

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

# Restoring Women to World Studies

A Document-Based Question  
Curriculum Unit for Grades 9–12



*Hemispheres*



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for Grades 9-12

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Restoring Women to World Studies:  
A Document-Based Question Curriculum Unit for Grades 9–12

Final Edition  
Publication Date: October 2009

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Welcome!

In much of the social studies—especially courses focused on world history, geography, and culture—there has been a long-standing awareness that the experience of women has been left out of the narrative. Recent changes in state, national, and Advanced Placement educational standards have sought to remedy this omission by calling for the inclusion of women’s studies in the social studies curriculum. However, the most widely available resources tend to focus on the experience of women in Western Europe and North America. *Restoring Women to World Studies: A Document-Based Question Curriculum Unit for Grades 9–12* seeks to address these new requirements and the current regional bias in available resources. The unit is based on the 2007 Hemispheres Summer Teachers’ Institute *Restoring Women to World Studies*. That four-day workshop explored the situation of women—historical and contemporary—in Latin America, the Middle East, Russia, East Europe and Eurasia, and South Asia. The training sessions discussed the contributions of notable women to historical and artistic movements, talked about concepts of gender roles and gendered spaces, looked at issues that are driving women’s movements today, and examined the greater context in which all of these take place.

In this unit, we have sought to address the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and National Geography Standards that explicitly deal with gender roles and social structures but also standards that address citizenship, processes of historical change, social movements and cultural differences. In addition, this unit draws on primary source readings and images to strengthen students’ skills in working with primary source materials. Each case study is laid out in a Document-Based Question (DBQ) format so that students can cite, interpret, and evaluate sources; consider point of view; and use historical evidence to develop and support a thesis.

The unit begins with a PowerPoint that introduces the notion of gender as a key social category and patriarchy as an important organizing structure in many societies and cultures. The unit then examines these concepts within case studies from the four regions. Each case study is meant to encourage students to address questions about gender roles in the different societies, either in a particular historical moment or how they evolve over time. In addition to responding to each case study, students can analyze and compare the different primary source documents within the case studies by considering the following questions and their answers:

- How do women in patriarchal societies experience gender norms and ideals?
- How do women in patriarchal societies create change within the established order of society?

It is our hope that, with *Restoring Women to World Studies*, students will be able to better appreciate how gender functions within different societies at different times; understand how it both shapes individual lives and offers individuals opportunities to shape society; see similarities in women’s experiences as well as differences; and appreciate that experiences of gender are influenced by other categories of identity (class, race, ethnicity, etc.) and are not frozen or merely restrictive but changing and challenged by women who respond to traditional understandings of gender roles and hierarchies.

We welcome feedback and comments on the unit and your experience using it in the classroom. Please do not hesitate to contact us at [hemispheres@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:hemispheres@austin.utexas.edu).





**This Curriculum Unit Address The Following Standards  
in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS):**

*113.22 (Social Studies Grade 6)*

(1) History. The student understands that historical events influence contemporary events. The student is expected to: (B) analyze the historical background of selected contemporary societies to evaluate relationships between past conflicts and current conditions.

(2) History. The student understands the contributions of individuals and groups from various cultures to selected historical and contemporary societies. The student is expected to: (A) explain the significance of individuals or groups from selected societies, past and present.

(13) Citizenship. The student understands that the nature of citizenship varies among societies. The student is expected to: (A) describe roles and responsibilities of citizens in selected contemporary societies including the United States; (B) explain how opportunities for citizens to participate in and influence the political process vary among selected contemporary societies; and (C) compare the role of citizens in the United States with the role of citizens from selected democratic and nondemocratic contemporary societies.

(15) Culture. The student understands the similarities and differences within and among cultures in different societies. The student is expected to: (C) analyze the similarities and differences among selected world societies.

(18) Culture. The student understands the relationship that exists between artistic, creative, and literary expressions and the societies that produce them. The student is expected to: (A) explain the relationships that exist between societies and their architecture, art, music, and literature; (C) describe ways in which societal issues influence creative expressions.

