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Gender



Lead-in

Traditional notions of gender tend to assign a strictly domestic and maternal role to women, who are identified primarily as mothers and wives. In the modern context, however, gender is no longer considered a natural given, something that should be accepted unquestioningly. Instead, there is a growing tendency to view gender as a social construct, a gradual cultural procedure that prescribes appropriate behaviors for men and women.

For centuries, advocates of women's rights have been committed to exposing the patriarchal oppression of women, demanding equality and civil rights for them, and enabling them to speak for themselves. Varied as their respective opinions and attitudes may be, these "feminists" shared a common purpose of addressing the problems that women faced. Some targeted such traditional labels as "the angel in the house." Some sought to expel the "feminine mystique" that trapped suburban housewives. Some drew attention to underrated or neglected female authors and artists. Others pursued a more fundamental cure. They called for a "feminist critique" of male assumptions and male-dominated cultural norms. The evolution of these ideas demonstrates the changing social dynamics that have given rise to different understandings of gender issues.

In this unit, you are going to read several texts relevant to the subject of gender. Note the different approaches to the subject, and how these approaches are related to their particular historical and cultural contexts.

Warm-up

1. There are several waves of feminist movements in history. Conduct research on the main agendas of these movements.
2. Gender roles are inculcated through a wide range of social practices, such as the toys children play with and the games they play. When it comes to reading, there are "boys' books" and "girls' books." What about the books you read when you were little? Were they gender-neutral or gender-specific?
3. Some critics of feminism accuse it of encouraging a tendency to create antagonism between the sexes and to jump at anything that smacks of gender-based discrimination or inequality. There are also concerns about a gender divide. What is your take on this?

Part A

 **Mary Wollstonecraft**

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

(excerpt from Introduction)

 **Betty Friedan**

The Feminine Mystique

(excerpt from Chapter 1)



Introduction

Born in the time of the French Revolution and influenced by Enlightenment ideas, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is often considered a trailblazing treatise on feminism, in which Wollstonecraft contends that the revolutionary goal of liberty, equality, and fraternity would be undermined if women were excluded from the social reform programs. In this treatise, Wollstonecraft lashes out at the education women receive, which reduces them to glittering ornaments that decorate the lives of men. Instead of associating women with mere sentiments and emotions, Wollstonecraft calls for the cultivation of rational mind and critical thinking in women. It is her repeated argument that women should, first of all, be treated and respected as human beings, and only in a social milieu that encourages their full intellectual development can women have “true dignity and human happiness.”

More than 170 years after the publication of this foundational work, Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) explores the subject of gendered roles in a completely different social context. What is striking, however, is that the complaint she has and the redress she seeks are not altogether different from those of Wollstonecraft. As a well-educated woman who became a housewife after getting married, Friedan suffered from a “problem that has no name,” the unnamable discontent with life. In 1957, she sent a questionnaire to her Smith College classmates, and the feedback suggested to her that she was not alone in her quiet desperation and this “problem that has no name” was a prevalent social problem for women. As the result of the ensuing research and studies, *The Feminine Mystique* draws attention to the predicaments of American women, especially the seemingly blissful suburban housewives, in the mid-20th century.

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

- 1 My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their fascinating graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone. I earnestly wish to point out in what true dignity and human happiness consists—I wish to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them, that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only the objects of pity and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt.
- 2 Dismissing then those pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften our slavish dependence, and despising that weak elegance of mind, exquisite sensibility, and sweet docility of manners, supposed to be the sexual characteristics of the weaker vessel, I wish to show that elegance is inferior to virtue, that the first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex; and that secondary views should be brought to this simple touchstone.
- 3 This is a rough sketch of my plan; and should I express my conviction with the energetic emotions that I feel whenever I think of the subject, the dictates of experience and reflection will be felt by some of my readers. Animated by this important object, I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style—I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render me unaffected; for wishing rather to persuade by the force of my arguments, than dazzle by the elegance of my language, I shall not waste my time in rounding periods, nor in fabricating the turgid bombast of artificial feelings, which, coming from the head, never reach the heart. I shall be employed about things, not words! And, anxious to render my sex more respectable members of society, I shall try to avoid that flowery diction which has slid from essays into novels, and from novels into familiar letters and conversation.
- 4 These pretty nothings, these caricatures of the real beauty of sensibility, dropping glibly from the tongue, vitiate the taste, and create a kind of sickly delicacy that turns

away from simple unadorned truth; and a deluge of false sentiments and over-stretched feelings, stifling the natural emotions of the heart, render the domestic pleasures insipid, that ought to sweeten the exercise of those severe duties, which educate a rational and immortal being for a nobler field of action.

