in *Genesis 18:16–19:29*. The account of how Lot was willing to sacrifice his daughters in order to save his male guests from being raped by the Sodomites has created conceptions about female inferiority as well as influencing how the church has looked upon homosexual acts. In this context it can be beneficial to point out elements of **continuity** and of **change** up until the present. This brings up the important differences that have existed since the end of the 1800s about homosexuality being seen as something that is connected to a person’s identity, as in what a person is rather than what a person does.

In this context it may be worth introducing Sappho and the importance she has been ascribed as a symbol for lesbian love. However, availability of sources about Sappho’s life and love life presents problems. How much are the accounts about her an embodiment of subsequent exotification, sexual fantasies or, in more recent times, an understandable need from the LGBT community to embrace historical figures who seem to be important from a perspective of identity. There is a fine line here between avoiding anachronisms yet not depriving people of important opportunities for historical identification. We believe that the solution here is to initiate this type of discussion with the pupils. What have we to gain and lose by highlighting different historical accounts? How can we understand the different values and norms that emerge in the accounts during different periods? Again, this is related to the central discussion about the main purpose of the subject of history.

The Christian values were both challenged and reinforced by the way of thinking that dominated in the Ancient societies where Christianity emerged. It included how relationships between men and women were viewed as well as sexuality and reproduction. The views that the *Church Fathers* had about sexuality, reproduction and procreation came to include many features of the Greek philosophers’ beliefs and where these lines of thought met was characterised by both **continuity** and **change**.

The second theme that should be looked at the position of women in Rome and the view of women that dominated during the infancy of the *early church*, when women played an active part in church work and in spreading the Christian gospel. Adultery committed by husbands was prohibited in Christianity, for instance, which could give





women the opportunity to question the patriarchal double standards. Other important themes when describing the construction of European gender relations are the processes involved in the *canonisation* of the texts for the *New Testament*, how the early church was organised, the establishment of the belief systems as well as looking at who was and wasn't allowed room in these processes. It may be useful to look here at Paul's impact on the view of the relationship between the sexes in Christianity and how it came to reinforce subordination of women. The controversial bible passage below should be discussed to give historical context to the environment it originated in. "As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disrespectful for a woman to speak in the church." (NIV, 1 Cor. 14:33–35) Paul's more ascetical view of sexuality, in comparison to Jesus, and its impact on the Christian values can also be addressed. There have been tendencies to diminish the importance of women in the early Christian church in other ways too. There are many notable women named in the Gospels and in Paul's letters but traditional theology has reduced the importance of these women or, on occasion, even translated female names as male names when behaviours have gone against the theologians' own ideas about gender roles (Olaison, 2018. p.36).

The connection between the Jewish ideas about gender, the Greek *Neoplatonism* and the ideas that grew within the *early church* were articulated and institutionalised through the position taken by the *Church Fathers* during the first five hundred years AD. It is during this time that the idealistic relationships between men and women start to be justified by accounts about Adam and Eve and the Fall. Origenes and Chrysostom thought, for instance, that sexuality started at and because of the Fall and that Adam and Eve had been innocent up until then. In general, it can be said that the view of sexuality within the Christian church became stricter during late Antiquity and diverged progressively further away from the more lenient Judaic view.

Middle Ages to 1700s

The period from the Middle Ages to 1700 covers approximately 1100 years and exhibits examples of both **continuity** and **change** in the private and public role of women. Pupils need help here as well to understand how the view of men and women in a certain period and place influenced how society came to be shaped and how much control individuals had over their own lives.





Compared to previous epochs, source availability generally improves from 1500 onwards because the printing press made it possible to produce and circulate more documents. These were mostly church texts but also state decrees and documents which increased in number during *absolutism* during the 1600s. Another important source of knowledge about the mindset in this period is paintings. For example, during the Renaissance, the art of portraiture showed clearly that the individual was taking an increasingly central place. Over time, many motifs became more *secularised* and portrayed the everyday and work lives of people.

Christianity and the church as an institution remained one of the most important **continuous** elements in the history of Europe during this period. The church shaped the view of the family and of what was considered male and female. These views didn't **change** significantly during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age, but there are a couple of **changes** in how marriage and family were viewed, which affected the gender roles. Up until the 1500s, the church declared that marriage was only binding if there was an agreement between the spouses, although many parents did influence their child's choice of husband or wife. At the same time, an opinion started to form amongst priests that marriage was one of the *sacraments* and thus a holy covenant with God, which meant that marriages became hard to dissolve and premarital relations became illegal. How strictly these rules were observed depended on where in Europe a person lived; in eastern Europe where the Orthodox Church had most influence, divorce was allowed for adultery and infertility, for instance, and in the places which came to be in the Ottoman Empire, marriage and family life were regulated by Muslim law. Divorce could be legal within the protestant church in Europe if the cause was infidelity, even from the man. Within the catholic church divorce was illegal. In Judaism, marriage was also seen as holy but should also be based on love and friendship. Divorce was allowed if it transpired that the spouses were not meant for each other. In the same way that there were differences in how sexuality was viewed in Christianity and Judaism during late Antiquity, there were differences in how the foundations of marriage were viewed in the Middle Ages. The norms and rules about marriage which were shaped primarily by the Christian church were passed on to the *colonies* during the 1500s, which brought radical **changes** to the way the colonised people lived. Polygamy was forbidden, for example, but there were other aspects that had an impact as well. The infectious diseases that Europeans brought with them to South and North America led to a high mortality rate among the indigenous peoples resulting in fragmented families.





