

SUBJECT

History

METHODS:

pair work, text work, discussion, educational conversation, brainstorming

DURATION

45 min.

MATERIALS:

overhead projector, presentation, cards with texts

TOPIC

• gender inequalities and women's rights

LESSON PLAN

INTRODUCTION

You can start by asking students what comes to their mind when they think about modern feminism and write the students' observations on the board. Don't give them definitions at this stage. A presentation organizing the classes can be displayed in the background. Then, basing on the their own knowledge, students answer the following questions:

- Since when have women had the right to vote in your country and in other parts of the world?
- How were they discriminated against in past eras?

PAIR WORK WITH TEXTS

Tell the students about Christine de Pizan. Then the students work in pairs. They receive source texts (Appendix 1) and answer questions related to the first one (questions are displayed during the whole presentation):

- What was the situation of women in the Middle Ages?
- What could they do and what were they not allowed to do?

Explain the difficult words in the text. Then introduce the next person, Sojourner Truth, and ask students to read her speech (Appendix 2) and answer the following questions:

- What were the problems that she faced?
- What were her postulates?

Explain the difficult words in the text.

OBJECTIVES

- the students will understand what feminism is, why the movement has been established and what its goals are
- the students will learn about historical examples of women breaking gender stereotypes
- the students will understand the dynamics of the processes of change taking place in societies
 - the students will be able to question and deny assumptions and stereotypes
- the students will practice public speaking skills
- the students will be able to give an example of a local and an international group advocating for women's rights



DISCUSSION

Discuss what feminism is, explain the concept and its roots (you can e.g. use the definition from Wikipedia).

Invite the students to discuss the following questions:

- Is feminism needed?
- Can men be feminists?
- What rights do women have today that they did not have in the past?
- Is the situation the same across the globe?

HOMEWORK

Ask students to search the Internet and describe in a few sentences a local or an international group that supports the fight for women's rights.

A. Additional materials (links, pictures etc):

Presentation for the class http://prezi.com/1dukn8hcru4v/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

B. Sources:

Alixé Bovey, 2015, "Women in medieval society", Online access: <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/women-in-medieval-society>

Sojourner Truth, 1853, „What Time of Night It Is”, at: „History is a weapon”.

Online access: <https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/sojournertruthtimeofnight.html>

Sojourner Truth, 1851, „Ain't I A Woman?", at „Modern History Sourcebook”,

Online access: <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/sojtruth-woman.asp>

C. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Women in medieval society

Appendix 2 - Sojourner Truth's speeches

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Women in medieval society

"Most people in medieval Europe lived in small rural communities, making their living from the land. Peasant women had many domestic responsibilities, including caring for children, preparing food, and tending livestock. During the busiest times of the year, such as the harvest, women often joined their husbands in the field to bring in the crops. Women often participated in vital cottage industries, such as brewing, baking and manufacturing textiles. (...)

According to the Bible, Eve was created from Adam's rib and, having eaten the forbidden fruit, was responsible for man's expulsion from paradise. In medieval art, the responsibility of women for this 'original sin', is often emphasised by giving a female head to the serpent who tempts Eve to disobey God. The story underlined the belief that women were inferior to men, and that they were morally weaker and likely to tempt men into sin. (...)

There were some women who exercised power, providing a challenge to the stereotypical image of medieval women as oppressed and subservient. In the church, women could hold positions of great responsibility as abbesses of convents. In some instances, such as monasteries that housed communities of men and women, the abbess had seniority over monks.

Outside monastic walls, women could wield political power, especially as queens and regents who exercised royal authority on behalf of absent husbands or underage sons. A number of powerful queens can be noted in English history, of whom one of the most remarkable was Queen Isabella (1295–1358), who (in collaboration with her lover, Sir Robert Mortimer) brought about the end of the reign of her husband, Edward II (1284–1327).

Yet however powerful some women were in the Middle Ages, it is important to remember that the overwhelming majority were not. Most women, even those in privileged circumstances, had little control over the direction their lives took. The marriages of young aristocratic women were usually arranged by their families (but here it is worth noting that their husbands, too, had little choice in their partners). Once widowed, such women had legal independence and, in many instances, autonomy over considerable financial resources.

The two main alternatives for a medieval woman were to marry, or to 'take the veil' and become a nun. Almost all female orders required women to live behind the walls of a monastery or within an individual cell, living a life of contemplation, prayer and work. Though the appeal of this way of life might be difficult to grasp today, for a medieval woman, one of its attractions must have been freedom from the dangers of childbearing.

Most women, however, were married, usually as teenagers. Afterwards, they were responsible for managing the household, whether this was a great castle or a small peasant hovel.

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Wealthy women had servants, who assisted them with cooking, cleaning and childcare, and so were left time to engage in other pursuits. Popular diversions for aristocratic women included religious activities, hunting, dancing and playing games.”

Alixé Bovey, 2015, “Women in medieval society”,

Online access: <https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/women-in-medieval-society>

Appendix 2 - Sojourner Truth's speeches

Sojourner Truth (1797-1883): Ain't I A Woman?, speech delivered in 1851 at Women's Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio

„That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

Sojourner Truth, 1851, „Ain't I A Woman?”, at „Modern History Sourcebook”,

Online access: <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/sojtruth-woman.asp>

Speech delivered in 1853 at the Fourth Woman's Rights Convention in New York City in a room filled with a hostile mob who shouted, taunted and threatened the speaker.

„I know that it feels a kind o' hiss; and ticklin' like to see a colored woman get up and tell you about things, and Woman's Rights. We all have been thrown down so low that nobody thought we'd ever get up again; but we have been long enough trodden now; we will come up again, and now I am here. (...) But we'll have our rights; see if we don't; and you can't stop us from them; see if you can. You may hiss as much as you like, but it is comin'. Women don't get half as much rights as they ought to; we want more, and we will have it.(...) I am sittin' among you to watch; and every once and a while I will come out and tell you what time of night it is.”

Sojourner Truth, 1853, „What Time of Night It Is”, at: „History is a weapon”.

Online access: <https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/sojournertruthtimeofnight.html>

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