

## UNIT 1: THE RISE OF TECHNOLOGY (1870 - 1896)

### Topic: Women

#### INTRODUCTION TO TEACHERS

The roots of the feminist movement in America reach into the nineteenth century. For example, the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, assuring women the right to vote, was not a sudden event. The "idea" had been suggested and discussed in the early years of the nineteenth century. It was formally declared as early as 1848 in the Seneca Falls declaration penned in part by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Throughout the years following, conventions were held dealing with women's rights. Voting was only one of many issues involved.

Much of the early feminist work in America was started in the east. However, with the rapidly expanding west during the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century, the movement quickly spread into western regions.

Suffrage came earliest in the west where the notion of female inferiority was most graphically renounced. Women who hunted, plowed and chopped beside men could hardly be considered second class. In 1869 women were permitted the vote in Wyoming Territory, fifty years prior to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

During the Civil War, many suffragists set aside their struggle for women's rights and devoted themselves to the struggle against slavery. Following the Civil War these women were disappointed to find that although the Constitution was being changed to include blacks, rights were extended only to men. Women were not advanced to the least degree.

In the years following the Civil War, while Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone and Carrie Chapman Catt carried on the fight for equal rights, women moved into society in greater numbers. It was during this period that women began to be known as keepers of society rather than just keepers of the home.

Many women's magazines were published in the 1880s. Although these publications were directed toward homemakers, there was a distinctive sensitivity to the importance of women, as the following editorial illustrates:

*A Man's Part in Good Housekeeping*  
*From the Nebraska Cultivator and Housekeeper*  
*Vol. 5, October 1, 1881*

*A man should first of all help his wife in planning her work. Let every husband give his wife the benefit of his practical business experience, and advise with her how she may best arrange her time and several duties that they may least conflict*

*In the second place, the husband should give the wife the full amount of money necessary properly to care for the home.*

*Third, he should see that she has the best tools that can be had to lighten her labor.*

*Fourth, he should by every possible means shorten her hours of labor. If he finds that she is obliged to work earlier and later than he, then he should at once give, or procure for her such assistance as will make their working hours equal.*

*Fifth, realizing that for her labor she receives no direct compensation, he should, at the least, be careful to give continually that reward of cordial praise which costs him nothing and so much pleases her.*

*Finally, the man must recognize that many of the domestic duties are essentially proper to him, and not to the woman; such are all that require great physical exertion. Therefore, not only should proper implements be generously furnished for the woman's use, but all the materials she must use should be provided and made easily accessible. Plenty of coal, wood and kindlings should be kept near the place where they are to be burned, water should be supplied so as to be handy and abundant, plenty of books, shelves, closets, etc., should be arranged to the best advantage.*

*At housecleaning time the man should either move or get moved the heavier articles of furniture; he should attend to the cleaning and putting down of carpets; the setting up of stoves and the like; in a word he should assume the responsibility for all the heavier and more disagreeable duties connected with good housekeeping, and be willing, on occasion to take a hand in those which are lighter.*

*But if he won't do these things that he ought to do, let him at the least, have grace enough to keep out of the woman's way while she is doing them for him, and refrain, when they are done, from rewarding his overworked helpmate with cross and complaining speech.*

Articles expressing this sentiment began to dot the pages of agricultural magazines during the late nineteenth century. Such early journals as the *American Agriculturist* and the *Nebraska Cultivator and Housekeeper* regularly featured entries of particular interest to women.

Roles for men and women were solidly established by the 1890s. On the frontier where survival was the initial goal, men and women often worked side by side. Following the frontier period in Iowa (1830 - 1870) publications written for the agricultural community reflected markedly different roles for men and women.

The *Iowa Housewife* is a publication styled after *The Housewife*, an eastern magazine written for women in 1880. Featured are advertisements and household suggestions to benefit the homemaker of the 1880s. To a certain extent, technological advances of the post-Civil War period impacted the home. While this impact was modest when compared to agriculture and industry, there were new devices and aids which helped the tired homemaker. These devices as well as the weekly routine of homemaking, unfold in a day-to-day description of homemaking in the 1880s.