Family models in the south and north of Europe had distinct differences. In the south, people got married as teenagers and lived together with the parents of one of the spouses. In the north, people got married much later, when they were 25–30 years old, a model that can be found until the 1800s. Newly married couples moved into their own dwelling, where they lived with their children, any servants they may have had and sometimes an elderly parent. The Nordic family model is seen as unique compared to other parts of the world. The Roman church's policy of compulsory celibacy for priests is another pattern of life that, even if not unique, is certainly unusual, when looking at Europe as a whole. Before the reformation, and also after in the catholic world, monastic life was an alternative to marriage for many women. In the monastery they could get an education and even be devoted to other things. By contrast, the Protestant church proclaimed that everyone must start families, which led to unmarried individuals being looked at with suspicion. Despite this about ten per cent were unmarried in the protestant Europe, while only a few per cent in the catholic. Allowing pupils to study family constellations, gender roles within the family and the reasons presents opportunities for comparing different periods and places as well as practice in **historical empathy**. Most children nowadays, just like the children before them, have experience of living in some sort of family constellation and so too the norms and values surrounding the concept of 'family'.

A woman in the Middle Ages or Early Modern Age had very limited influence over her own life but some women could at certain times gain greater **power** and authority which gave them greater freedom. This generally happened during times of war when men were gone for long periods of time or once the women became widows. The Swedish historian Dick Harrison states that women with **power** – queens and noblewomen – in the Nordic countries during the late Middle Ages had greater influence than women in similar roles during the 1700s and 1800s. In particular he points to Queen Margaret of Denmark, Norway and Sweden and the Norwegian-Swedish duchess Ingeborg who was active in politics at national and county level. Queen Margaret was never given the title of queen during her lifetime because it was synonymous with being the wife of the king, not a woman regent. Instead, she was proclaimed Margaret "Sovereign Lady and Rightful Ruler" as the widow of the Norwegian king Haakon. In other European countries during the Middle Ages, it was not unusual for women to become *feudal lords* when land was divided up between or within families. They could have abbatial lands too. Those women who inherited land or acquired land through their position as *abbess* belonged exclusively to the upper classes. These examples of women with tangible power may be interesting to study from a language/concept perspective, possibly by examining the titles men and



women had, how titles could reinforce or challenge the gender order and how they **changed** over time in different ways. Later on we will see that queens who reigned two to three hundred years after Margaret, in the 1500s and 1600s, bore the title of queen.

As the *Feudal System* was phased out more and more in western Europe during the late Middle Ages, the **power** of the kings was strengthened, especially in defence and finance. The **change** required a larger and more systematic administration in order to organise and collect taxes to finance armies and to establish greater states. A new economic system was introduced at the same time called *Merchant Capitalism* which, in contrast to the feudal economy, was based on money. Trade within and outside of Europe increased now too. These two **changes** reinforced each other and a new class in society called the *bourgeoisie* emerged. The majority of men in the *bourgeoisie* worked in trade and administration while others were doctors and lawyers. Women were not allowed into any of these professions which meant that the **power** and public offices that women in the upper classes of society could hold during the Middle Ages disappeared along with Feudalism.

During the *Renaissance*, kings and court administrators appointed male public officials from the *bourgeoisie* based on their qualifications rather than through inherited rights as was done in the Middle Ages. Therefore, the ability of women in the *aristocracy* to exercise **power** also disappeared and their primary role during the *Renaissance* was that of wife or mistress. Of course some women could gain political **power** indirectly through their husbands but in public life this possibility was greatly restricted. There were exceptions however. The British queen Elizabeth I, who ascended the throne in 1558 at the age of 25 was one of Europe's most renowned regents. She influenced European history in several ways by successfully opposing Catholic Spain and refusing to marry for political reasons, even though her suitors included European princes and kings, including Sweden's future king Erik XIV. Elizabeth shared the same way of thinking as the Swedish Queen Christina a hundred years later in that she knew she would have a lot less **political power** if she got married.

Another reason why inequality in the upper classes increased during the *Renaissance* was that the society and ideals of the Antiquity Age became the model within the ruling and intellectual classes in the *Renaissance*. No thought was given to increasing the influence of women but rather the opposite. Within the nobility and bourgeoisie, especially in Italy, there were however a number of young women who were able to get an education and used their knowledge to write poetry, translate and copy old



texts. An interesting difference between the writers of the time was that the women wrote mainly about worldly themes while the men produced predominantly religious texts. Few of the women became acknowledged writers and when they got married or entered a convent they stopped writing. One recognised *renaissance* writer is Christine de Pizan, who wrote the feminist work *The Book of the City of Ladies* at the beginning of the 1400s. She became a writer when her husband died and she became forced to provide for her family.

However, the main majority of women – farmers and city dwellers – lived under completely different conditions in which family and gathering food were the most important duties. The latter could provide a certain margin for manoeuvre and influence for women in the lower classes. Responsibility for food supplies meant that women had to leave their homes regularly to go to markets where they could bargain and protest collectively about high bread prices. Rioting was not unusual but rarely led to punishment because the actions of the women were seen as them taking responsibility for the family's survival. The struggle of women for bread and other necessities is a common theme throughout history. Further on in the syllabus there are examples of war widows being responsible for farms and family and of women who marched to the Palace of Versailles to protest to the king that bread was scarce. Highlighting the common forces that drove women to want **change** during different periods and also adding in a class perspective in the lessons can help the pupils to understand what the struggle could lead to and how long it took before a **change** came.