*113.33 (World History Studies)*

(1) History. The student understands traditional historical points of reference in world history. The student is expected to: (A) identify the major eras in world history and describe their defining characteristics; (C) apply absolute and relative chronology through the sequencing of significant individuals, events, and time periods.

(17) Citizenship. The student understands the significance of political choices and decisions made by individuals, groups, and nations throughout history. The student is expected to: (A) evaluate political choices and decisions that individuals, groups, and nations have made in the past, taking into account historical context, and apply this knowledge to the analysis of choices and decisions faced by contemporary societies; and (B) describe the different roles of citizens and noncitizens in historical cultures, especially as the roles pertain to civic participation.

(18) Citizenship. The student understands the historical development of significant legal and political concepts, including ideas about rights, republicanism, constitutionalism, and democracy. The student is expected to: (C) identify examples of political, economic, and social oppression and violations of human rights throughout history, including slavery, the Holocaust, other examples of genocide, and politically-motivated mass murders in Cambodia, China, and the Soviet Union; (D) assess the degree to which human rights and democratic ideals and practices have been advanced throughout the world during the 20th century.

(20) Culture. The student understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created. The student is expected to: (B) analyze examples of how art, architecture, literature, music, and drama reflect the history of cultures in which they are produced.

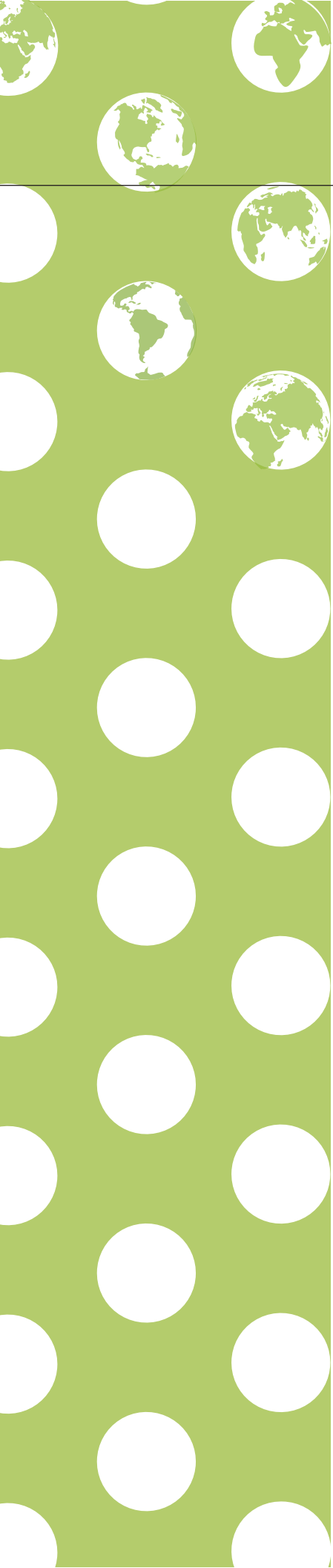
(21) Culture. The student understands the roles of women, children, and families in different historical cultures. The student is expected to: (A) analyze the specific roles of women, children, and families in different historical cultures; and (B) describe the political, economic, and cultural influence of women in different historical cultures.

**This Curriculum Unit Addresses the Following Theme  
in the Course Description for Advanced Placement World History**

4. Systems of social structure and gender structure (comparing major features within and among societies, and assessing change and continuity)

What students are expected to know:

- **Foundations, 8000 BCE–600 CE:** Classical civilizations: social and gender structures
- **1450-1750:** Gender and empire (including the role of women in households and in politics)
- **1750-1914:** Changes in social and gender structure (tension between work patterns and ideas about gender). Major comparisons: Compare the roles and conditions of women in the upper/middle classes with peasantry/working class in western Europe.
- **1914-present:** Social reform and social revolution (changing gender roles; family structures; rise of feminism)



Israel

## **Pioneers in Pre-state Israel: The Women of the First *Aliyah***

The history of the modern state of Israel has its origins in a political movement called Zionism that began in Europe in the late nineteenth century. The advocates of Zionism believed that European society would never fully accept Jews as equals, and they felt that the ultimate solution to this problem would be for Jews from around the world to come together to create their own country. Several locations around the world were considered for the Jewish homeland: Uganda, Madagascar, and the Patagonia region of Argentina. However, for many the only choice worth considering was Palestine—*Eretz Israel*—the historical homeland of the Jewish people.

