

# Women in the 19th century essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



In the nineteenth century, in America, the role women would play in our society began to change dramatically. This was the beginning of a whole new world for women, and America in general. Women began to realize that there were opportunities for them outside of the home, and that they could have a place in the world as well as men. It was a time when the feministic view was being born and traditional views of women were changing. First, women would play a part in working to help slaves gain their freedom in the anti-slavery movement. They felt they could identify with the way slaves were being treated, therefore wanted to help them.

Middle class women then would begin to realize that they were just the same as men, and wanted to be treated that way, and partake in the same activities. This included getting an education, working and being able to support themselves without the help of men. This changed not only the traditional roles of women in society, but also their role in the family. With women wanting the right to vote, work and go to school, middle class life as they knew it would be drastically changed. Women would no longer be in the home with the children cooking and cleaning; they wanted to get out into the world. There was still an extremely long way to go before women were to be accepted in society, and this was just the beginning.

In 1830's, there was a radical anti-slavery movement, which demanded the cessation of slavery on the grounds that every man was the owner of himself. That is, that every human being is the only person who has jurisdiction over his or her own body. Angelina Grimke, Sarah Grimke, and Abbey Kelley were a few of the major feminists during this time. These women became the first women in America to do lecture tours before

audiences, that included men, about anti-slavery. They believed that women should be grateful to slaves because giving them freedom would lead to society's granting of women's freedom.

This made people start to see the similarities between how slaves were treated and how women were treated, and began to strike up feminist views among many people. It was evident that white men were applying much of the same principle to women as they were to slaves. Also during this time, the ideas of individualism seemed to only matter for the white man. Angelina Grimke became the first woman to speak before an American legislative body on February 21, 1838. While addressing the Massachusetts Legislature, she spoke of both slavery and women's rights together.

Angelina's older sister, Sarah Grimke shared much of the same beliefs. In 1837 she wrote a pamphlet called *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman*, which used the individualist feminist approach of comparing women to slaves. She compares the Louisiana law that said that all a slave possesses belongs to his master with a law that said, "A woman's personal property by marriage becomes absolutely her husband's which, at his death, he may leave entirely from her.":

"If the wife be injured in her person or property, she can bring no action for redress without her husband's concurrence, and in his name as well as her own. This law is similar to the law respecting slaves, 'A slave cannot bring suit against his master or any other person, for an injury-his master must bring it.'"

In the early nineteenth century, married women could not do much of anything without their husband's consent. Once women were married they seemed to disappear; they lost their names to men along with any identity of their own. Women lost all ownership of inherited property or earnings to their husbands as soon as they were married. Also by law, children were controlled only by their fathers. It wasn't until 1850 that the married woman's property law was passed. This law enabled women who were married to still be entitled to their inheritance. Due to the efforts of the Grimke sisters, women's rights there after began to become a subject of controversy throughout America.

Women were starting to want an education; many women battled to get into schools. One of the more famous women was Elizabeth Blackwell, who ended up getting herself into medical school to graduate first in her class, and make a huge breakthrough for women in medicine. Prior to this, it was unheard of that there would be a woman doctor. Women who worked primarily worked in professions such as a governess, teacher or librarian. During the Civil War, although still important, women's rights were somewhat shelved and the focus was put on anti-slavery. Abraham Lincoln said, " one war at a time, so I say one question at a time. This hour belongs to the negro." But during the Civil War, women were starting to show that they were capable of many things.

Elizabeth Blackwell returned from England to train women in the north to be nurses for the soldiers in war. Even now that women were allowed to be a part of the war, the only women who were able to tend to the men had to be

ugly. They were to have small breasts, be at least thirty years of age, and they wore plain black or brown dresses. Another woman who made her place in history during the Civil War was Mary Walker, who wanted to be a doctor in the army. She succeeded and became the first woman to get the Medal of Honor from the United States Government.

After the Civil War, the battle for Women's right to vote became a bigger issue. People like Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B. Anthony started to travel around America talking to groups of people and encouraging them to sign petitions to get the vote. The idea of women voting scared the majority of men in America. Among these were alcohol manufacturers and bar and saloon owners. This was because they were scared that with women voting, they would legalize alcohol and ruin their business.

People thought women were too weak, and that they would vote Republican because of Abraham Lincoln's influence. It was also thought that women voting would destruct families and cause divorce if husbands and wives disagreed on their political views. Another fear was that all the women would vote together, and a woman would be put into a political office and this would change everything. In 1871, 150 women attempted to vote and were arrested for illegal voting, which is a law that does not exist.

Voting became legal for women first in states such as Wyoming and Utah. In Wyoming, the main reason for granting the vote to women was to attract people to the state, and there were hardly any women there. In Utah, the population consisted of mostly Mormons who had multiple wives and the women would vote the same as their husbands would. In 1893 California

gave women the right to vote and in 1899, in the states where they could vote they did not.

