

Changes in the role of women 1939-1975

1939-1945

(During WW2)

Women did war work during WW2- taking over the jobs of men working in munitions factories, agriculture and transport as well as secretarial work and administration.

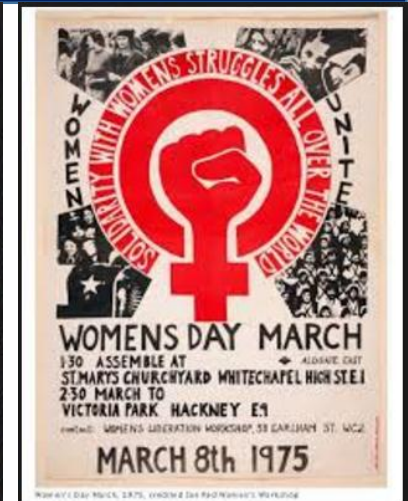
Number of women working doubled to more than seven million- around half a million in the armed forces.

Due to the Beveridge Report (an investigation into the health and wellbeing of the working class in 1942), changes began happening that directly benefitted women- school meals for all children, NHS to help keep them and their children healthy. These things helped increase women in the workplace BUT there were campaigns to get women to give up their jobs.

Laws: The 1943 Equal Pay Commission was supposed to give women equal pay but failed. The 1945 Butler Education Act guaranteed all females the right to a secondary education (which also increased the number of women university students).

Post WW2 Women in the 1940s-1950s

Creation of a cult of domesticity (being the celebration of the perfect women being a perfect housewife- being beautifully groomed, with a beautiful house, with beautiful domestic appliances and raising beautiful children in beautiful clothes). Fuelled by advertising and the new boom in consumer goods (like vacuum cleaners, stoves, convenience food, fridges, dishwashers and washing machines etc.). This was even though the 1944 Education Act banned the sacking of married women teachers and an increase in female students in secondary education and university- although they still had a curriculum based on domestic duties such as Home Economics and childcare). Even the Beveridge report was based on women staying at home while their husbands went to work. **Women in the home was a bit of a problem though- due to labour shortages after WWII leading to the encouragement of women going to back to work.**



Feminism in the 1960s and 1970s

Women got fed up with the slow pace of change and the feminist movement began to call for change. They became more politically active; campaigning for equal pay and equal opportunities in education and employment burning bras as symbols of male oppression, protesting Miss World beauty pageants; claiming a woman should be appreciated for more than just her body and looks. They were campaigning also to prevent women from being treated as second class citizens and to get parliamentary support for items like contraception and abortion rights. Prominent feminists from the time (such as Germaine Greer's) wrote books that were very influential. Germaine Greer said things like: "Yet if a woman never lets herself go, how will she ever know how far she might have got? If she never takes off her high-heeled shoes, how will she ever know how far she could walk or how fast she could run?"

Legal Changes

	Contraceptive Pill (1961)	Abortion Act (1967)	Divorce Reform Act (1969)	Equal Pay Act (1970)	Sex Discrimination Act (1975)
Who?	Conservatives (Enoch Powell as Minister for Health)	David Steel (backed by Labour government) but Private Member's bill.	Labour government (large Labour majority in Parliament made it possible). Private Member's bill and free vote).	Labour government-one of their election manifesto promises	Labour
What happened?	Contraceptive pill available on the NHS. Not available to single women until 1974.	Free vote. Abortion made legal in the UK.	Allowed a couple to divorce on grounds of adultery, cruelty, desertion (for at least two years) or by mutual consent (after five years if only one wanted a divorce).	Tried to redress the imbalance between men and women's pay.	Both men and women protected from gender discrimination in employment, training, education, harassment and the provision of goods and services.
Effect on the lives of women?	Gave more control over their lives, meaning they married and started families later- could get jobs and university degrees etc.	Gave women more control over when they had a baby. Huge opposition from religious groups and some people who believed in traditional family values.	Women could get a divorce more easily if they were in abusive or unhappy relationships and would get support to obtain those divorces.	Gave women more chances of supporting themselves and not needing to get married so a husband could support them.	Gave women improvements over opportunities. Demonstrated government support for these actions.

1969 Family Planning Poster

“Many people found this poster shocking and even offensive when it first appeared. Contraception was a taboo subject for display in public spaces and the image itself subverts the model's masculinity. However, these shock tactics were effective in drawing men's attention to the issue of unwanted pregnancy. It is a famous example of the power of advertising, and the image has become part of popular British iconography, still referred to and reproduced”.

(From the Victoria and Albert Museum collection and website)



Why did things change for women?

The Women's Liberation Movement

Became strong in Britain towards the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s, Germaine Greer published *The Female Eunuch* which was very influential on the movement.

