

**The Americans, Gerald A. Danzer, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Larry S. Krieger, Louis E. Wilson, and Nancy Woloch, IL: McDougal Littell, 2005. [10-12]**  
[850-851]

**WOMEN'S ROLES.** During the 1950s, the role of homemaker and mother was glorified in popular magazines, movies, and TV programs such as Father Knows Best and The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet. Time magazine described the homemaker as "the key figure in all suburbia, the thread that weaves between family and community -- the keeper of the suburban dream." In contrast to the ideal portrayed in the media, however, some women, like Carol Freeman, who spoke of her discontentment, were not happy with their roles; they felt isolated, bored, and unfulfilled. According to one survey in the 1950s, more than one-fifth of suburban wives were dissatisfied with their lives. Betty Friedan, author of the groundbreaking 1963 book about women and society, *The Feminine Mystique*, described the problem.

A Personal Voice. Betty Friedan

"For the first time in their history, women are becoming aware of an identity crisis in their own lives, a crisis which... has grown worse with each succeeding generation.... I think this is the crisis of women growing up -- a turning point from an immaturity that has been called femininity to full human identity." -- *The Feminine Mystique*.

The number of women working outside the home rose steadily during the decade. By 1960, almost 40 percent of mothers with children between ages 6 and 17 held paying jobs.

But having a job didn't necessarily contribute to a woman's happiness. A woman's career opportunities tended to be limited to fields such as nursing, teaching, and office support, which paid less than other professional and business positions did. Women also earned less than men for comparable work. Although increasing numbers of women attended four-year colleges, they generally received little financial, academic, or psychological encouragement to pursue their goals. D.

**MAIN IDEA. Contrasting. D.** How did women's roles and opportunities in the 1950s differ from women's roles today?

**Background.** The percentage of women college students in the 1950s was smaller than in the 1920s.

[982]

### **Women Fight for Equality**

**MAIN IDEA:** Through protests and marches, women confronted social and economic barriers in American society. **WHY IT MATTERS NOW:** The rise of the women's movement during the 1960s advanced women's place in the work force and in society.

### **One American's Story**

During the 1950s, writer Betty Friedan seemed to be living the American dream. She had a loving husband, healthy children, and a house in the suburbs. According to the experts -- doctors, psychologists, and women's magazines -- that was all a woman needed to be fulfilled. Why, then, wasn't she happy? In 1957, after conducting a survey of her Smith College classmates 15 years after graduation, she found she was not alone. Friedan eventually wrote a book, *The Feminine Mystique*, in which she addressed this "problem that has no name."

A Personal Voice. Betty Friedan

"The problem lay buried, unspoken.... It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night -- she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question -- 'Is this all?' "

-- The Feminine Mystique

During the 1960s, women answered Friedan's question with a resounding "no." In increasing numbers they joined the nation's African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans in the fight for greater civil rights and equality in society.

(photo) Betty Friedan, November 1967  
[1982-1984]

**A New Women's Movement Arises**

The theory behind the women's movement of the 1960s was feminism, the belief that women should have economic, political, and social equality with men. Feminist beliefs had gained momentum during the mid-1800s and in 1920 won women the right to vote. While the women's movement declined after this achievement, it reawakened during the 1960s, spurred by the political activism of the times.

**WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE.** In 1950, only one out of three women worked for wages. By 1960, that number had increased to about 40 percent. Still, during this time, certain jobs were considered "men's work" and women were shut out. The jobs available to women -- mostly clerical work, domestic service, retail sales, social work, teaching, and nursing -- paid poorly.

The country largely ignored this discrimination until President Kennedy appointed the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women in 1961. In 1963, the commission reported that women were paid far less than men, even when doing the same jobs. Furthermore, women were seldom promoted to management positions, regardless of their education, experience, and ability. These newly publicized facts awakened many women to their unequal status in society.

"Move on little girl; we have more important issues to talk about here than women's liberation." A MALE ANTIWAR ACTIVIST.

**WOMEN AND ACTIVISM.** Ironically, many women felt the sting of discrimination when they became involved in the civil rights and antiwar movements -- movements that toted the ideological banner of protecting people's rights. Within some of these organizations, such as SNCC and SDS, men led most of the activities, while women were assigned lesser roles. When women protested this arrangement, the men usually brushed them aside.