Soon after the Zionist movement became popularized, some Jews decided to immigrate to Palestine, even though the final selection of the Jewish homeland had not been made (and would not be made until after World War I). This first wave of immigrants, arriving between 1882 and 1903, is referred to in Zionist history as “The First *Aliyah*.”

The earliest immigrants to Palestine—often referred to as “Pioneers” (*Halutzot*)—were mostly Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe. The Orthodox Jewish society of Eastern Europe was highly patriarchal and gender segregated. Women were traditionally expected to confine themselves to domestic work, focusing on their roles as wives and mothers. Few women were educated beyond the first few years of primary school. The male heads of household had complete control over decisions involving the family, and frequently the decision to immigrate to Palestine would be made by the male community leaders, who expected their family members to follow unquestioningly.

The pioneers were motivated not only by political restrictions placed on Jews in their home countries—forced relocation to urban areas, and exclusion from a range of occupations which reduced many communities to poverty—but also by a movement of secularization within Jewish society in Europe to which they objected. The Enlightenment movement in Europe (the *Haskala*) was eroding the traditional power structure within the Orthodox community. Secular education began replacing religious education, and women’s education became a priority for the first time in many communities. In many traditional homes, this was viewed as an affront to religious values, particularly by the male leaders of conservative communities. The combined force of political oppression and an erosion of traditional social values spurred Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe.

These first *Halutzot* founded new settlements that would eventually be known as the *Yishuv* (“settlement”). Unlike later waves of immigrants, these first pioneers did not arrive in Palestine with the intention of establishing a new society, but rather to create enclaves in which they could re-establish the traditional Orthodox way of life to which they were accustomed. They continued to speak their native languages rather than adopt Hebrew as the new national tongue, as immigrants later did.

Within many of these first *yishuvot*, women were expected to maintain the same social roles that they had in Eastern Europe: wives and mothers. However, the demands of establishing a new life on the *yishuv* often necessitated a broader role for women, who were generally reluctant to then limit themselves to more traditional roles afterwards. Women began demanding greater participation, especially toward the end of the First *Aliyah* as more settlers began to arrive who embodied a more socialist ideal of equal participation for all.

It was the experience of these first female *halutza* that inspired the settlers of the Second *Aliyah* to seek an expanded role and opportunities for women. The influence of women would grow significantly over the course of the early half of the twentieth century. When the State of Israel was established in 1947, women would be given equal political rights, and were expected to serve in the military. Israel has, in its short history, had two female prime ministers, and one of the highest representations of women in political offices.

While modern Israeli women might not recognize the experience of the first *halutza* as one that they can identify with, the experience of those women, and the reactions to it, has a direct impact on the status of women in Israel today.

**Source 1: Excerpt from a short story by Hemeda Ben-Yehuda, 1903**

*Hemeda Ben-Yehuda was one of the first (and only) female authors producing literature during the time of the First Aliyah. This short story depicts two male settlers who are looking for possible ways to increase the Jewish population of Palestine.*

How can we expect anything of our women ... if we do not dedicate ourselves to their education ... and we cannot deny that in our villages, we have left the women completely alone. Which of us has ever taught his wife anything or even read to her! No wonder that by the time she is married a few years and has become the mother of two or three children, not only hasn't she made any progress ... but she has turned into nothing but a servant, forgetting even what she knew before ... Did we ever try to improve her situation? Did we arrange any sort of communal shelter for the children, where a mother could safely leave her child (in order) to attend meetings, to read, to listen, to speak, to develop, to learn? It is we, we who are to blame.

Hemeda Ben-Yehuda, "The Farm of the Rekhabites," *Hashkafa* 3 (1903): 21–23.