- 5 The education of women has, of late, been more attended to than formerly; yet they are still reckoned a frivolous sex, and ridiculed or pitied by the writers who endeavour by satire or instruction to improve them. It is acknowledged that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments: meanwhile, strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves, the only way women can rise in the world—by marriage. And this desire making mere animals of them, when they marry, they act as such children may be expected to act: they dress; they paint, and nickname God's creatures. Surely these weak beings are only fit for the seraglio! Can they govern a family, or take care of the poor babes whom they bring into the world?
- 6 If then it can be fairly deduced from the present conduct of the sex, from the prevalent fondness for pleasure, which takes place of ambition and those nobler passions that open and enlarge the soul; that the instruction which women have received has only tended, with the constitution of civil society, to render them insignificant objects of desire; mere propagators of fools! If it can be proved, that in aiming to accomplish them, without cultivating their understandings, they are taken out of their sphere of duties, and made ridiculous and useless when the short lived bloom of beauty is over, I presume that rational men will excuse me for endeavouring to persuade them to become more masculine and respectable.

Notes

1. **Mary Wollstonecraft:** Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) was an English writer and passionate advocate of educational and social equality for women. As a child, she suffered from the brutality of her father and the submissiveness of her mother. She started to earn her own living at an early age, first as a companion to a widow and later as a governess. After the outbreak of the French Revolution, Wollstonecraft championed the revolutionary cause and wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, a famous rebuttal of Edmund Burke's eloquent attack on the French Revolution.

The Feminine Mystique

- 1 The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—“Is this all?”
- 2 For over fifteen years there was no word of this yearning in the millions of words written about women, for women, in all the columns, books and articles by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfillment as wives and mothers. Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread, cook gourmet snails, and build a swimming pool with their own hands; how to dress, look, and act more feminine and make marriage more exciting; how to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents. They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights—the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for. Some women, in their forties and fifties, still remembered painfully giving up those dreams, but most of the younger women no longer even thought about them. A thousand expert voices applauded their femininity, their adjustment, their new maturity. All they had to do was devote their lives from earliest girlhood to finding a husband and bearing children.
- 3 By the end of the nineteen-fifties, the average marriage age of women in America dropped to 20, and was still dropping, into the teens. Fourteen million girls were engaged by 17. The proportion of women attending college in comparison with men dropped from 47 percent in 1920 to 35 percent in 1958. A century earlier, women had fought for higher education; now girls went to college to get a husband. By the mid-

fifties, 60 percent dropped out of college to marry, or because they were afraid too much education would be a marriage bar. Colleges built dormitories for “married students,” but the students were almost always the husbands. A new degree was instituted for the wives—“Ph. T.” (Putting Husband Through).

- 4 Then American girls began getting married in high school. And the women’s magazines, deploring the unhappy statistics about these young marriages, urged that courses on marriage, and marriage counselors, be installed in the high schools. Girls started going steady at twelve and thirteen, in junior high. And an advertisement for a child’s dress in the *New York Times* in the fall of 1960 said: “She Too Can Join the Man-Trap Set.”
- 5 By the end of the fifties, the United States birthrate was overtaking India’s. The birth-control movement, renamed Planned Parenthood, was asked to find a method whereby women who had been advised that a third or fourth baby would be born dead or defective might have it anyhow. Statisticians were especially astounded at the fantastic increase in the number of babies among college women. Where once they had two children, now they had four, five, six. Women who had once wanted careers were now making careers out of having babies. So rejoiced *Life* magazine in a 1956 paean to the movement of American women back to the home.

Notes

1. **Betty Friedan:** Betty Friedan (1921–2006) was an American feminist best known for her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Graduated in 1942 from Smith College with a degree in psychology and completed a year of graduate work at the University of California at Berkeley, Friedan pursued a doctoral degree in psychology before dropping out to marry and then stayed at home as a housewife and mother in the suburbs of New York while doing freelance work for a number of magazines.

Reading Strategies



Use Context Clues

One of the main obstacles in reading is the existence of unfamiliar words and difficult expressions. Though consulting dictionaries or references may be an easy way out, overreliance on them would significantly slow down the reading speed. Most of the time, we use context clues to decipher the meaning of new words and expressions.

For instance, the word “vitate” in the text might be unfamiliar to you.