Women voting and women beginning to work are both major parts of the fight for equality for women in America. Women's rights and the birth of feminism changed the way society looked at women in the Middle Class and changed the Middle Class values. Women were starting to have a more individualist view on life, they were realizing that they do not have to depend on a man to survive. Women started going to school and working, and not spending as much time at home tending to their husband and children. The 19th was the beginning of a new era of feminism, that women have not forgotten about or stopped fighting for until this day. The development of feminism in America began an extraordinary history for women and how they made their place in our society.

After devoting their time to the war, it only seemed devastating, and degrading that women be denied the right to vote again. I think Elizabeth was correct in believing that women could not attain complete equality until the right to vote was passed. The privilege to choose one's own leader guarantees certain rights and freedoms. The Woman's Bible is the culmination of what she thought to be unjust. To be honest, I love it, and find the fact that she went as far to criticize what society found so sacred intrigues me. I would have to agree with what Elizabeth and her friends was trying to change. I believe today the Bible still is in fact misinterpreted to the women's disadvantage, and Elizabeth and her colleagues just started people to think about it. Although, I believe such a reform is yet to come.

As you see Elizabeth Cady Stanton was an influential leader in the woman's rights movement. She was considered taboo in her time for what she did, and said, however many of the great people we think of today were.

Elizabeth never lived to see what she worked so hard for accomplished: when American women finally won their cherished right to vote, although the legislation was passed in 1920, or many of the other goals she set attained. However, woman today have all that the feminists in the nineteenth century could have ever asked for, this was solely achieved because of the efforts of these woman and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Women of that time wrote millions of word, traveled thousands of miles, shed oceans of tear, and poured their fortunes and lifetimes into the suffrage movement. That only leaves me to ponder... What might dedicated women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton have accomplished for the world if they had not been forced to spend their energy on winning a right that should have been theirs in the first place?

In 1854, Elizabeth took on the awesome task of addressing state legislators on the legal status of women. Elizabeth gave a moving outlook of feminine ability as she spoke in the Senate chamber. She demanded justice for woman, claiming they were as worthy as “ the proud white man himself, and yet by your laws we are classes with idiots, lunatics, and Negroes...” More over, she pointed out, a woman ranked even lower than these other legal pariahs, for a black man could buy his freedom, the lunatic could vote when sane “ and the idiot, too, of he be a male one, and not more than nine-tenths a fool...” Although, despite such overwhelming logic, the legislators were

unmoved. However, her hard work paid off when legislation was passed giving women rights over their own property, wages, and children.

The Feminist movement was stopped by the civil war as women devoted their time to the “great conflict.” After the war, with slavery at an end, it seemed like the perfect time to honor both Negroes and women with the right to vote. However, the women were told that it was “the Negroes’ hour.” Elizabeth couldn’t believe that not only were women being sacrificed again, but the vote was being given to yet more.

Suffragists and the Postbellum Lyceum 1029 war. Put another way, this essay traces what might usefully be termed the incorporation of American feminism. Although scholars occasionally note that women earned money speaking, they have treated this fact as secondary or incidental to the larger trajectory and substance of the woman suffrage movement. The continuing durability of Stanton’s assertion has led historians to view women’s labor as being voluntary, animated primarily by conscience rather than capital. The earning of women lyceum speakers, then, has been a passing footnote, not yet fully analyzed. Earning, however, was a fundamental piece of the story. Ignoring this aspect has hindered our ability not just to understand, but also to see, the movement in its fullness—which had important dimensions we have yet to uncover.

Our knowledge of the postbellum movement has been further attenuated by the lack of scholarship on these years. Scholars have instead preferred to study beginnings (1848-1860) and victories (1900-1920), leaving the long campaign’s middle decades—the years of greatest suffragist presence on



the commercial lyceum—relatively un- examined. Scholars of rhetoric have also recently insisted on the importance of the lecture system to our understanding of nineteenth-century womens rights, yet as one observes, “ such investigations proceed into little-chartered terrain.””

This essay systematically follows suffragists’ earning on the lecture circuit and argues for a réévaluation of conventional understandings of post-Civil War feminism and of postwar activists, who, as this essay contends, were business women, entrepreneurs who pursued profit with calculation and acumen. That fact pushes us to rethink what “ middle class” means when we think of suffrage reformers; it urges us to see woman suffrage as a more intimate part of the sociopolitical landscape; and it presents us with a movement that, due to economic pressures, was—contrary to conventional wisdom—largely de- centralized and grassroots. Because the fortunes of the movement and the lyceum were so tightly connected, as the lyceum declined during the 1880s from its postwar high, it caused a decline in the vibrancy of the one-woman campaigns that had characterized.

This article was extremely interesting, I had no idea how influential the womens movement was, it seems that there is a lot more left to learn. This had definitely strengthened my views on American History.