

DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints
in Primary Source Documents

The New Feminism & Its Critics

*Did the post-1960s women's liberation movement
actually make a difference in women's lives?*



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Teacher Introduction

★ *Using Primary Sources*

Primary sources are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their “secondary” accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it's because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



*“Multiple,
conflicting
perspectives are
among the truths
of history.
No single
objective or
universal account
could ever put an
end to this endless
creative dialogue
within and
between the past
and the present.”*

From the 2011 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

INTRODUCTION

★ *The Debating the Documents Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. *Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way.* (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **One DBQ.** On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

★ *How to Use This Booklet*

1. Have students read “Suggestions for the Student” and the Introductory Essay.

Give them copies of pages 5–7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

2. Have students do the worksheets.

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.

3. “Debate the documents” as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source’s point of view.

4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):

“Starting in the 1960s, a new feminist movement opened doors for all women. Its critics only want to force women back into second-class citizenship again.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay’s thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

INTRODUCTION

★ *Complete DBQ Scoring Guide*

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

Excellent Essay

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

Good Essay

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Fair Essay

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Poor Essay

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in "laundry list" style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

Suggestions to the Student

★ *Using Primary Sources*

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This *Debating the Documents* lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

★ *How to Use This Booklet*

1. Read the one-page introductory essay.

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



2. Study the primary source documents for this lesson.

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image’s “content” (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image’s meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source’s author, that author’s reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source’s historical value.

3. Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the “Study the Document” worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the “Comparing the Documents” worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

4. As a class, debate the documents.

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

5. Do the final DBQ.

“DBQ” means “document-based question.” A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.

The New Feminism & Its Critics

In 1920, the nation ratified the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment gave women the right to vote in all elections. It was the final triumph of a long struggle that began in the first half of the 19th century. This struggle for women's rights is often called the "first wave of feminism."

For several decades, women's issues attracted less attention, especially during the Great Depression of the 1930s and during World War II. After the war, millions of women left wartime factory jobs and again centered their lives around home and family, resulting in the post-war "baby boom." Yet in their 1950s suburban neighborhoods, middle-class women often found that "home and family" were now more cut off than before from the public world of careers and civic involvement. Educational benefits granted to returning soldiers aided men in finding careers, while women were confined within the home. A bland popular culture of TV shows like *Ozzie and Harriet* promoted a "happy homemaker" image for women.

The frustration this produced soon led to a second wave of feminism. This rebellion was born within two others: the civil-rights and the anti-Vietnam War movements of the 1960s. Both movements appealed strongly to the children of the 1950s now coming of age on the nation's campuses. Yet young female college students often felt undervalued by the male leadership of the 1960s protest movements. In thousands of small "consciousness raising" groups, these women discussed their need for equal status, respect, and greater leadership roles in these movements of social change.

The two causes of the second feminist wave (1950s middle-class life and 1960s political idealism) help explain its double focus. One focus was on personal change and self-fulfillment. The other was on breaking down social barriers to women's equal rights.

Betty Friedan illustrates both sides of the movement. Her book *The Feminine Mystique* gave voice to middle-class women trapped by what Friedan saw as a false notion of femininity. This notion left women frustrated at marital tensions, blocked careers, boredom, and feelings of emptiness, hence the need for personal awakening and liberation.

Yet Friedan also addressed what she saw as the social and political causes of this discontent. She helped found the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966. Of many feminist organizations, NOW became the leader. It was constantly fighting to end discrimination in employment, education, and politics. Countless battles were fought to open professional careers to women, help them run for office, or win them more rights in their families and more control over sexual and reproductive behavior.

The movement's achievements in the 1960s and 1970s (see the time line) were not without cost. Some critics sought to turn back the clock. Feminists often spoke of a "backlash" against them. However, even some who supported feminist goals reacted against certain aspects of the movement. Some disliked its heavy reliance on government and affirmative action programs. Others, such as Feminists for Life, opposed its stands on abortion or other lifestyle changes. Many younger women felt their biggest challenges had more to do with the greater freedom they now had than with any remaining barriers to it. As one put it, independent women now must "juggle jobs, kids, money, and personal freedom in a frenzied world."

Is there still a single feminist movement? Are the critics unfair, or do they have merit? What is the future of feminism? The sources with this lesson will help you think about and debate these vital questions.

The New Feminism Time Line

1960

- • • Birth control pills are approved. The pill is often seen as giving women much greater freedom regarding their sexual and reproductive behavior.

1962

- • • Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* inspires many feminists.

1963

- • • The Commission on the Status of Women, headed by Eleanor Roosevelt, issues a report documenting discrimination against women in American life.

1964

- • • Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of sex as well as race, religion, or national origin. The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) is empowered to bring suits to enforce the act. It becomes a key agency promoting affirmative action efforts for women. In the years ahead, many other state and local agencies take on this task as well.

