

Cuban women dbq essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Part A

(Suggested writing time—40 minutes)

Percent of Section II score—33 1/3

Directions: The following question is based on the accompanying Documents 1-10. (The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise.)

Write your answer on the lined pages of the Section II free-response booklet.

This question is designed to test your ability to work with and understand historical documents.

Write an essay that:

- Has a relevant thesis and supports that thesis with evidence from the documents.
- Uses all of the documents.
- Analyzes the documents by grouping them in as many appropriate ways as possible. Does not simply summarize the documents individually.
- Takes into account the sources of the documents and analyzes the authors' points of view.
- Identifies and explains the need for at least one additional type of document. You may refer to relevant historical information not mentioned in the documents.

Using the following documents, analyze the effects of the Cuban Revolution on women's lives and gender relations in Cuba in the period from 1959 to 1990. Identify an additional type of document and explain how it would help analyze the effects of the revolution.

Historical Background: Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro assumed power after overthrowing the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in January 1959. Castro then began a radical restructuring of Cuban society along socialist lines.

Unauthorized copying or reuse of any part of this page is illegal.

Source: Ofelia Domínguez Navarro, female Cuban socialist feminist, autobiography, reflecting on prerevolutionary conditions, 1971. A son was freed from paternal authority when he reached the age of majority, but both the mother and the daughters of the family had to tolerate that male authority as long as they lived with the father or the husband. Article 154 of the Spanish Civil Code states that the father exercises patria potestad [patriarchal power]. In spite of the military orders imposed by the United States occupiers in 1898–1902, the different laws passed by the Republic, and the new Constitution, the lower status of women, with the fluctuations imposed by time, remained in place. These conditions prevailed until 1959.

Document 2

Source: Yolanda Ferrer, female politician and general secretary of the Federation of Cuban Women, speech, 2003.

In 1960, the Ana Betancourt School for Peasant Women was created. Over a few years' time, 14, 000 young women from the countryside, including the most remote areas, came to Havana to learn basic job skills. The program included sewing, reading, and writing, and basic health and hygiene such as eliminating body parasites and fixing teeth. On Mother's Day parents coming to Havana to visit their daughters attending the school could barely

recognize them because of the changes in their skills, confidence, and health. In addition, the Schools to Upgrade Skills for Domestic Workers gave women training in skills that would enable them to break out of household work. As a result, Black women, formerly domestic servants, were for the first time hired as bank workers, a job from which they had previously been excluded.

Source: Male Cuban revolutionary sympathizer, interview in Cuba with United States anthropologist, published in 1969.

I'm against women's liberation. Most of the older generation is also. The Revolution gave women a lot more freedom by giving them jobs, so now they don't depend so much on their husbands. I think that's not right. I expect my wife to stay home and look after the house. She has plenty to do here. She owes herself to me and the children.

Source: Genoveva Hernández Díaz, age seventeen, teenage daughter of a Cuban revolutionary, interview, 1970. Before the Revolution, women didn't have as many opportunities as they do now. If they weren't prostitutes, or mistresses to military men or to some boss, they didn't have a chance. The only other opportunity was to be a servant. But now women are independent, free. A woman can work in the daytime and go to night school. Who ever studied before the Revolution? What money did they have? What facilities to study? Lots of older women who think women's liberation is terrible because women go in the street like men and do men's work. Those women never learned anything useful to themselves or to the Revolution.

They regard liberation as a hell. I think it's a good thing because now women are equal to men.

Source: Fidel Castro, Cuban leader, speech to the Federation of Cuban Women, 1974. There continues to be a certain discrimination against women. It is very real, and the Revolution is fighting it. It undoubtedly will be a long struggle. Women's full equality does not yet exist.

Unauthorized copying or reuse of any part of this page is illegal.

Source: Alina Fernández in her memoir *Castro's Daughter: An Exile's Memoir of Cuba*, published in the United States, 1997.

In 1978, I asked for maternity leave [from medical school] and received instead a resolution whereby I had been expelled for having abandoned my field of study. Motherhood and ration books are irreconcilable enemies. My infant daughter didn't even have a mattress when I got home, because I couldn't get one at the hardware store without a hospital certificate stating that she had been born alive. Our monthly ration of laundry soap was not enough for the inexhaustible pile of dirty diapers.

There had been no water at home since the minister of transportation had a swimming pool built in his garden a few blocks down. And bananas, pumpkins, and taro roots, the traditional baby foods, existed only in our memory.

Source: Cuban mother, interviewed by a United States journalist in Cuba, 1980. Now, in Cuba, there is a Family Code* that guarantees the equal rights of women in their homes. Everything is not different in a single day,

but it has made a difference for us all. The day-care centers also help us develop our careers. My daughters are students in the public schools. The little one goes to a day school. My older daughter is a student at a five-day-a-week boarding school in the countryside.