These pretty nothings, these caricatures of the real beauty of sensibility, dropping glibly from the tongue, **vitate** the taste, and create a kind of sickly delicacy that turns away from simple unadorned truth. (para. 4)

Yet, the derogatory tone in “pretty **nothings**,” “**caricatures** of the real beauty,” “dropping **glibly**,” and “**sickly** delicacy,” can help us figure out the negative meaning of “vitate.” Therefore, vitiating the taste cannot mean improving the taste in any positive fashion, but signifies the spoiling or debasing of taste.

Use context clues to identify the meaning of the underlined words (from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*). Choose the answer closest to the contextual meaning of the word.

1. Dismissing then those pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften our slavish dependence, and despising that weak elegancy of mind, exquisite sensibility, and sweet docility of manners, supposed to be the sexual characteristics of the weaker vessel, I wish to show that elegance is inferior to virtue...
A. refinement of taste
B. intellectual maturity
C. false feminine delicacy
D. literary talent
2. Animated by this important object, I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style—I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render me unaffected.
A. try hard to
B. scornfully refuse to
C. be willing to
D. figure out how to
3. It is acknowledged that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments: meanwhile, strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves, the only way women can rise in the world—by marriage.
A. refined
B. genuine
C. lustful
D. artistic

Comprehension Check

- 1** Scan the two texts and find out what qualities and behaviors are considered feminine/unfeminine in the authors' times. Write your answers in the table below.

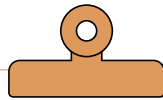
Title	Feminine	Unfeminine
<i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i>		
<i>The Feminine Mystique</i>		

- 2** Refer back to the "feminine" qualities you have identified in the table above and reflect on the possible negative effects of such definitions of femininity. Write your answers in the table below.

Title	Feminine qualities	Possible negative effects
<i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i>		
<i>The Feminine Mystique</i>		

- 3** While sharing the same concern for women's welfare, Wollstonecraft's and Friedan's writings have different emphases. Summarize their main difference in your own words.

- 4** In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft argues that women are “degraded by mistaken notions of female excellence.” According to Wollstonecraft and Friedan, what are these mistaken notions of female excellence?

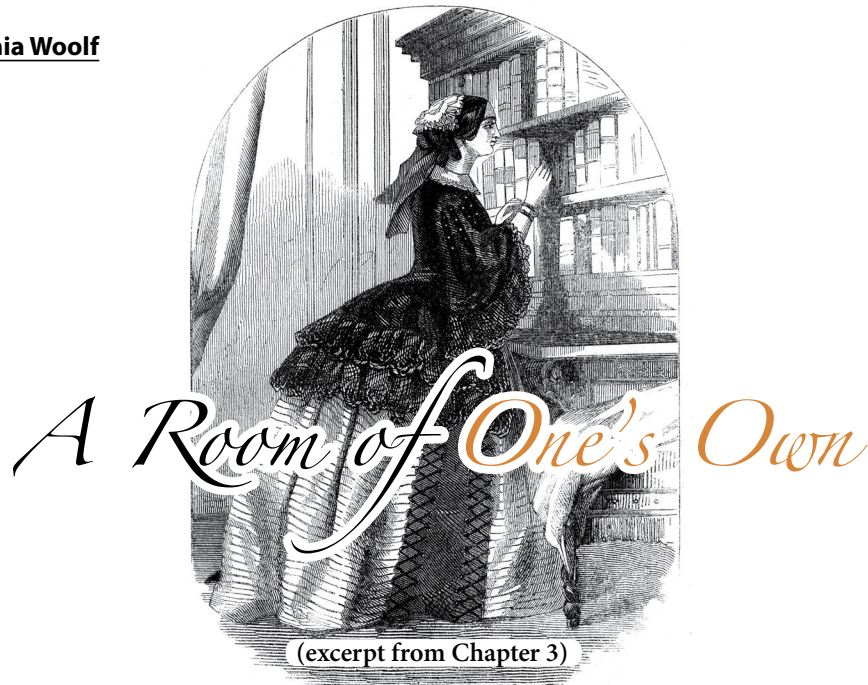


Extension Activities

- 1** The portrayal of women in literature often includes the romantic idealization of female beauty and virtue. Women are either depicted as objects of the male gaze, or placed on a moral pedestal. Compile a list of such “ideal” women in literature.
- 2** Wollstonecraft is particularly averse to the way women are taught to adopt “artificial weakness” and “infantile airs,” that is, to present themselves as fragile and immature creatures in need of help and protection. Does such an image of women still exist in mass media today? Do a presentation on the media representation of women.