Attitude of the Labour Government

Many changes for women happened under a Labour government as they were generally more open to social changes- such as legalisation of male homosexual acts between consenting adults in private. Although many were free votes and private members bills, they still had to be passed by Parliament, which after 1966 had a large Labour Majority making it easy to pass those acts. Still- not every Labour MP backed the reforms and some reforms received support from other parties.

European Influence

Britain was gradually becoming closer to the European Economic Community (EEC) which became the EU. When it joined in 1973, Britain had to comply with the equal rights legislation in the EEC treaty.

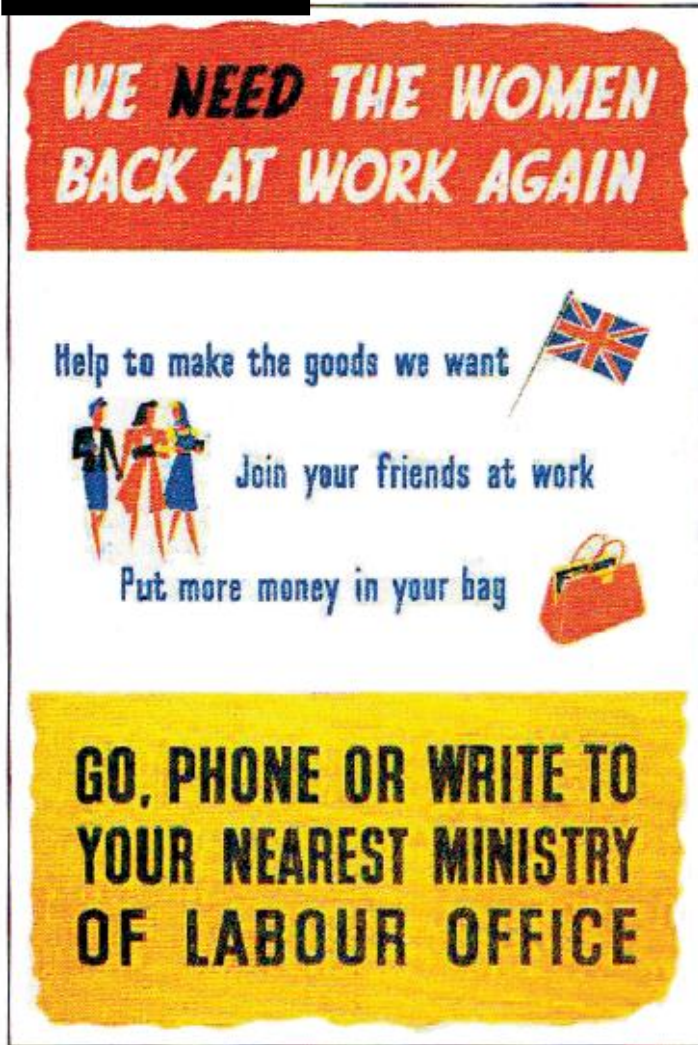
Private Members' Bills

The Labour government did not initiate most of the laws that changed- e.g. the 1967 Abortion Act introduced by David Steel. Controversial issues were dealt with outside of the party, so that it didn't cause splits within the government.



Sample Exam Questions

Source A



An advertisement published by the government in 1954

Question: Why was this source published in 1954?

STRUCTURE:

- Identify the action/ reaction of the audience.
- Refer to the content of the source that gives you that information (either quote or describe- but keep it brief either way).
- Explain why the source creator would want their audience to have that reaction based on what you know.
- Explain the significance of the date mentioned in the question. (If you can't think of anything that happened on that date, go for the general period).

REMEMBER

Purpose questions need you to identify the action/ reaction the audience is supposed to take/ have.

What does this source want the audience to actually do?

All source questions on Paper 2 require you to refer to the content of the source and your contextual knowledge to support your answer to the question: e.g. what is going on around the date in the question?

Sample Exam Questions

Question: How useful is this source as evidence about women's opportunities in the 1950s?

Source B



SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE OPENS IN KENT

This is one of the nation's newest comprehensive schools. Lucky pupils here will be able to leave or go on to university with no regrets about their schooldays.

The whole approach to learning here is completely modern. The most striking feature is the very modern equipment. Boys can perfect their engineering skills with the most up to date machinery. In the office skills class, no more scrabbling for typewriters- the girls have one each. Similarly, in dressmaking and needlework the girls have all they need.

This really is a school of tomorrow for the children of today.

From a government information film broadcast in 1958.

STRUCTURE:

- Explain what the source is telling you and how it is relevant.
- Explain what you can infer from the source- what isn't obvious but you can work out (especially if you are applying the context of the time to the source).
- What limitations does the source have? Is it unreliable? Has it been produced for a purpose that makes it untrustworthy? Or more trustworthy?
- Is it an accurate source- does it fit with what you know of the time?
- Look at why the source has been produced? Does that make it trustworthy?