**Source 2: From a short story by Nehamah Pukhachewsky**

*Nehama Pukhachewsky arrived in Palestine in 1889, and was one of the first to dedicate herself to the renaissance of women in settlement life. Sarah Zarhi, the title character of this short story, has given up a career in teaching to focus on housework and agriculture, conforming to the Zionist belief in the dignity of labor and its importance to the movement.*

How will this all end? ... It is not the hardship of a life of toil which leads to failure, because she is willing to make do with very little and ungrudgingly accepts whatever comes her way. There is only one thing she cannot overcome: the treatment of women—Slave and Woman, it is all one and the same. Except that the slave has found some liberators, while woman has found none. Woman, woman! What a shameful name to bear ... for what purpose did nature endow her with this quality of submitting to a fate more bitter than gall? Why must she hang her head and bear her burden in silence?

Nehamah Pukhachewsky, "Sarah Zarhi," *Life in the Village* (Tel Aviv: Hedim, 1930), 97, 116

**Source 3: "From the diary of Zipporah Drori, a farmer"—excerpt from a short story by Nehamah Pukhachewsky**

Many of the leading figures of our settlement assembled for a general meeting and I decided to go to the meeting place. The people's representatives were gathered to discuss a burning issue and to pass judgment on it ... I became very stimulated by the discussion and put my name on the list to reply, but when my turn came, they would not allow me to speak. Their reason was that I was only a guest at the meeting and not an official participant. Grievously offended, I wondered: have I no status whatever in this group into which I force my way and demand the right to discuss its issues? Cannot a poor, wretched soul like me contribute anything to this 'complicated mechanism' that is 'the settlement of our land'? Yet, on the other hand ... a woman has no rights whatsoever, so by what authority does she push herself into the group to express her opinion? That is nothing but impudence on her part! A woman's place is in the kitchen, behind the stove and not among the chosen delegates of the people!

Nehamah Pukhachewsky, "Zipporah Drori," *Life in the Village* (Tel Aviv: Hedim, 1930), 185–186.

**Source 4: From the memoirs of a Yemenite Jew, 1909**

My mother worked at farmhouses doing laundry. My brother, Shalom, was born shortly after we came, but my mother continued working while I had to take care of him. Shalom died when he was three months old, and I was sent to work. My job was to rock a baby's cradle and to clean the mistress' house. When my work was not satisfactory I was hit. I was so young and short that, in order to reach the sink to wash dishes, I had to stand on two crates. My pay was a meal!

If the baby cried, I was ordered to take him for a stroll. I soon learned to pinch the baby so that I could spend more time outdoors. But, I was caught, dismissed from my job and hit by my parents. This stigmatized me as a bad worker and I could not find another job. I sat dejected on the steps of Rehovot's nursery school. The teachers took pity on me, invited me indoors, paid my tuition and provided me with a knapsack. This was the only year in my life that I was fortunate enough to spend in a formal education program. ...

In Ben Shemen, I helped the teacher's wife in household chores, and in return I was secretly taught to read and write (my father objected)... On the other hand, my mother was more sympathetic, but she had to be careful because my father ruled with an upper hand ...

My boyfriend, Kalman, came to Ben Shemen in 1918 and we were soon romantically involved. He learned agriculture abroad and worked in the experimental station. In the evenings, he was in charge of the library. He secretly loaned me books to read that we later discussed. We had to meet secretly because I was afraid of my father. Kalman met him occasionally while working and found an opportunity to tell him of our love and his desire to marry me. This happened after my father heard from Yemenite friends that I rejected their company. My father did not answer Kalman, but when he returned home he beat me severely. I was sick for three days. My mother warned me of my father's wrath, but I informed her candidly that I was leaving home ...

A few friends told my father that Kalman and I would be married and he is invited to the ceremony. He was very angry and said that he would prefer to attend my funeral. On my wedding evening, my father and a few members of my family sat "shiva" in mourning. ...