Part B

 **Virginia Woolf**



Introduction

Published as an essay in 1929, *A Room of One's Own* was based on two lectures given by Woolf in 1928 at Newnham College and Girton College, the first two colleges for women at Cambridge. In this foundational work of modern feminism, Woolf addresses the predicaments of women, especially female authors and artists, in a society dominated by men. Woolf points out the peculiar fact that women, though often the source of literary and artistic inspiration, are insignificant or even absent in historical and social accounts. Moreover, centuries of financial and educational disadvantages have dampened women's social aspirations and inhibited their expression of creativity. Women could not have written the plays of Shakespeare, Woolf argues, not because they did not have the necessary talent, but because they were not given the opportunity to develop it.

While the previous works in our selection deal with women's social existence in general, Woolf's essay draws our attention to female authorship and women's writing. In later times, finding their own voices and articulating their own ideas have become the major concerns of women's movements.

- 1 I went, therefore, to the shelf where the histories stand and took down one of the latest, Professor Trevelyan's *History of England*. Once more I looked up Women, found "position of" and turned to the pages indicated. "Wife-beating," I read, "was a recognized right of man, and was practised without shame by high as well as low... Similarly," the historian goes on, "the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parents' choice was liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice, particularly in the 'chivalrous' upper classes... Betrothal often took place while one or both of the parties was in the cradle, and marriage when they were scarcely out of the nurses' charge." That was about 1470, soon after Chaucer's time. The next reference to the position of women is some two hundred years later, in the time of the Stuarts. "It was still the exception for women of the upper and middle class to choose their own husbands, and when the husband had been assigned, he was lord and master, so far at least as law and custom could make him. Yet even so," Professor Trevelyan concludes, "neither Shakespeare's women nor those of authentic seventeenth-century memoirs, like the Verneys and the Hutchinsons, seem wanting in personality and character." Certainly, if we consider it, Cleopatra must have had a way with her; Lady Macbeth, one would suppose, had a will of her own; Rosalind, one might conclude, was an attractive girl. Professor Trevelyan is speaking no more than the truth when he remarks that Shakespeare's women do not seem wanting in personality and character. Not being a historian, one might go even further and say that women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of time. Indeed, if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even greater. But this is woman in fiction. In fact, as Professor Trevelyan points out, she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room.
- 2 A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and

conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.

- 3 It was certainly an odd monster that one made up by reading the historians first and the poets afterwards—a worm winged like an eagle; the spirit of life and beauty in a kitchen chopping up suet. But these monsters, however amusing to the imagination, have no existence in fact. What one must do to bring her to life was to think poetically and prosaically at one and the same moment, thus keeping in touch with fact—that she is Mrs. Martin, aged thirty-six, dressed in blue, wearing a black hat and brown shoes; but not losing sight of fiction either—that she is a vessel in which all sorts of spirits and forces are coursing and flashing perpetually. The moment, however, that one tries this method with the Elizabethan woman, one branch of illumination fails; one is held up by the scarcity of facts. One knows nothing detailed, nothing perfectly true and substantial about her. History scarcely mentions her.
- 4 Occasionally an individual woman is mentioned, an Elizabeth, or a Mary; a queen or a great lady. But by no possible means could middle-class women with nothing but brains and character at their command have taken part in any one of the great movements which, brought together, constitute the historian's view of the past. Nor shall we find her in any collection of anecdotes. Aubrey hardly mentions her. She never writes her own life and scarcely keeps a diary; there are only a handful of her letters in existence. She left no plays or poems by which we can judge her. What one wants, I thought—and why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton supply it?—is a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking; would she be likely to have a servant? All these facts lie somewhere, presumably, in parish registers and account books; the life of the average Elizabethan woman must be scattered about somewhere, could one collect it and make a book of it. But what I find deplorable, I continued, looking about the bookshelves again, is that nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century. I have no model in my mind to turn about

this way and that. Here am I asking why women did not write poetry in the Elizabethan age, and I am not sure how they were educated; whether they were taught to write; whether they had sitting-rooms to themselves; how many women had children before they were twenty-one; what, in short, they did from eight in the morning till eight at night. They had no money evidently; according to Professor Trevelyan they were married whether they liked it or not before they were out of the nursery, at fifteen or sixteen very likely. It would have been extremely odd, even upon this showing, had one of them suddenly written the plays of Shakespeare, I concluded, and I thought of that old gentleman, who is dead now, but was a bishop, I think, who declared that it was impossible for any woman, past, present, or to come, to have the genius of Shakespeare.

