



WOMEN IN EARLY 1900's BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

- Not allowed to vote so very limited political power
- Lack of rights and laws to protect women from discrimination.
- Employment was very limited to a small selection of jobs. Most were very poorly or unfairly paid and had little prospects for promotion.
- Education- this was limited. Women could go to university but places were very limited.
- Women were expected to get married and have children. Their rights within marriage were poor and divorce was limited.
- Fashion- this was conservative at this time with long dresses and full coverage. Women were expected to act 'appropriately'

WOMEN IN 1920's

The lives of women advanced in many respects during the 1920's. In fashion, votes, social life, marriage and employment their rights really seemed to progress enormously.

However, this change was not universal. Progress was limited and in many cases the lives of women barely improved at all.

You should be able to assess these changes and work out just how far women's rights progressed. You will have some to make sure you know the evidence for BOTH SIDES.

1920 VOTES FOR WOMEN - 19th AMENDMENT

The 19th AMENDMENT granted SUFFRAGE (the right for women to VOTE).

It came after years of campaigning and following the heroic work of women during the First World War, when many women took over the role of men and showed their capability to match or exceed men's efforts.

It was hoped that this harnessing of the vote would transform the lives of women as politicians would have to listen to and address issues important to women for the first time

While this was the case to an extent, it was much more limited than what many women expected.

The power of the female vote was evident in President Harding's electoral landslide and in voting for President Roosevelt in the 1930's

The right to vote meant that women could begin to influence politics and decision making for the first time.

- PROHIBITION- You can see how much influence women had in the decisions to introduce Prohibition AND to repeal it. The views of women and female organisations were highly influential.

- NEW LAWS- Although hugely underrepresented in Congress to begin with, women were able to lobby for major changes and protection.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS (LWV) replaced NAWSA- the American suffrage movement. It's aim was to encourage women to get involved in politics. A combination of groups formed the WJCC (WOMENS JOINT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE) This had up to 10 million members! It was hoped this would lobby for a wide range of women's issues in employment, education and prohibition.

SHEPPARD TOWNER ACT 1921
This showed the new power of women to influence law. Federal funding was granted for maternity leave and childcare.

WOMENS BUREAU 1923- aimed at working towards equal pay laws

THE FLAPPERS

This is an essential example for you to liberated women in the 1920's

- They challenged the fashions and restrictions of the past.
- They smoked cigarettes.
- They flirted with men and were much more sexually liberated with increased use of contraception.
- The use of cars gave people much more freedom. Women began to own and drive cars too.

- Women bobbed their hair and wore more shapeless boyish clothes designed by fashion designer Coco Chanel. This was called 'garconne' Step in's were looser and replaced the corset.
- Many women tended to wear much looser and more practical outfits and shorter dresses.

- Films like the It Girl portrayed women in a much more liberated and exciting way. Film stars like CLARA BOW were famous for their flapper looks and lifestyle. Many women emulated them and copied their fashions and mannerisms.

- Nightlife was very popular with Jazz music and the Charleston dance becoming hugely popular.
- Many women went to Speakeasies.

SOCIAL PROGRESS

- Women before the 1920's were generally, 'prim, modest and proper.' They would wear clothes which would cover most of the body. Even showing an ankle was regarded as scandalous! Corsets and restrictive clothing was fashionable, preventing many activities. They were supposed to have a chaperone to accompany them if starting relationships.

This changed hugely as women began to be more liberated in their fashion and behaviour.

The horrors of the First World War and the Spanish flu made people, particularly young people, much more eager to live for the day

Although women's traditional role within the home was still prominent, Labour saving devices like hoovers and washing machines helped reduce the amount of time they spent doing housework, allowing for more leisure time.

Women also had more money to spend on that leisure time! This was due to the amount of new jobs they had.

Beauty salons became much more popular and women spent vastly more on cosmetics... from \$17 million to over \$200 million a year!



SOCIALLY

THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN

EMPLOYMENT

BACKGROUND

POLITICAL POWER?

VOTE



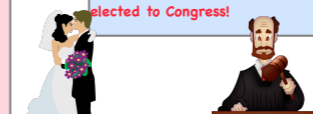
ISSUES



POLITICAL AND OFFICIAL POSITIONS

It was hoped that the vote would also bring with it new positions for women

However, only a few women were made judges
There were very few female State governors
There were only 13 women elected to Congress!



EVIDENCE THAT PROGRESS WAS LIMITED

- Many men came back from the war and reclaimed their old employment. Women lost their jobs as a result - despite being better in many cases. Jobs in munitions ceased as the war ended.

- While there was more employment for women in the 1920's, the quality of that employment was limited. Most of the jobs which were available were poorly paid and had little chances for promotion. Pay was a lot less than men often for the same job. Women were frequently employed because they were cheaper to hire.

- Women were often forced from their jobs when they married or had children. There was little legal protection. Some workplaces like banks refused to employ women.

- Only 15% of White married women with working husbands worked themselves. This rose to 30% among African Americans.

- Poor women certainly did not benefit. Those in rural areas struggled with a life of hardship. Even in towns, many women had difficult lives with work during the day and family commitments at night.

- While some women became famous and succeeded in business, the list is very short. For many women trying to start a business was met with a great deal of prejudice...

EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS:

- women had proved themselves in the First World War through their war work which tended to match or outperform men.

- Two million more women were employed in the 1920's.

- Many found lots of work in new industries. Telephones for example needed large numbers of operators who tended to be female. The explosion in retail and mail order also created new positions and women were employed in car factories for their specialism in stitching. Women were increasingly employed as secretaries, typists and a variety of other jobs.

- Some women even became multi millionaire business owners. ESTEE LAUDER for example saw her cosmetics industry boom. MARY PICKFORD was an influential investor in the cinema industry.

- Females made up a huge and growing market which grew and grew in the 1920's mass marketing and mail order were aimed at this lucrative market and sales of things like rayon and cutex nail products soars.

- Female role models increase hugely with Mary Pickford, Josephine Baker and Clara Bow.

- Female trade union Membership increased and the women's Trade Union League was aimed at boosting female workers rights

- The Women's Bureau was introduced in 1920 by the US Congress. It's aim was to promote women's employment rights, conditions and opportunities



CONTINUITY IN WOMENS ROLE

- The role of women did indeed change in the 1920's. However, the image of the flappers and their liberal attitudes is not the full picture

- Much of America was still conservative and traditional and opposed to what was regarded as scandalous change.

- There was a reaction in the Bible Belt southern states who were deeply opposed to the liberal changes occurring elsewhere. To them a women's role was clearly laid out and limited in the bible to wife and mother.

- RURAL USA - In rural America little had changed. Much of this was conservative and traditional. Up to 90% still lacked electricity by the 1920's! Much of agriculture was also poor and depressed. Women had to cook on old ranges or open fires and hoovers were unheard of and the fashions were beyond the reach of the vast majority.

- Most women in the USA could not afford the time or the money to party like the Flappers. They were either wives or mothers or they worked long hours in factories or elsewhere with little time for partying. Money was also not independently available to all women.

- Cultural backlash. There was a serious backlash against some of the progress women were making. Groups like the anti flirt league were set up to protest against 'flirting' and trying to show women 'proper behaviour'