If we widen our perspective and study the economic development during this time, a long period of **continuity** emerges when looking at ways of making a living. During the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age, more than 90% of the people in Europe farmed land, grew food and stored crops for their own needs and perhaps also for selling. With the invention of the plough during the Prehistoric Age, crops were bigger but the use of implements also led to a clearer division between male and female duties. Ploughing was done by the men and the women did more and more of the work closer to home: cooking, caring for children and the elderly, handicrafts and so on. Because women's duties had required fewer material resources than work in the fields, their work had lower status. It is also important to note the effect land ownership had when studying how gender roles are formed and maintained. On the one hand, possession of land provided an income which, at best, generated a profit and also came to signify the difference between rich and poor. On the other hand, it had a legal factor that reinforced the difference between daughters and sons. In



general, it was usually the boys who came into an inheritance and girls came after. One of the few ways in which women could become land owners was to become the widow of a man who owned land.

What was considered male and female was also affected by other materialities such as *long-distance trade*, which involved transportation of valuable and heavy goods over long distances, from Europe to Asia and vice versa. Because women didn't generally produce goods for trade or work far from home, it was unthinkable that they would engage in *long-distance trading*. Again, we see a gender divide in society into a public sphere for men and a private sphere for women. As we have seen, the divide can be traced back to Prehistory and Antiquity. At the same time it is important to point out cultures that exhibit other patterns. In west Africa during the Early Modern Age, for example, women were allowed to engage in trade involving long journeys and contact with European merchants. So although the geographical distance between southern Europe and north west Africa wasn't so great, living conditions between the two could differ quite substantially.

The slow-moving economic and social **structures** that are involved here have had a substantial impact on people and society, stretching almost to the present-day. It took until 2008 before the number of people living in the countryside and earning a living from agriculture, was surpassed for the first time by the number of people living in cities. The aspects described above can provide the foundation for lessons about how financial and material conditions shape views about gender and how these views have had, and continue to have, a real impact on the lives of adults and children.

Merchant Capitalism became more and more prominent during the 1400s and the number of people who earned a living from trade and manufacture continued to grow. In the beginning, manufacture took place as *cottage industries* in homes but during the 1700s *paid labour* in newly-built factories became more common. As *capitalism* gained ground as the economic system, *corporations* and *guilds* were developed in order to increase the skills of craftspeople and to reduce competition. The members of the *corporations* were almost exclusively men despite the fact that many women worked in the textiles industry and trading, for example. A woman's wage was roughly half of a man's wage and this could attract employers to employ women instead of men. With regard to the gender principles of the guilds, there were some exceptions. In the midwifery guild men could for example not access.



The *industrialisation* did not lead to any fundamental **changes** in gender roles even though the process in itself is seen to be one of the most crucial in the history of humankind. For factory owners, employing women continued to benefit them financially, especially in the textiles industry. The employees in heavy industries were mostly men. This wasn't solely because the work was de facto heavy but because it was done with the help of big machines. Only men were allowed to operate them. Women's work was done mostly by hand or with smaller implements such as weaving looms. Thus there is a clear link between gender and division of work, which even today sustains the differences in status between what is seen as typical professions for men and women.

The arena where women were most active was in the home but there were boundaries here as well for what they could do. It went without saying that the husband was the guardian of his wife's and children's lives but neighbours and relatives could also exert some control. It is likely that most women lived in the ways expected of them and unfortunately we therefore know very little about them. Those with ordinary lives don't generally leave source material behind. However, we do know more about women who were not considered to have followed the norms and rules. These women were quite frequently the subject of rumours, prosecution and punishment which was documented by the church or the legal system. Extensive *witch hunts* are an important example of how such rumours could have terrible consequences for individual women and, in parts of Europe, for individual men too. The witch hunts began in several places in Europe during the 1450s but they reached their height at the end of the 1500s and early 1600s. Both the Roman and Protestant churches spread ideas about women's complicity with the devil, but the persecution was especially prominent in the Protestant north and mid Europe, where 50–100,000 people were executed for witchcraft, 80% of whom were women. Women in North America were also affected after the migration from Europe during the 1600s and 1700s.

The persecution reached its peak in Sweden during the latter part of the Great Power Period, between 1668 and 1676, after a long period of war. According to some historians, the explanation is that the position of women was stronger when the men were away from home for long periods. Known as soldiers' widows, there were many women running farms, businesses and families without any support from a grown man and this could make men in their vicinity feel threatened and suspicious. For these men, accusations of witchcraft was a simple way to get rid of the threat. However, there were several examples of women accusing other women of being





witches. In these cases, the charges stemmed from disputes and rumours about the accused possessing supernatural powers which had led to evil deeds. It was also common that children, after being bribed by the inquisitors, would testify that women had abducted children or had dealings with the devil. The accused women might even have been the child's own mother. Especially poorer, older women were affected. Later on, the witchcraft commissions, priests and doctors began to question the reliability of the witnesses' testimonies and argued that the persecution should stop. And this is also what suddenly happened. Though there were some isolated incidents up until the middle of the 1800s in Sweden.

There are plenty of sources available from witch trials and dogmatic writings about witchcraft. Though many of the younger women who were accused of witchcraft were named in the trial records it is much harder to find the names of the older women in the source material. Elin from Horsnäs in southern Sweden was one of the young women accused of being a witch several times and she was subjected to severe torture during her trials. Elin was executed in the end, like many of her fellow sisters. With some adjustments, this type of source material can definitely be used in teaching about gender history and as a comparison to present-day theories about conspiracies and scapegoats. The sources are especially useful as teaching materials since they highlight individual **agents**, perpetrators and victims that can be clearly linked to structural factors such as gender, economy and religion. Source material about people who are mentioned by name, such as Elin from Horsnäs, can be used in lessons designed to give pupils practice in **historical empathy** and source criticism. The material can also provide problematisations of the idea that war automatically brings greater freedoms for women.