Such experiences led some women to organize small groups to discuss their concerns. During these discussions, or "consciousness-raising" sessions, women shared their lives with each other and discovered that their experiences were not unique. Rather, they reflected a much larger pattern of sexism, or discrimination based on gender. Author Robin Morgan delineated this pattern. A.

**MAIN IDEA. Analyzing Effects. A.** What effects did the civil rights and the antiwar movements have on many women?

A Personal Voice. Robin Morgan

"It makes you very sensitive -- raw, even, this consciousness. Everything, from the verbal assault on the street, to a 'well-meant' sexist joke your husband tells, to the lower pay you get at work (for doing the same job a man would be paid more for), to television commercials, to rock-song lyrics, to the pink or blue blanket they put on your infant in the hospital nursery, to speeches by male 'revolutionaries' that reek of male supremacy -- everything seems to barrage your aching brain.... You begin to see how all-pervasive a thing is sexism."

-- quoted in *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*.

**THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT EMERGES.** The *Feminine Mystique*, which captured the very discontent that many women were feeling, quickly became a bestseller and helped to galvanize women across the country. By the late 1960s, women were working together for change. "This is not a movement one 'joins,'" observed Robin Morgan. "The Women's Liberation Movement exists where three or four friends or neighbors decide to

meet regularly... on the welfare lines, in the supermarket, the factory, the convent, the farm, the maternity ward."

(graph) Women in the Workplace, 1950-2000. SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Graphs. 1. For each year shown, what percentage of men's income did women make? 2. About how many more women were working in 1990 than in 1960?

(photo) "WOMEN MAKE POLICY NOT COFFEE." This 1960s pin displays a slogan used by Betty Friedan at the National Women's Political Caucus.  
[984-985]

### **The Movement Experiences Gains and Losses**

As the women's movement grew, it achieved remarkable and enduring political and social gains for women. Along the way, however, it also suffered setbacks, most notably in its attempt to ensure women's equality in the Constitution.

**THE CREATION OF NOW.** The women's movement gained strength with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, and gender and created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to handle discrimination claims. By 1966, however, some women argued that the EEOC didn't adequately address women's grievances. That year, 28 women, including Betty Friedan, created the National Organization for Women (NOW) to pursue women's goals. "The time has come," the founders of NOW declared, "to confront with concrete action the conditions which now prevent women from enjoying the equality of opportunity... which is their right as individual Americans and as human beings." B.

### **MAIN IDEA. Analyzing Causes. B. What prompted women to establish NOW?**

NOW members pushed for the creation of child-care facilities that would enable mothers to pursue jobs and education. NOW also pressured the EEOC to enforce more vigorously the ban on gender discrimination in hiring. NOW's efforts prompted the EEOC to declare sex-segregated job ads illegal and to issue guidelines to employers, stating that they could no longer refuse to hire women for traditionally male jobs.

**A DIVERSE MOVEMENT.** In its first three years, NOW's ranks swelled to 175,000 members. A number of other women's groups sprang up around the country, too. In 1968, a militant group known as the New York Radical Women staged a well-publicized demonstration at the annual Miss America Pageant. The women threw bras, girdles, wigs, and other "women's garbage" into a "Freedom Trash Can." They then crowned a sheep "Miss America." Around this time, Gloria Steinem, a journalist, political activist, and ardent supporter of the women's liberation movement, made her voice heard on the subjects of feminism and equality. Steinem's grandmother had served as president of the Ohio Woman's Suffrage Association from 1908 to 1911; Steinem had inherited her passion and conviction. In 1971, Steinem helped found the National Women's Political Caucus, a moderate group that encouraged women to seek political office. In 1972, she and other women created a new women's magazine, Ms., designed to treat contemporary issues from a feminist perspective.

**LEGAL AND SOCIAL GAINS.** As the women's movement progressed, women began to question all sorts of gender-based distinctions. People protested that a woman's physical appearance was often considered a job qualification. Girls' exclusion from sports such as baseball and football came into question. Some women began using the title Ms., instead of the standard Miss or Mrs., and refused to adopt their husband's last name upon marriage.

These changes in attitude were paralleled by numerous legal changes. In 1972, Congress passed a ban on gender discrimination in "any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance," as part of the Higher Education Act. As a result, several all-male colleges opened their doors to women. That same year, Congress expanded the powers of the EEOC and gave working parents a tax break for child-care expenses. C.