- 5 Be that as it may, I could not help thinking, as I looked at the works of Shakespeare on the shelf, that the bishop was right at least in this; it would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare. Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith, let us say. Shakespeare himself went, very probably—his mother was an heiress—to the grammar school, where he may have learnt Latin—Ovid, Virgil and Horace—and the elements of grammar and logic. He was, it is well known, a wild boy who poached rabbits, perhaps shot a deer, and had, rather sooner than he should have done, to marry a woman in the neighbourhood, who bore him a child rather quicker than was right. That escapade sent him to seek his fortune in London. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre; he began by holding horses at the stage door. Very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practising his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets, and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home. She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. They would have spoken sharply but

kindly, for they were substantial people who knew the conditions of life for a woman and loved their daughter—indeed, more likely than not she was the apple of her father’s eye. Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighbouring wool-stapler. She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage. He would give her a chain of beads or a fine petticoat, he said; and there were tears in his eyes. How could she disobey him? How could she break his heart? The force of her own gift alone drove her to it. She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer’s night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother’s, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager—a fat, loose-lipped man—guffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting—no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress. He hinted—you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last—for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same grey eyes and rounded brows—at last Nick Greene the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so—who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet’s heart when caught and tangled in a woman’s body?—killed herself one winter’s night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle.

Notes

1. **Virginia Woolf:** Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) was an English writer best known for her experimental novels, especially *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), which departed from the path of traditional realism in their exploration of the characters' consciousness. She was the central figure of the celebrated Bloomsbury Group, and her name was closely associated with literary modernism. Woolf also wrote pioneering essays on artistic theory, literary history, women's writing, and the politics of power. She experimented with several forms of biographical writing, composed painterly short fiction, and sent a lifetime of brilliant letters to her friends and family.
2. **History of England:** G. M. Trevelyan's *History of England* (1926) is a renowned one-volume work that provides a comprehensive overview of England's history.
3. **Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, and Rosalind:** These are female characters in Shakespeare's plays.
4. **Aubrey:** It refers to John Aubrey (1626–1697), an English antiquary, natural philosopher, and writer.
5. **Newnham and Girton:** They are two women's colleges at Cambridge. Woolf's essay is based on two papers read to the Arts Society at Newnham College and the Odtas (a literary society, the name an acronym for "One Damned Thing After Another") at Girton College in October 1928.
6. **Elephant and Castle:** A tavern south of the Thames where roads went off to different parts of southern England. In England, there existed a tradition of burying suicides at the crossroads.

Comprehension Check

1 Read each statement and decide whether it is true (T) or false (F) based on the text.

- ☐ 1. “I” browsed through Professor Trevelyan’s *History of England* and found abundant accounts of great women in history.
- ☐ 2. If woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance.
- ☐ 3. In literature written by men, women are often neglected, or downright forgotten.
- ☐ 4. It is impossible for women to have gifts and talents comparable to those of men.
- ☐ 5. It would have been impossible for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare.

2 Why does Woolf refer to woman as a “very queer, composite being”?

3 According to Woolf, “nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century.” What exactly does she want to know about women in history? Why?

4 Woolf gives a lengthy account of the life story of Judith, a fictional sister of Shakespeare. Write a summary of this account in your own words.

Extension Activities

1 Why haven’t women made more contributions to the great wealth of literature? Brainstorm the possible reasons that might hinder women writers on their way to success. Present your answers to the class.

2 Women play a significant role in contemporary Chinese society, achieving great success across diverse professional fields. If the Judith of Woolf’s imagination (a gifted woman with artistic or literary talent) were to live today, in China, what would her story be like? Confine your writing to 200-300 words.

Supplementary Reading

- William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*
- Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, *Cranford*
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”
- Adrienne Rich, “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision”
- John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*
- Florence Nightingale, *Cassandra*
- Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*
- Susan Sontag, “A Woman’s Beauty: Put-Down or Power Source?”
- Eileen Chang, *The Golden Cangue* (张爱玲, 《金锁记》)
- *The Ballad of Mulan* (《木兰辞》) and other versions of the legend of Mulan in ancient Chinese literature
- Xiao Hong, *The Field of Life and Death* (萧红, 《生死场》)