During the late 1600s, the life expectancy of a Swedish officer was 44 years, which meant that the number of war widows kept rising. During the Northern wars at the beginning of the 1700s, women were running almost 50% of Sweden's farms. In one way this meant a period of independence and freedom but for many women life became more dangerous and unsettling. Without a husband present they, for example, were living under the constant threat of rape. Sexual relations outside of marriage had become an even greater sin after the Reformation and could lead to severe punishments for both parties if there were witnesses. Without witnesses there was a big risk that a married woman would be convicted of being a whore and consequently risked the death penalty, even though she had been raped. Women of higher status were slightly safer because they were surrounded by servants. Once



again this proves the importance of applying an **intersectional** perspective when we want to discover and understand the living conditions of men and women in history.

1700s and the Enlightenment

In the western accounts of history, the *Age of Enlightenment*, the French Revolution and the American Revolution all stand for reason, liberty and the fight for human rights. This interpretation of historical events is a given in history education in schools. The *Age of Revolution*, which began in 1776 in the British colonies in America and ended in 1848 with discontent across Europe, shook the political order as well as the balance between the sexes. Within the general hope for justice and putting an end to the old aristocratic **structure** there was also an awakening of hope, vision and demand for justice for the women. It was to become a time of **change** in traditional and modern thought competed and hopes for peace coexisted alongside hate and warmongering. And there would be a bitter struggle about the term *citizen*: who would be accepted and what would be included in the rights of *citizens*.

During the second half of the 1700s, the *Age of Enlightenment*, as it came to be known, was critical of the authoritarian and religious society of old. Human reason, rather than the divine will, should guide society and development. Thoughts were born about individuality and accompanying rights for life, freedom and property. It is worth noting that, in the beginning, these ideas circulated within a very limited group of people in western Europe. The majority of farmers and peasants didn't know about the wave of *Enlightenment* until much later. As we have already seen, it is important to look at the effect of the **changes** from the perspective of class and estate.

Many of the political and philosophical texts which were written during this time addressed the relationship between the sexes as well as the position of women and what was interpreted to be male and female. There were varying thoughts about what women could do and what their role they should adopt, despite the reason-based approach. Progressive thoughts about complete equality shared space with opinions that a woman was a different type of human with other duties in society than the men had. Thus it is possible to discern that the male and female roles cemented in Antiquity and the Early Modern societies were being challenged here. During the 1700s there were also varying opinions about what rights the different estates should have and about the differences between women and men within and between different estates. By applying **historical empathy** and an **intersectional perspective**,





pupils can try to understand how opinions about gender roles, that we would identify as old-fashioned and irrational, could share space with the progressive ideas that we now embrace. Applying **historical empathy** also enables the pupils to put texts and their authors into a historical context regulated by **structural** terms, which can mean that pupils identify features of **continuity** and **change** over time.

In his work *De l'esprit des lois (The Spirit of the Laws)* Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu wrote about the nature of **power** and women's inferior position within the family. He believed that the women in a civilised society should be treated with honour and respect because they were valuable members of society. There was, however, no mention that a woman should have political rights or hold any public positions in society. It was as a family member that the women served an important cultural role and in this role she would be guaranteed certain rights. Women in the public eye were described instead as a threat and as a symptom of a society's moral decline, identical to the views that had been circulating since Antiquity. Nor did Jean-Jacques Rousseau believe that the women should have a place in the public political sphere. In *Du contrat social (The Social Contract)* his belief was that the state should protect the freedom and rights of individuals but this didn't mean that women should have political power. His well-known book *Émile (On Education)* contains his views about raising children. He believed that boys and girls should be raised differently as preparation for the gender roles they were going to have. Boys should be prepared for a life in the public eye and girls prepared for taking care of a home, husband and children. Women and men were described as being different and destined for different roles in society.

These divisions between individual and political rights as well as between male and female had influence on the interpretation and implementation of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* from 1789 and the new constitution from 1791. The active *citizen*, understood to be a tax-paying man, gained both political and individual rights, whereas the passive *citizen*, that is any woman, child or man who didn't pay tax, only gained the rights for individuals. And thus the idea of gender became entwined with *citizenship*. The political public sphere became masculine and the private sphere became feminine. Connected to this was the view of the male intellect as reasonable, rational and logical while the woman was viewed as emotional and caring.

There were, however, some who reacted to the dividing up the intellectual functions of the sexes. As early as 1739 Mary Wortley Montague had written a text stating that





a woman was not worth less than a man. She believed that if only women were given the same opportunities for education and careers, then they would be able to do exactly the same things as the men. The text reached a wide audience and was translated into French and other languages.

It was the British writer and philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft who had the biggest impact with her progressive texts. She was in France in person during the revolution and was bitter about women not having any real political power. So she wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. In the book, Wollstonecraft demanded the same rights, be it financial, legal or political, for women and for men. In contrast to Rousseau, she believed that boys and girls should be raised the same way so that women wouldn't be at a disadvantage later on. She also indicated that women should be able to enter into government. Alongside these progressive ideas, Wollstonecraft defined a woman's place as in the home. She thus mixed clear ideals of gender equality with ideas that seem outmoded nowadays. It is also interesting that Wollstonecraft likened the situation of women to that of the working classes and believed that both faced the same **powerlessness**.

Probably the most radical text was written by Marie Gouze who wrote under the pseudonym Olympe de Gouges. Two years after the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* was adopted by the *National Assembly*, she wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*, as a protest at women not having the same rights as men and not being included as active *citizens*. The pamphlet mirrored the seventeen articles of the original declaration and was directed at both men and women. The text promoted real *meritocracy* but at the same time de Gouges believed that women possessed unique qualities that were needed in the political sphere. In this way, gender was of consequence to de Gouges but she did not define gender equality in the same way we use the term nowadays. On 3 November 1793 de Gouges was sent to the guillotine having been accused of forgetting the virtues belonging to her sex. Her thoughts and life, like Wollstonecraft's, can be used to illustrate their symbolic power in *uses of history* within contemporary feminism even though their views of gender equality were quite different.