**MAIN IDEA. Making Generalizations. C.** What sort of gains did the women's movement make by the "early 1970s?

**ROE v. WADE.** One of the more controversial positions that NOW and other feminist groups supported was a woman's right to have an abortion. In 1973, the Supreme Court ruled in Roe v. Wade that women do have the right to choose an abortion during the first three months of pregnancy. Some thought the ruling might "bring to an end the emotional and divisive public argument...." However, the issue still divides Americans today.

**THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (ERA).** In what seemed at first to be another triumph for the women's movement, Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1972. The amendment then needed ratification by 38 states to become part of the Constitution. First introduced to Congress in 1923, the ERA would guarantee that both men and women would enjoy the same rights and protections under the law. It was, many supporters said, a matter of "simple justice."

The amendment scared many people, and a Stop-ERA campaign was launched in 1972. Conservative Phyllis Schlafly, along with conservative religious groups, political organizations, and many anti-feminists, felt that the ERA would lead to "a parade of horrors," such as the drafting of women, the end of laws protecting homemakers, the end of a husband's responsibility to provide for his family, and same-sex marriages. Schlafly said that radical feminists "hate men, marriage, and children" and were oppressed "only in their distorted minds."

A Personal Voice. Phyllis Schlafly

"The U.S. Constitution is not the place for symbols or slogans, it is not the proper device to alleviate psychological problems of personal inferiority. Symbols and slogans belong on bumper strips -- not in the Constitution. It would be a tragic mistake for our nation to succumb to the tirades and demands of a few women who are seeking a constitutional cure for their personal problems."

-- quoted in The Equal Rights Amendment: The History and the Movement.

**THE NEW RIGHT EMERGES.** In order to combat the ERA and the pro-abortion supporters, conservatives built what they called a new "pro-family" movement. In the 1970s, this coalition -- which focused on social, cultural, and moral problems -- came to be known as the New Right. The New Right and the women's movement debated family-centered issues such as whether the government should pay for daycare, which the New Right opposed. Throughout the 1970s, the New Right built grassroots support for social conservatism. It would later play a key role in the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1980. D.

**MAIN IDEA. Analyzing Motives.D.** What concerns motivated those who opposed the ERA?

(photo) **KEY PLAYER: GLORIA STEINEM, 1934-** . Gloria Steinem became one of the more prominent figures of the women's movement after she and several other women founded Ms. magazine in 1972. The magazine soon became a major voice of the women's movement.

Steinem said that she decided to start the feminist magazine after editors in the mainstream media continually rejected her stories about the women's movement:

"Editors who had assumed I had some valuable biological insight into food, male movie stars, and textured stockings now questioned whether I or other women writers were biologically capable of writing objectively about feminism. That was the beginning."

(photo) Thousands of women march through the streets of New York City during the summer of 1970 to promote women's equality.

(photo) Phyllis Schlafly

[1986]

**The Movement's Legacy**

The New Right and the women's movement clashed most dramatically over the ERA. By 1977 it had won approval from 35 of the 38 states needed for ratification, but the New Right gained strength. By June of 1982 -- the deadline for ratification -- not enough states had approved the amendment. The ERA went down in defeat.

Despite ERA's defeat, the women's movement altered society in countless ways, such as by transforming women's conventional roles and their attitudes toward career and family. Interviews with women graduates at Stanford University reflect the change. Of graduates in 1965, 70 percent planned not to work at all when their children were of preschool age. When the class of 1972 was surveyed, only 7 percent said they would stop working to raise children.

The women's movement also succeeded in expanding career opportunities for women. For instance, as of 1970, 8 percent of all medical school graduates and 5 percent of all law school graduates were women. By 1998, those proportions had risen to 42 and 44 percent, respectively. Yet many women ran into a "glass ceiling" -- an invisible, but very real, resistance to promoting women into top positions.

By 1983 women held 13.5 percent of elected state offices as well as 24 seats in the U.S. Congress. More importantly, as historian Sara Evans has noted, by 1980 "feminist concerns were firmly on the national political agenda and clearly there to stay." Most of all, the women's movement helped countless women open their lives to new possibilities. "For we have lived the second American revolution," wrote Betty Friedan in 1976, "and our very anger said a 'new YES' to life."

(photo) "A WOMEN'S PLACE IS IN THE HOUSE... AND ALSO IN THE SENATE!" As this poster shows, women have made significant political strides by being elected to the U.S. Congress.

