

## **Primary Source Paper Assignment**

When historians write history, they use two types of sources: primary and secondary. Primary sources are photographs, newspaper articles, letters, diaries, or other artifacts that were produced during/by a specific time period, event, or person. Secondary sources are usually essays, articles, or books that analyze and interpret a set of primary sources in order to tell a story about a specific time period, event, or person.

The purpose of a primary source paper is to engage you in the role of a historian.

**Choose ONE source from the two pasted below.**

Write a short essay on women's history that includes the following:

- Describe the document/source. Who wrote it, when, where? Do you know who the author is by name? Do you know the race, age, or gender of the author?
- Why do you think the author wrote the document? What was the author's motivation for writing? Did s/he have an intended audience? Can you discern any particular characteristics about the audience?
- What kinds of conclusions about womanhood, work, and/or activism can you draw from the sources.
- What do we learn about the time period in which the documents were written?
- Do the experiences that are described in the document relate to history that we have discussed in class?

Send paper to professor by email: [kwarren@ku.edu](mailto:kwarren@ku.edu)

Page requirement: 2-3 pages (500-700 words)

SOURCE A



## SOURCE B

### ***Speech of Charlotte Perkins Gilman Stetson to the Convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, January 1897***, by Charlotte Anna Perkins Gilman

Underlying the objections to woman suffrage is a reason of which, as an American, I am deeply ashamed. I do not think either men or women have the same honest pride in our democracy that they had fifty years ago. We are becoming a little afraid of what Europe has always told us was an experiment, but one reason it has not yet been all we could wish is that it is not a democracy at all, but a semi-democracy, one-half of the race ruling over the other half.

Another deep-seated feeling is that, while development is the general rule, yet the production of the best men and women requires "the maternal sacrifice," *i. e.* that the mother shall be sacrificed to her children, and incidentally to her husband. If the sacrifice is necessary, well and good; but how if it is not? . . . . It has been regarded as dangerous to improve the condition of women for fear they would not be as good mothers. If gain to the mother means robbery to the child, let the mother remain as she is. But the standard is the amount of good done to the children, not the amount of evil done to herself. . . . .

Grant that it is a woman's business to take care of her children — not merely of her own children. If children anywhere are not under right conditions, women ought to see to it. The trouble is we are too wrapped up in *my* children to think of *our* children. We can not keep out disease by shutting our own front door. We have to know and care about the world outside our gates. In order to do our duty to our children we must make this world a better place to live in.

Our children are not born with that degree of brain power that we could wish. They will not be, until our minds are widened by study of the whole duty of a human being. . . . . What is needed for women is an enlargement of their moral sense so as to include social as well as private virtues. We have been taught that there is only one virtue for us. Our morality is high but narrow. It is not wholesome to limit oneself to one virtue, or to six or to ten. Sons resemble their mothers. While mothers limit their interests to their own narrow domestic affairs, regardless of the world outside, their sons will betray the interests of the country for their own private business interests. . . . . Women and men are so connected that we can not improve one without improving the other. Under equal rights we shall raise the moral sense of the community by the natural laws of transmission through the mothers. We shall learn to blame a man as much if he betrays a public trust as we do if he deserts his wife.

Have we done our full duty when we have loved and served and taken care of those that every beast on earth loves and serves and takes care of — our own young? That is the beginning of human duty but not the whole of it. The duty of woman is not confined to the reproduction of the species; it extends to the working of the will of God on earth. The family is a leaf on the tree of the State. It can grow in strength and purity while the

State is healthy, but when the State is degraded the family becomes degraded with it. We have not done our full duty to the family till we have done our best to serve the State.