The stages of the French Revolution have been categorised by historians in many different ways. It often depends on how questions are formulated or by the area of interest when approaching history. Gender historians often distinguish between an early optimism and a later stagnation. During the first years of the revolution, from 1789 to 1793, there was a sense of there being new opportunities for equality



between the sexes. From 1794 to 1795 the rights of women and their place in the public eye were disputed more and more. When Napoleon came to power, all hope of political rights and equality for all citizens disappeared completely. By categorising the French Revolution in this way, the pupils can examine the **power** perspective as well as similarities and differences. What did the struggle for **power** look like initially and also later on? How did the transition of **power** during the different stages influence views on women as fellow revolutionaries and as guarantors for the preservation of the new society?

Initially, the driving force behind the revolution was the experiences and feelings of the women in the Third Estate; hunger, anger and hopes of bread and lower taxes. These problems and hopes were experienced by women as well as men and many historians have pointed out the important, active and public role of the women in the initial stage of the revolution. In the syllabus there are several descriptions of how poor women have dealt with and protested against similar issues in similar ways to the women of France in the 1700s. Looking at it from a longer-term perspective, it is clear that women have regularly broken with an established gender order. The Women's March on Versailles on 5–6 October 1789 played a large part in the introduction of the first liberal reforms and a new constitution. That women, and from the Third Estate at that, took such a clearly political initiative horrified many. Edmund Burke, a contemporary of the time, described, for example, wild, yelling, hysterical and dancing women when he wrote condemning the event. There are also many satirical cartoons from the time portraying wild and promiscuous women in the march. The political woman of the Third Estate was seen as an anomaly by many. Nevertheless, the women were lauded as they returned to Paris. Songs were written about the heroines of the revolution that had kidnapped the king. The women also marched during festivals with the men who had stormed the Bastille the same year. Female *sans-culottes* played a big role in the public sphere and participated in various demonstrations and assemblies and thus symbolised the fair revolution. They also called themselves *citizens (citoyenne)*, which was a very progressive move and upset many. They never demanded the right to vote, however, since they viewed this as belonging to the male sphere. Thus, radical ideas about women's liberation were mixed with traditional views about male and female, **continuity and change**.

Bourgeoisie women opened *salons* for political discussions and women's voting rights were even discussed in a few. Many educated women also wrote books and pamphlets under pseudonyms. Out of this came more distinct ideas that a woman should be seen as an active *citizen* and also as someone belonging to the political





sphere. The concept **intersectionality** can help pupils here to understand how different groups of women chose to get involved in the revolution and to identify which issues were the most important to them.

Between 1790 and 1793, several reforms were brought in which reinforced a woman's legal position within the family and marriage, which made it possible to get divorced and have a civil wedding ceremony, for instance. In this way it can be perceived that this period was a success for equality for certain groups of women. However, in 1793 there were tensions between various groups of women with different interests. Issues such as hunger and food were more pressing than the fight for rights for certain women. There was also a complex **power** struggle going on between those with different interests, especially between the National Convention and the *sans-culottes*. In this **power** struggle, the radical women's organisations were seen as the easiest target and the various women's groups were a target in order to suppress radical behaviour. *The National Convention*, with André Amar taking the lead, decided to ban female clubs and organisations. The reason given was that a woman's role ought to be supporting the family and *citizenship* thus became even more closely associated with masculinity. Women had taken part in violent riots and made radical demands on several occasions during the revolution. The murder of Jean-Paul Marat by Charlotte Corday is one example. In 1795, women were banned from attending public meetings and public gatherings of more than five women were not allowed. At first the reason given was that many women had been too radical in their revolutionary behaviour but it soon came to be gender itself that was the focus in the debate about rights for women. The women were no longer called *citoyenne* but Mrs or Miss instead, which further conveyed that the woman belonged to the man and had the household as their primary domain.

The *Code Civil (Civic Code)* law which was brought in in 1804, after Napoleon came to power, brought to an end the society which was based on estates and privilege. The women also lost their remaining rights which the revolution had initially brought about. The law reverted back to *Roman law* in which women were seen as minors and without rights outside of the family. The main principle was that it was the man's duty to protect the woman and the woman's duty was to obey the man. This patriarchal stance spread in part to the countries that France conquered during the *Napoleonic Wars*.

Despite how it ended, the French Revolution had opened up the possibility to understand and grasp the relationship between men and women in a different way





from the patriarchal way. Women had taken part in the revolution as *citizens*. They didn't gain the right to take part in the public sphere so they demanded it. The pupils can see this if they use the concepts **continuity** and **change**.

1800s

The 1800s in Europe was a century in which living conditions **changed** radically for many groups of the population. Thoughts which had emerged in the intellectual circles of the Enlightenment during the 1700s now spread to a wider stratum of the population. There was also an industrial revolution happening in parts of Europe which radically reshaped family relations as well as *production and consumption practices*. A large *population increase* in northern Europe, as well as redistribution of lands through *land reforms*, forced people into seeking a living in industries within cities, mills or on the other side of the Atlantic. This *migration* dislodged previous *gender contracts* concerning work duties, starting families and the **balance of power**. Relocation of people on what was previously an unthinkable scale was now possible thanks to new modes of transportation. For many people, the rural social unit of production, consumption and socialisation was replaced by a life in which work and education took place outside of the home. All of these led to exchanges of culture and views which smashed the old ways of thinking in various ways. However, these **changes** occurred at different times and in different ways in separate parts of Europe. It is therefore hard to apply a 'European perspective' on these **processes of change**. In certain parts of Europe, such as Poland and Russia, the century was dominated by a great **continuity** until its final years whereas people in other areas experienced more dramatic **changes** even at the beginning or middle of the 1800s. Therefore there is no choice but to have examples that represent a limited geographical, cultural and/or socioeconomic area. However, these variations can also provide a useful launch pad for teaching the pupils that historical **processes of change** must always be contextualised and that generalisations must be problematised at every turn.