[1080-1081]

## **AMERICAN LITERATURE**

### **Women Writers Reflect American Diversity**

1978-2000. The broadening of opportunities for American women that began in the 1970s is as evident in literature as it is in other fields. Toni Morrison, Mary Oliver, Nikki Giovanni, Amy Tan, Anne Tyler, Alice Walker, Marge Piercy, Sandra Cisneros -- these are just a few of the talented women novelists and poets who reflect the multicultural nature of the American identity. These women's writing shares a common characteristic -- that of conveying the American experience through the exploration of personal memories, nature, childhood, and family.

(photo) **NIKKI GIOVANNI**

In the late 1960s, Nikki Giovanni won instant attention as an African American poet writing about the Black Power movement. Since then her poetry has often focused on childhood, family ties, and other personal concerns. In the following poem, Giovanni deals with individual empowerment -- even under less than ideal circumstances.

Choices / if i can't do / what i want to do / then my job is to not / do what i don't want / to do // it's not the same thing / but it's the best i can / do // if i can't have / what i want then / my job is to want / what i've got / and be satisfied / that at least there / is something more / to want // since i can't go / where i need / to go then i must go / where the signs point / though always understanding / parallel movement / isn't lateral // when i can't express / what i really feel / i practice feeling / what i can express / and none of it is equal / i know / but that's why mankind / alone among the mammals / learns to cry  
-- Nikki Giovanni, "Choices," from Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day (1978)

### **AMY TAN**

A native of Oakland, California, Amy Tan draws on personal experiences in *The Joy Luck Club*, a series of interconnected stories about four Chinese-American daughters and their immigrant mothers. The four mothers establish a club for socializing and playing the game of mahjong.

My mother started the San Francisco version of the Joy Luck Club in 1949, two

years before I was born. This was the year my mother and father left China with one stiff leather trunk filled only with fancy silk dresses. There was no time to pack anything else, my mother had explained to my father after they boarded the boat. Still his hands swam frantically between the slippery silks, looking for his cotton shirts and wool pants.

When they arrived in San Francisco, my father made her hide those shiny clothes. She wore the same brown-checked Chinese dress until the Refugee Welcome Society gave her two hand-me-down dresses, all too large in sizes for American women. The society was composed of a group of white-haired American missionary ladies from the First Chinese Baptist Church. And because of their gifts, my parents could not refuse their invitation to join the church. Nor could they ignore the old ladies' practical advice to improve their English through Bible study class on Wednesday nights and, later, through choir practice on Saturday mornings. This was how my parents met the Hsus, the Jongs, and the St. Clairs. My mother could sense that the women of these families also had unspeakable tragedies they had left behind in China and hopes they couldn't begin to express in their fragile English. Or at least, my mother recognized the numbness in these women's faces. And she saw how quickly their eyes moved when she told them her idea for the Joy Luck Club.

-- Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989)

(photo) **SANDRA CISNEROS**

Sandra Cisneros is one of many Chicana writers to win fame in recent years. In *The House on Mango Street*, she traces the experiences of a poor Hispanic girl named Esperanza (Spanish for hope) and her warm-hearted family. Nenny is her sister.

#### **Four Skinny Trees**

They are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here but are here. Four raggedy excuses planted by the city. From our room we can hear them, but Nenny just sleeps and doesn't appreciate these things.

Their strength is secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep.

Let one forget his reason for being, they'd all droop like tulips in a glass, each with their arms around the other. Keep, keep, keep, trees say when I sleep. They teach.

When I am too sad and too skinny to keep keeping, when I am a tiny thing against so many bricks, then it is I look at trees. When there is nothing left to look at on this street. Four who grew despite concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be.

-- Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1989)

#### **THINKING CRITICALLY**

1. Comparing. From these selections, what can you infer about women's experiences in American life today? Cite passages to support your response.

2. INTERNET ACTIVITY. CLASSZONE.COM. Visit the links for American Literature to find and choose selections for an anthology of writing by three contemporary American women. Write a "capsule biography" summarizing each writer's background and achievements.

[1120-1121]

#### **Women in the Work Force**

Will the American workplace grant men and women equal opportunities?

**Women are still making less than their male counterparts -- averaging only 72 cents for every dollar.**

Thirty-two years after entering a management training program at Boston's Federal Reserve Bank, Cathy Minehan -- now the bank's president -- is one of a select group of female executives who hold 3.3 percent of the nation's highest-paying jobs. "A critical

element in making it to the top is being in the pipeline to do so,..." says Minehan. "Aside from . . . [that,] they have to believe they can make it.... It is hard for women or minorities to believe they can progress if they cannot look up and see faces like their own at the top."

