Declaration of Sentiments: Women’s Grievances Against Men

Women’s Rights Convention: Seneca Falls, New York
Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott?
July 19, 1848

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves, by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise. He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men - both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.
He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, **civilly dead**.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes, with **impunity**, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master - the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer **chastisement**.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes of divorce; in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women - the law, in all cases, going upon the false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty **remuneration**.

He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction, which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education - all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in Church as well as State, but a **subordinate** position, claiming **Apostolic** authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment, by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and **abject** life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious **degradation**, - in view of the unjust laws above mentioned,
and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.
Teacher’s Guide

Name of Text: Declaration of Sentiments: *Women’s Grievances against Men*

Question Composers: *John Tierney, Caroline Hatcher*

**Standards:**

**NV Social Studies Standards:** H2.[6-8].9; H2.[6-8].10 and H3[6-8].16

**Common Core State Standards:**

WHST- 6-8.WHST.2: Write informative/explanatory texts; 6-8.WHST.4 and .5: Production & Distribution;  6-8.WHST.9 and .10: Research & Range

RH - 6-8.RH.1.2: Key Ideas and Details; 6-8.RH.4: Craft & Structure;  6-8.RH.10: Range of Reading Level of Text Complexity

SL - SL.8.1a-1d: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Dependent Questions</th>
<th>Teacher Notes and Possible Textual Evidence for Student Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What language in lines 6-15 parallel the phrasing of the Declaration of Independence? | **Purpose:** To orient the reader to a document which represents an American woman’s Declaration of Independence.  
**Answers:** Direct parallel in lines 6-10  
Line 11; note the word “women” has been added  
Lines 12-15 stopping at the word “governed” on line 15 |
| In the sentence in lines 23-26 who is being referred to as “them” and “their”?  
How do we know there is a history of degradation? | **Purpose:** To have the reader identify the wronged population and their rationale for seeking remedy.  
**Answers:** “Them” and “Their” refers to women.  
Line 23, “A long train of abuses and usurpations...” |
| Beginning at line 32 and continuing to line 71 a series of grievances is listed; create categories which encompass all of these grievances. | **Purpose:** For the reader to identify and separate the grievances listed in the document.  
**Answers:** Categories should be similar to these but may not be exact.  
Politics/Voting Rights    Marriage    Self Esteem/Self Worth  
Property/Employment    Education  
(40, 51-53, 54-55, 56-58)    (57-58, 59-60) |
| Why would these authors intentionally use the language and format of the Declaration of Independence to introduce their cause? | **Purpose:** To have students understand the intentional tone of disenfranchisement in an “equal society.”  
**Answers:** lines 74-76 |
| How are the authors planning to further promote their cause? | **Purpose:** The reader recognizes that this is an intentional crusade of equality.  
**Answers:** lines 79-82: employ agents, circulate tracts, petition legislatures, enlist the pulpit and press and continue with a series of conventions throughout the nation. |
Writing Prompt:

Using evidence from the document, describe why the Seneca Falls Convention was a necessary initial step toward women’s equality. Use at least four pieces of evidence from the document to support your explanation.

Checklist identifying key points that will assist in measuring student success and/or difficulty with the close reading and/or writing prompt.

Students are expected to use a well-developed essay with a strong introduction and conclusion. The essay should include at least four examples (including line numbers) from the document with well-developed commentary. Examples may include evidence of specific inequalities, grievances against men, disenfranchisement with so-called “equal rights,” and general dissatisfaction with their overall social status.