Women intellectuals during the 1800s came to expand on the views that the philosophers and writers of the *Enlightenment* shared about of the freedom of the individual. One such thinker was Harriet Taylor Mill who wrote the ground-breaking work *On Liberty* with her husband John Stuart Mill. She put forward the idea, revolutionary at the time, that women should get an education for their own sakes, not just to become a more interesting wife. The woman should not have to choose between a career and family either. In an essay from the 1830s, she took these ideas even further and stated that all legislation regulating marriage should be done away



with and that the woman should have sole responsibility for the children. She is also a prominent example of how nineteenth century women intellectuals often had to stay in the background with regard to their husbands. Those women who defied the existing ideals for women were suppressed. It would take until the end of the century before women had the opportunity to pursue the fight for equal rights to any great degree.

The 1800s were the golden age of the bourgeoisie too, which also affected the gender relations. The view of the public man and the private woman was spread to larger groups within the growing middle class. The husband should provide for and represent the family in society while the virtuous wife should take care of the family and home, away from the public gaze. Even though this is a description of the gender roles in a new class in society, we still recognise the divide into public male sphere and private female sphere that had existed since Antiquity. A patriarchal, bourgeoisie intellectual construct emerged about how the family should be organised as a microcosm mirroring the macrocosm of society, like a body in which the various parts had differing tasks. This type of clear divide between male and female is illustrated by the Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen in his well-known play *Et dukkehjem* (*A Doll's House*) from 1879. The healthy, fertile body of a woman also came to represent the middle class woman and contrasted with the licentious, more immoral upper and lower class woman. Both the nobility and the working class would therefore become emblems of a threatening immorality that could upset the order of society.

In northern Europe a *marriage pattern* emerged in which middle class men delayed marriage because it often took them decades to save up enough money to afford a respectable home. The wife was consequently often several decades younger than her husband. Many middle class women remained unmarried, which led to large groups of women having no income. Nor did they have any education that prepared them practically for business or occupations. The problem of such women being a 'burden on their brothers' would eventually lead to several reforms and changes in the law which improved conditions for middle class women and their ability to support themselves. The emergence of occupations such as village school teachers, nurses and telephone operators was partly as a result of these circumstances. Delaying marriage was also one of the factors behind the large increase in prostitution in the larger cities. The view of how responsibility was divided between men and women can be seen in the choice of words. "Women spread venereal diseases and men got them." Prostitution was seen as problematic because of the risk to the honourable wives at home when the men brought home diseases. So the solution to





this became *regulationism* which forced prostitutes to have regular medical examinations. The vulnerable position of the prostitutes did not prompt any great debate in society however. Nor was the role of men in these transactions discussed. It was seen instead as an undeniable fact that men could not be held responsible for deeds that their natural urges drove them to. Here we have an example of how an **intersectional** perspective could qualify the teaching and how discussions about conditions for women and *masculinity norms* could be beneficial.

Another archetypal nineteenth century woman was the worn-out factory worker providing cheap labour in the expanding industrial society. Working class women had, of course, always worked and supported themselves and their families in various ways but during the industrialisation and urbanisation of the 1800s, they came to be a more visible category in society. The rules governing marriage and childbirth, which were so rigid for middle class women, were reinterpreted by working class women. Many working class women in Sweden rejected marriage, for example, because until 1874 a husband had the wife's income at his disposal and was, until 1921, also her guardian. Instead, they made sure they had children as cohabitants and the women could thus maintain a certain amount of freedom. In Sweden there is a term 'Stockholm marriage' (*Stockholmsäktenskap*) because more than 40% of the children born in Stockholm during the 1840s were illegitimate.

The women were also to be excluded from the growing labour movement. The first Social Democrats and labour unions prioritised better conditions for men and viewed women workers almost as a threat that caused wage cutting. Low wages for women were a reality not only in the 1700s during the first stage of industrialisation but also during the 1800s. The working class man's goal was to copy the middle class family model and strive for a wage that was enough to support the whole family. This was often an impossibility and in reality it was the wife's *piece work* from home, childminding and lodgers that was a necessity to make the family's finances work. It wasn't until the early part of the 1900s that women's demands were heard within the labour movement. As recently as the economic crisis of the 1930s, women were being fired with the approval of the labour movement in order to improve the job market for men.

However, it should not be forgotten that most people during the 1800s and early 1900s lived and worked in the countryside. The **structural** transformations in rural areas in the north of Europe were extensive. These included a growing class without property and an increasingly productive agriculture, both of which would affect living



conditions for the women. As *dairy production* expanded, many women living near country estates became dairy maids. It was only when milking became mechanised that it became categorised as a task for men. We can see a similar development in various areas, and also if we look back in history to the first rationalisations in agriculture.

The patterns of marriage were not just linked to class. There were variations in different parts of Europe, which affected gender constructions and population rates. In southern and eastern Europe it was usual to get married at a young age and have many children, although a small number of these didn't make it to adulthood. Usually the women moved in with their husband's family and had to conform to the parents-in-law's rule. In Nordic countries, the farming population owning land freehold got married later in order to avoid having too many children which could cause property to be divided up during inheritance distribution. The nuclear family unit was the most common family constellation in these areas and delaying marriage meant that *multigenerational households* were relatively unusual, which is a pattern we have seen in northern Europe since medieval times.