### **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy named a commission to study the status of women in the workplace. Its report revealed that employers paid women less than men for equal work. The report also said that women were rarely promoted to top positions in their fields.

Almost 40 years later, the U.S. Census Bureau found that more women than ever before worked outside the home—about 60 percent. Women made up 47 percent of the American work force. Yet they held only 12.5 percent of the most senior jobs in a sampling of the Fortune 500, the nation's 500 largest companies.

Some women who choose to pursue careers in business, government, or other organizations feel that a glass ceiling limits their career progress. It is said to be glass because it is an invisible barrier that keeps women and minorities from attaining promotion above a certain level. Its invisibility makes it difficult to combat.

### **POSITIVE TRENDS**

Women have made great strides in recent decades. In 1997, they filled almost half of all jobs in managerial and professional specialty areas. Women have also been entering new fields, including construction work and blue-collar jobs such as equipment repair.

In the academic world, women are better represented than ever before. In 1997, women received a record number -- nearly 41 percent -- of all doctorate degrees issued by universities. More degrees were given in the life sciences, the field in which women were most strongly represented.

For many women, job success involved getting the right credentials and targeting a growth industry. A 2000 survey by the women's advocacy group Catalyst found that 91 percent of women with MBA degrees working in information technology reported high satisfaction with their current jobs, compared with only 82 percent of their male counterparts. "This translates into opportunity for women in this growing industry," said Sheila Wellington, president of Catalyst. "They're essentially telling us, This is the place to be."

### **MONEY AND UPWARD MOBILITY**

Despite these positive signs, the key issues of unequal pay and unequal representation remain. Women are still making less than their male counterparts -- averaging only 72 cents for every dollar earned by men. According to the National Committee on Pay Equity, there are a variety of reasons for this discrepancy: women are often socialized to aim toward lower-paying jobs, often have limited expectations about their leadership potential, and may have conflicts between the demands of work and family life.

In the nation's most top-level jobs, women continue to be vastly outnumbered by men. As of 2001, women headed only two Fortune 500 corporations. Ninety of the Fortune 500 companies had no women among the ranks of their corporate officers. Of all line officers -- positions with profit-and-loss responsibility -- 7.3 percent were held by women, while men held an overwhelming 92.7 percent of these positions.

Why are women underrepresented in the top jobs? In one Catalyst poll of women executives, blame was placed on three factors: male stereotyping and preconceptions of women, women's exclusion from informal networks of communication, and women's lack of significant management experience.

On the other hand, the respondents suggested some approaches that had helped them succeed in the corporate world: consistently exceed expectations, develop a style with which managers are comfortable, seek out difficult assignments, and have an influential mentor.

## **STRIKING OUT ON THEIR OWN**

Many women who are frustrated by the corporate environment at their existing companies are choosing to start their own business. As of 2000, according to the National Foundation for Women Business Owners, the number of women owned businesses had doubled in the last 13 years -- totaling more than 9.1 million firms -- and constituted the fastest-growing sector of the U.S. economy. Notes Dixie Junk, owner of Junk Architects in Kansas City, "It's more than having a business -- you get to create the culture you want."

## **IT PAYS TO BE FLEXIBLE**

Another area of change affecting women in the work force has been an increasing number of options for flexible work arrangements, such as part-time work and telecommuting opportunities. In 1996, 60 percent of companies surveyed had formal policies or guidelines for some type of flexible work arrangement.

One Catalyst study tracking 24 women who first used flexible work arrangements more than a decade ago found that all of the women now held mid- and senior-level positions, and more than half had earned promotions in the last 10 years. Says Marcia Brumit Kropf, vice-president of research and information services, "Findings from this report suggest that even though working mothers may reduce career involvement for a period of time -- with the support of the right company -- career advancement does not have to get sidelined."

**PREDICTING EFFECTS.** What can be done to afford women the same opportunities as men?

**RESEARCH LINKS.** CLASSZONE.COM. Visit the links for the Epilogue to find out more about Women in the Work Force.

(photo) U.S. Appeals Court judge Rosemary Barkett (center) delivers the keynote address during a special session of Florida's high court honoring the state's first 150 female lawyers on June 15, 2000, In Tallahassee, Florida.