1966

- • • The National Organization for Women (NOW) is organized.

1967

- • • A radical form of feminism grows in part as a protest against male leadership in the civil-rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. New York Radical Women, for example, forms to promote women's "consciousness raising" groups. A year later, it publishes its *Notes from the First Year*.

1969

- • • The National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL) is founded, followed the next year by the National Right to Life Committee, which is opposed to legalizing abortion.

1972

- • • *Ms. Magazine* begins publishing, with Gloria Steinem as editor. Title IX of the Educational Amendments to the Civil Rights Act requires sex equality in education. Congress sends the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the states for ratification. Phyllis Schlafly forms STOP ERA to defeat the amendment.

1973

- • • The Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* rules that abortion is protected by a Constitutional right to privacy, with states able to set some limits.

1978

- • • For the first time in history, more women than men enter U.S. colleges.

1981

- • • Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first woman on the Supreme Court.

1982

- • • The ERA fails as the deadline for ratification passes with the amendment still three states short of the 38 needed.

1984

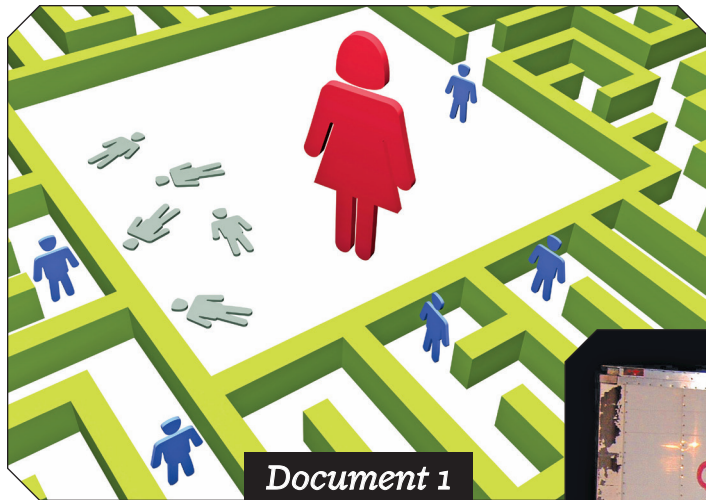
- • • Democrat Geraldine Ferraro becomes the first female vice-presidential candidate of a major political party.

Since 1990

- • • Generational divisions lead to splits among feminists. Some women promote what they call "third-wave feminism" — especially in the universities and through some forms of popular culture. It focuses on diverse subgroups of women in American life and on social tensions that even independent-minded women still face. Meanwhile, "post-feminist" writers such as Christina Hoff Sommers openly criticize feminism today while admiring earlier feminist achievements. The Independent Women's Forum, founded in 1992, accuses liberal feminists of encouraging too great a dependence by women on government programs. The label "feminist" may no longer quite fit any of the many views women hold today.

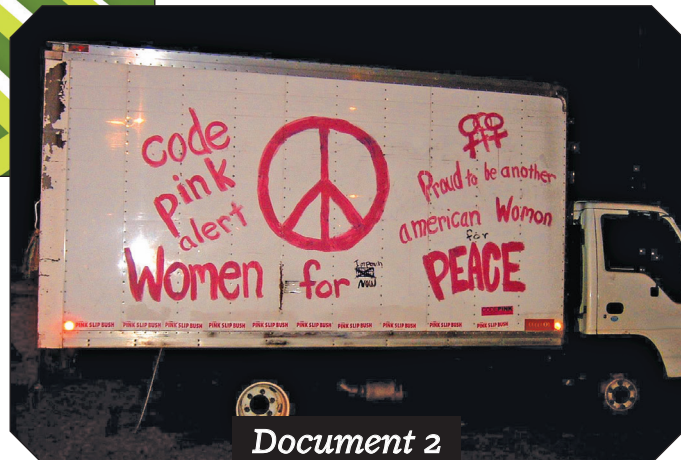
DOCUMENTS 1 & 2

Visual Primary Source Documents 1 & 2



Document 1

Darko Novakovic, Shutterstock Inc.



Document 2

Jessica Bethke, Shutterstock Inc.

Information on Documents 1 & 2

Document 1 is a graphic image titled “Deadly Maze.” Both the title and the image itself capture the feeling that led many feminists in the 1960s and later to call for basic changes in the attitudes of men toward women and to protest against the obstacles women faced in many workplaces.

Document 2 is a photo of a Code Pink truck. Code Pink began in 2003. It defines itself as “a women-initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement working to end the war in Iraq, stop new wars, and redirect our resources into healthcare, education, and other life-affirming activities.” Code Pink is one of several women’s groups that feel there is a strong link between their new feminist ideas and other radical and liberal causes.