1900s

In 2021, Sweden celebrated that it was a hundred years since women were first allowed to vote in a national election. This was relatively late seen from a northern European perspective. Women got the vote in Finland in 1906 for example. Looking at *democratisation* from an overtly *Eurocentric* perspective can obscure the fact that the first countries in the world to give women the vote were New Zealand in 1893 and Australia in 1902. From an **intersectional perspective** it can be worth noting that the indigenous people in Australia, both men and women, didn't get the right to vote until 1962.

The women's movement was much more of an international movement than what is often portrayed in literature. An important milestone was the Seneca Falls Convention in America in 1848, which can be seen as the beginning of modern feminism. Those who got involved in this movement, like the Quakers Elisabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, were often abolitionists too. This shows how various movements supporting equality for all were woven together and in most cases would boost each other. Views from this convention spread across the world. Because source material from the 1800s is more readily available than for previous centuries, there are greater





opportunities to teach using news material and photographs that promote gender-related aspects and an **intersectional** perspective. An example of this is how the British press covered and described the *suffragette* movement and which of the women were allowed a voice. An **intersectional** approach can be a constructive starting point here as well, for discussions about class and gender but also an opportunity for the pupils to practise skills in **historical empathy**: what did loyalty look like within the *suffragettes* as a group and what opportunities were there for poor or very wealthy women in the cause?

Interestingly, it appears that efforts to get women the vote first had an impact in the colonial areas where many British men and women lived and not the homeland or in colonial areas administrated by a small number of male British elite. In most countries in Europe, it can be observed that women's struggle to be granted the right to vote bore fruit during the 1900s in the aftermath of the two world wars. This occurred after World War I in northern Europe and the UK and after World War II in southern Europe. In Eastern Europe it was a mixture. Countries like Czechoslovakia gave women the vote in 1918 but Hungary and Bulgaria did not until after World War II. The efforts of the British *suffragettes* paved the way for these changes in many respects. The most well-known figure was probably Emmeline Pankhurst. Pankhurst was highly educated and got married young to a man who actively supported her work for women's voting rights. In 1898 after her husband died, she founded an organisation that fought to allow women to vote and only accepted female members. It took until 1928, however, for women in Britain to be granted equal voting rights. Traditionally, much of the focus on the movement for women's rights has been on northern and western Europe. It is important to also point to the struggle conducted within the context of the Catholic Church, for example. In the Mediterranean countries a *difference feminism* emerged in which supporters wanted better rights for women without challenging the influence of the church over family **structures**.

When teaching about twentieth century Europe from a gender perspective it is impossible to ignore the large influence that both of the world wars and the non-democratic ideologies exerted on the gender constructions for men and women. Appalling crimes against humanity, and especially women, took place in the Ottoman Empire in the Young Turk regime during the Armenian genocide from 1915 to 1917. Thousands of Armenian women were raped, forced into marriages, murdered and had their children taken away too.





Conventional history teaching describes how women entered the job market because men were in the trenches during World War I. The war broke out at a time when the male role was under renegotiation. Many saw the war as a purification and a way to restore a forgotten masculinity. Of course, experiencing the horrors of war caused these ideas to nosedive and instead, a whole generation of European men were traumatised by their experiences during the war. This was also a time when the modern, independent woman started to enter public life.

Women's progress on the labour market did not become permanent though because the Great Depression in the 1930s generated enormous unemployment. Nazism and fascism also emerged in this context and it would greatly affect conditions for men and women. It can be observed that these ideologies had a similar agenda in that they were about controlling all aspects of a person's behaviour including in the bedroom. Women were encouraged to stay at home and have many children for the nation's sake. Even legislation was influenced in various ways. One example is the *crimes of honour* law which was drawn up in Italy in 1932 and implied that a man could not be charged with murder for murdering a wife, mother or sister if the woman had been unfaithful. These ideologies also placed great focus on masculinity. At the centre of these ways of thinking stood the brave warrior who would protect his family and fight for the nation. This manliness was also constructed in contrast to the racialised and gender coded less manly 'others'. Jews and colonised ethnic groups were labelled instead as weak, soft, irresolute and corrupt.

The Russian Revolution also affected gender roles. The first *Bolsheviks* stressed the importance of women's liberation. Marriage had primarily a legal significance which gave illegitimate children the same legal rights as other children. Divorce and abortion were also legal during the first years after the revolution. However, these reforms brought tougher conditions for many women. A more liberal view of sexuality on the part of men resulted in many women and children being left without financial support. After Stalin came to power, a more traditional view of gender roles returned. Once again, the family became the most important social institution, getting a divorce became more difficult and abortion became illegal again. The women stayed in the labour market but their main duty was to take care of the home and children, which resulted in a double burden. During World War II many Soviet women were enlisted in the Red Army and fought alongside male soldiers as pilots, tank drivers, snipers or medical staff. The writer Svetlana Aleksievitj from Belarus has described how these women were met with contempt after the war because neither men nor women considered them as feminine enough to get married and start a family. They believed





that the war had masculinised women fighters. A great number of soviet women therefore lived their lives alone despite having risked their lives for their nation.

World War II affected civilians in a way that few wars had until then. Recent research has shown how badly mass rape affected women in Germany. According to the German historian Miriam Gebhardt, estimates show that the number of German rape victims was approximately 860,000 women and that the crimes were committed by armies from both east and west. Similar crimes occurred across the whole war-torn world.

The Holocaust has an important place in European cultural history as well as in history teaching in schools. We believe that the Holocaust must also be examined from a gender perspective because its horrific consequences in the short and long term have gender dimensions too. Discussions about how the roles of perpetrator and victim can relate to gender constructions are important to bring up with the pupils. In addition, it is important to actualise **intersectional** perspective and show how the Holocaust also affected those who did not fit the heteronormative mould or were in other ways considered as being 'other' in the Nazi ideology.

