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

Welcome ................................................................. vii
Standards Alignment ................................................. ix

Introduction: Restoring Women to World Studies ...................... 1

Classroom Activity: Graffiti Wall—“What are Gender Norms?” ........ 15
Graphic Organizer: Gender Norms and Women’s Responses ............ 16
Classroom Activity: Analyzing Images of Women ....................... 17

Case Studies

The Arab World: Islam and Feminism in the Age of the Arab Renaissance . 29
Brazil: Black Women’s Work and Social Progress .......................... 37
Chile and Argentina: Madre = Resistencia: Mothers of the Disappeared . 47
Israel: Pioneers in Pre-state Israel: The Women of the First Aliyah ........ 69
Russia: Women’s Work or Women’s Rights? Russia after the Revolution 75
Sri Lanka: Juki Girls: Clothing, Factory Work, and Changing Gender Roles in Sri Lanka 85
Yugoslavia: Women in Black—Belgrade: Making Their Silence Heard 97

About Hemispheres .................................................. 107
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.
Standards Alignment

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.
Standards Alignment

(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)
Juki Girls: Clothing, Factory Work, and Changing Gender Roles in Sri Lanka
The development of the textile industry is an important step in the industrialization process of many developing countries. The availability of raw materials and a large unemployed labor force combine to make the textile and garment industry attractive for developing countries both as a substitute for imports and as a major source of international trade. In Sri Lanka, the sector is important to the national economy in terms of output, employment, and export earnings, and its role in an export-led development strategy. With the expansion of this industry, however, came an increase in cultural concerns about changes in gender roles in Sri Lankan society.

“Juki girls” is a derogatory nickname given to urban female factory workers in the garment industry in Sri Lanka. The term comes from the Japanese industrial sewing machines commonly used in Sri Lankan factories. The term associates women not only with machines, but with a foreign brand, which implies that the workers are foreign or somehow less “Sri Lankan” than women who do not work in the factories. The term expresses the anxiety that many Sri Lankans feel about young women working outside their village homes, away from their families, and in an urban industrial setting.

With the growth of industrialism, the search for cheap labor persists as a way of maximizing profits. The history of the development of capitalist industries reveals that textiles, garments, food processing and, more recently, electronics have traditionally utilized female labor. Since the cost of female labor has always been lower than that of males, particularly in the third world, industrialists have preferred female labor in order to increase their profits. Cheap manual labor remained one of the primary concerns of multinational enterprises, which affected their decisions about the physical location of industries as well. As a result, countries with cheap labor, a high level of unemployment, and sufficient natural resources have been chosen by multinationals, particularly those in labor-intensive industries.

The garment industry in Sri Lanka expanded rapidly after the liberalization of the economy in 1977. Since 1986 the production in the textile and garment sector has more than doubled. During the 1990s the garment industry grew 18.5 percent per year. This expansion led to the replacement of tea by garments as the nation’s largest export. The textile and garment sector accounts for about 30 percent of the country’s total export earnings, making the industry the largest source of foreign exchange. The textile industry is also the largest employer in Sri Lanka.

In the garment sector, particularly in the export processing zones (EPZ), more than 90 percent of the workforce is female. Though women constitute the majority of workers in export processing zones, employers typically allow them to stay only until they are married. As a result, only 10 percent of the workforce in the EPZs is married. Most of the workers are young, with an entering age between 18 and 25, and employed in a factory for the first time in their lives. The women hope to have well-paid lasting employment in the free-trade zone but, as a rule, their hopes are not fulfilled.

In addition, the workforce of the garment industry consists primarily of women from villages who do not have families in the areas of employment, which means the women need housing in order to work. Many of the women are housed in private accommodations close to the free trade zone: cooking and washing facilities are insufficient and in poor condition, and often forty women have to share one toilet, kitchen, and well.