These questions help you evaluate the source- you may not need them all!

Sample Exam Questions

Question: Does source C prove that source D is wrong about Britain in the 1960s? (Sources are on the following page)

STRUCTURE: Remember, this is your STANDARD TWO SOURCE QUESTION

- Explain similarities and differences between the sources.
- Look at who has written the sources and when- this will be your key indicator of whether source C proves source D wrong. If source C has been written by someone entirely untrustworthy then it can't prove source D wrong!
- Identify whether the purpose of the source makes it more likely to prove source D wrong or right?
- Support your claims with understanding of the context of the time.
- REMEMBER TO REFER TO (AND EVALUATE) BOTH SOURCES

REMEMBER

Read both sources carefully, making sure that you have understood the point behind both sources.

Make sure that you have referred to both sources.

Make sure that you have answered the question asked. Not all two source comparison questions will be exactly the same. USE the LANGUAGE of the QUESTION in your answer.

Sources for the previous question

Source C

From 1964 to 1970 Labour has made Britain a far less civilised place to live. Labour attacked what they saw as 'out of date' laws. But at least people knew how to behave in the 1950s. Now we see shouting and swearing and violence in the streets. Now we have marriages which last only a few minutes, leaving women miserable and isolated, broken families and deprived children. We have the terrible toll of unborn children who have been killed by selfish, reckless young women running eagerly for abortions.

From an article in the pro-Conservative newspaper, The Daily Telegraph, in 1970. There was a General election that year.

Source D

Roy Jenkins and his colleagues made Britain a better place, especially for women. When Labour took power in 1964 the existing laws were clearly inadequate for the modern age. Many laws were viciously unfair to women. The Divorce Reform Act of 1969 was just one of the many great liberal and civilising reforms of the 1960s. This Act ended the emphasis on guilt and fault. The Matrimonial Property Act of 1970 recognised that a wife's work was an important contribution to a marriage. The laws represented a change in marriage from an unequal contract into a partnership based on affection and companionship.

From an obituary for the Labour MP Roy Jenkins who served in Labour governments in the 1960s and 1970s and died in 2003.

Sample Exam Questions

Question: Study source E. How useful is this source to an historian studying women in the workplace?

STRUCTURE:

- Explain what the source is telling you and how it is relevant.
- Explain what you can infer from the source- what isn't obvious but you can work out (especially if you are applying the context of the time to the source).
- What limitations does the source have? Is it unreliable? Has it been produced for a purpose that makes it untrustworthy? Or more trustworthy?
- Is it an accurate source- does it fit with what you know of the time?
- Look at why the source has been produced? Does that make it trustworthy?

These questions help you evaluate the source- you may not need them all!

Source E

Following the Equal Pay Act, I visited a wide range of workplaces to expose what was really going on. A typical example of what I found was this shoe factory. There were a lot of women putting heels on shoes. I said to the manager, 'I suppose you have equal pay?' and he said, 'Oh yes, we have equal pay'. So I asked him, 'Do you mean to say that the women here running this machine and the men over there running the same machine, get the same pay?' He said 'Oh no, heavens no! Those men are putting heels on men's shoes. The women are putting heels on women's shoes. It's not the same work.' There were six nails going into each shoe and they were using the same machines. But the women didn't get the same pay.

From a report by the leader of the Six Points group in 1971. The Six Points Group was a campaigning feminist organisation.

Sample Exam Questions

Question: Study all the sources-

“In the period 1939-75, opportunities for women increased”. Using your own knowledge and the sources explain how far you agree with this interpretation (16 marks, 3 spelling, punctuation and grammar)

Plan this answer before you write it by creating the following table.

If you run out of time on the last question then the examiner can give you some credit for that- just don't spend too long on it!

	For	Both	Against
Knowledge	Add knowledge that supports the view.		Add knowledge that challenge the view.
Sources	List sources that supports the view.	List sources that support and challenge the view.	List sources that challenge the view.

REMEMBER

You need to go across the whole period (1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s).

You knowledge is much more important than the sources. Not using the sources will lose maybe 2 marks. Only using the sources will get you only 4 marks out of 16.

Make sure your answer is balanced (deals with both sides of the question).

Suggested structure

As long as you've gone across the whole period throughout your whole answer- it doesn't matter if you don't do it for both sides of the argument.

Discuss the support for the interpretation. Use your knowledge and support it further with a couple of sources.

Discuss the challenge for the interpretation. Use your knowledge and support it further with a couple of sources.

Sum up with your conclusion

Remember to go across the 1940s (1939 counts), 50s, 60s, and 70s in your answer