The war had positive effects for women long term as well because it opened up, once again, for women to have a working life. Of course, there was a crucial difference between countries that were drawn into the war and those that were lucky enough to keep out of it, although the men were on standby there too. There continued to be major differences even afterwards, because countries such as Sweden, which did not fight in the war, had the economic resources to invest in various *welfare reforms* which improved the position of women.

It was also at this time that the second wave of granting women the right to vote occurred in Europe. Italian women got the right to vote in 1946 for instance and Greek women in 1952. Most countries drawn into the communist domain gave women the vote around this time, for example Bulgaria in 1944 and Rumania in 1946. We believe it is important to draw attention to the late introduction of equal voting rights in Switzerland in 1971 and Portugal in 1976, as well as the reasons for the long **continuity** of insufficient democracy and equality. In connection with this, it is key to point out to pupils that these victories should not be taken for granted and that even today there are various threats to democracy.



In a Swedish context, several defining events can be observed that **changed** conditions for men and women in the post-war era in different ways. The first was the introduction of the contraceptive pill in 1964, which gave women power over their own bodies and sexuality in a completely new way. The second was the abolition of joint taxation in 1971 which made paid work for women much more profitable for the families and meant women could have their own finances. Thirdly, it was the development of child care during the 1970s that led the majority of Swedish women to enter the job market. Of course these changes affected living conditions for men as much as for women, especially in terms of changes to their role as fathers.

A hot topic during the post-war era has been the attitude to *family planning* and abortion. After World War II many European states **changed** their political agendas on these issues. Long **continuities** surrounding concepts like motherhood, family and the role of women were challenged which had an effect on legislation. Abortion was first legalised in the communist countries but would gradually spread west of the Iron Curtain. The **changes** came to be associated with various discourses. In some countries the discussions were about women's right to choose over their bodies, and in others it was more about responsible motherhood and the unborn baby's social conditions. Discussions about public health and ambitions to lower infant mortality also influenced the debate in certain countries. Abortion in Sweden during the 1960s was only allowed if the woman had been raped, her life was in danger or she lived in great poverty. It was however for example allowed in Poland. Pregnant women travelled to Poland in secret in order to get abortions and thus risked a prison sentence if discovered once they returned home. Nowadays as abortion rights for women in Poland are becoming more limited, the situation is reversed. Certain nations distanced themselves from the wave of legalising abortion and in countries like Ireland, Portugal and Malta it was to remain illegal throughout the 1900s. Abortion was legalised in Portugal in 2007. In May 2018 an Irish referendum vote was in favour of a law for free abortion. On Malta abortion is still illegal, but in 2021 there was growing opposition to these laws.

The **change** processes during the latter half of the 1900s were characterised, as illustrated above, by both **continuity** and **change**. It is important in this context to show the pupils that the classes in society didn't have the same access to the improvements that occurred. There are of course large variations between different countries and lessons can develop out of pupils' identifying similarities and differences between the different areas on these issues.



Gender issues and the work to promote gender equality are constant, ongoing processes that affect both women's and men's conditions. In these respects, the syllabus has shown crucial **changes** and **continuities** which have been influenced by the actions of particular individuals and groups as well as by the surrounding **structures** of society. Like the historical **agents**, the pupils are both a part of and creating history. They are also **agents** who can have an impact on history through their opinions, values and actions, which are in turn tinged by the pupils' present as well as the past.

Glossary of concepts

Prehistory

- *Patriarchal*
- *Neolithic Period*
- *Archaeological finds*

Antiquity

- *Dionysian*
- *Apollonian*
- *Gynaikon*
- *Hetaerae*
- *One-sex model*
- *Abrahamic religions*
- *Early church*
- *Canonisation*
- *Neoplatonism*
- *Church Fathers*
- *New Testament*
- *Old Testament*

Middle Ages to 1700s

- *Sacraments*
- *Absolutism*
- *Secularised*





- Colonies
- Feudal lords
- Abbesses
- the Feudal System
- Bourgeoisie
- Capitalism
- Renaissance
- Aristocracy
- Long-distance trade
- Paid labour
- Corporations
- Industrialisation
- Witch hunts
- Cottage industries
- Guilds

1700s and the Enlightenment

- Citizens
- The Age of Enlightenment
- National Assembly
- Meritocracy
- Uses of history
- Bourgeoisie
- Salon
- The National Convention
- Sans-culottes
- Roman law
- Napoleonic Wars



LAB

1800s

- Production and consumption practices
- Migration
- Population increase
- Land reforms
- Marriage pattern



- *Gender contracts*
- *Regulationism*
- *Masculinity norms*
- *Piece work*
- *Dairy production*
- *Multigenerational households*

1900s

- *Democratisation*
- *Eurocentric*
- *Suffragettes*
- *Crimes of honour*
- *Bolsheviks*
- *Welfare reforms*
- *Difference feminism*
- *Working life*
- *Family planning*



Web Resources:

National Women's History Museum

<https://www.womenshistory.org/womens-history>

UN Women

Timeline: Women's Footprints in History

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2016/3/timeline-womens-footprint-in-history>

Europeana

<https://www.europeana.eu/en/womens-history>

Stockholm Museum of Women's History

Rethink Tomorrow: Hear Our Stories – Documenting Women's History

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHZO-MPFD4k>

womeninworldhistory.com

<http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/index.html>





The British Library
<https://www.bl.uk/>

Fordham University
Internet History Sourcebooks Project
<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/women/womensbook.asp#Modern%20Europe>

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Disclaimer

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