Shoshanna Bassin. "Memoirs," in *The People of the Second Aliyah*, vol. 3, ed. Nahman Tamir (Tel Aviv: Mifaley Tarbut Vehinuch, 1971), 325–331.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. What is the tone of each of these passages? Cite examples of language from the text that supports your answer.
2. How do the women portrayed in each passage view their roles in the new society of the *yishuv*? How would each woman prefer her role to change?
3. Three of these passages are from literature. Compare and contrast them with the memoir. What might be idealized? How closely do they seem to reflect reality?

**Source 5: From an Essay by Yael Gordon, one of the leading women pioneers of the Second Aliyah**

We want equality and emancipation for women, which will enable them to fulfill their roles both as mothers and as effective individuals in society. This must be our aim, especially in this young society being formed in Palestine out of the desire of the [Jewish] people to preserve its character and its “self” through work and creation. The young Jewish women who came here want not only to fulfill their national roles as daughters of our nation, but also to find themselves, the “self” of the woman-person, who has no more fitting place in the world in which to find the roots of her soul and to give it expression than in the workers’ sector of our land.

Deborah S. Bernstein, *The Struggle for Equality, Urban Women Workers in Prestate Israeli Society* (New York: Praeger, 1987), 35.

**Source 6: Excerpts from the diary of “R.,” a young *Halutza* of the second Aliyah (1925–1937)**

We had to leave Russia not because of personal persecution by the authorities, but because we could see no possibility of Zionist action within this frame of life. We did not escape to Eretz Israel, we were looking for ways to train Jewish youth in the diaspora before they came here. Many of the comrades stayed abroad, myself included. The decision to go to Israel, even after several years, was still not an easy one. As for myself, I knew that my own restless, active soul could only find an outlet in Eretz Israel. I had felt that the special conditions here would help me in the fulfillment of my positive qualities, and I broke out. My friends understood this and tried to help me. My life at the time had a personal dimension which delayed my departure for a while. Already when I was in Russia, my hot blooded woman’s temperament was awakened. Yes, I had loved, and it was a great and powerful love! ...

It is now a year since I came here. Eretz Israel has been kind to me. I have met with good working conditions, and grown stronger in body and mind. I have been feeling the ground under my feet, the immediate link with the Workers’ Movement. I began my new life under no compulsion, without stress. My love for Eretz Israel is what I imagine the love of a daughter to her mother to be. ...

I have enlisted with my whole heart to the establishment of a new enterprise of the Women Workers’ Movement. I have become alive with the Movement and with my friends. I feel the acute situation of the woman worker here, her weakness and her helplessness and the subsequent lack of activity. I would like to help, to have some influence to train the woman, so that she should have an independent economic position in life.

Deborah S. Bernsetin and Musia Lipman, “Fragments of Life: From the Diaries of Two Young Women,” in *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel* ed. Deborah S. Bernstein (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 159–161.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

4. How does the tone of sources 5 and 6 differ from the tone of the first four sources? Cite language from both sets of sources to support your answer.
5. How much appears to have changed in practice for women in the *yishuv* from the time of the First Aliyah?
6. What is different about the attitude of these women of the Second Aliyah from the first wave of pioneers?
7. How have the women of the Second Aliyah learned from the experiences of their predecessors?





# About Hemispheres

Created in 1996, Hemispheres is the international outreach consortium at the University of Texas at Austin. Hemispheres utilizes University resources to promote and assist with world studies education for K–12 and postsecondary schools, businesses, civic and non-profit organizations, the media, governmental agencies, and the general public.

Comprised of UT's four federally funded National Resource Centers (NRCs) dedicated to the study and teaching of Latin America; the Middle East; Russia, East Europe & Eurasia; and South Asia, Hemispheres offers a variety of free and low-cost services to these groups and more. Each center coordinates its own outreach programming, including management of its lending library, speakers bureau, public lectures, and conferences, all of which are reinforced by collaborative promotion of our resources to an ever-widening audience in the educational community and beyond.

Hemispheres fulfills its mission through: coordination of pre-service and in-service training and resource workshops for educators; promotion of outreach resources and activities via exhibits at appropriate state- and nation-wide educator conferences; participation in public outreach events as organized by the consortium as well as by other organizations; and consultation on appropriate methods for implementing world studies content in school, business, and community initiatives.

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