Almost all the workers are boarded in close proximity to the factories due to the unreliability of public transportation. As a result, the area within a five-mile radius of most factories is covered in boarding houses. Most boarding houses are built solely for the purpose of renting out to the garment factory workforce, and are often no better than sheds, consisting of a 10x9 foot room that houses ten or more female workers. Often the rooms have inadequate ventilation and sunlight.
Even though the minimum salary is 1000 Sri Lanka Rupees (about $9) per month, the take-home salary of many workers is about Rs. 850. The problem is more acute with probationary employees whose take home pay is 700. From this salary, between 100–125 is paid to the boarding houses and about 500 is spent on daily expenses and food. For many workers, what is left, especially in the probationary period, is insufficient to even clothe themselves decently. In fact many workers bring rice and coconut from their parental homes to supplement their food supplies. Extreme poverty and malnutrition are quite evident and what they wear at boarding houses is no better than rags.

With economic liberalization and growing numbers of women entering the workforce, especially in factories, there has been a corresponding increase in worry about changing gender roles and societal concern about a potentially crumbling rural and urban divide. The village is seen as a place of cultural traditions and values and the city as a place of new ways of thinking about gender, a loosening of morals, and the decline of traditional values. The public visibility of factory girls indicates to many Sri Lankans that these women, who have crossed the rural/urban divide by leaving their villages for employment, symbolize the end of Sri Lankan traditions. Since shortly after the EPZ was established there has been considerable moral fear about “good girls” going “bad,” which is made worse by media reports on prostitution, premarital sex, rape, abortion, and sexual harassment in association with EPZs and urban women factory workers. These concerns have lead to factory girls being cast as key symbols of the problems of modernization.
COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (BBC) Increasing numbers of female workers in Sri Lanka are demanding the right to stop wearing saris and to be allowed to wear western dress, which they claim is more practical. The formal dress code in hospitals and some offices is now skirts, dresses or trousers, but only after a long battle by employees. Women in banks, those employed by the national airline and members of parliament still have to wear saris....

In the crowded corridors of the hospitals, only the patients wear saris. Nurses and administrative staff campaigned long and hard to replace the sari with a simple cotton dress. They said the six-meter sari took too long to put on and slowed them down. “I work in an important area, it’s a separate ward for mothers and new born babies and sometimes there are complications,” says Gunasili Hettierachi, who has been a nursing attendant for six years. “When that happens I have to run, I have find the doctor or bring blood from the bloodbank. So it’s much better for me to wear a frock than a sari,” Ms Hettierachi says.

But not all women have a choice. In the world of politics, dominated by men, views on dress are more conservative. While male politicians wear suits, the President Chandrika Kumaratunga, and her mother, the prime minister, are never seen in western dress. According to the rules, in parliament all female Members of Parliament must wear saris. Deputy Women’s Affairs Minister Nirupama Rajapakse says any change would be seen as an attack on the culture. “I wonder whether any woman is bold enough to change the dress and get to parliament,” she says. “It might be interpreted differently in the media saying you want to change the national dress,” she says.

Female politicians are not alone. Air hostesses and those working in government offices and banks still have no choice. The editor of women’s magazine Satyn, Naomini Ratnayake Weerasooriya, says men are to blame. “Women find wearing a suit is practical and better, but Sri Lankan men seem to be very traditional and prefer women in saris,” she says. “I’ve experienced when you wear a sari to a meeting, men will take you seriously, and when you wear a suit, they might see you as trying to be too westernized,” she says.

However, in the rural areas, fashions are changing fast. This is due to the huge number of young women employed in the garment industry. Nirupama Rajapakse says that young women in her constituency are influenced by the western clothes that they spend all day putting together. “The girls now are becoming more stylish because most are employed in the garment sector ... they are more trendy than me,” she says....

While one section of women continue the fight against the sari, others are keen to maintain what they see as their cultural heritage. But one thing is sure - clothes in Sri Lanka will always be much more than just a fashion statement.


Source 2: Poem by garment factory worker, published 2008

Little sister
You came to the city from the village,
Why did you change?
You cut your hair short
Started wearing trousers and short dresses —
You were the most innocent girl in the village
What happened to you after coming to the city?
We can’t correct the city
But we can keep in mind to
Protect the village [customs].

Comprehension Exercises:
1. What are the different attitudes towards women's clothing expressed in these two documents? What connections do they make between place and style of clothing? Use examples from the documents to support your answer.
2. How does the newspaper article differ from the poem in its expression of attitudes towards women's dress? In what ways are they similar?
AVISSAWELLA, Sri Lanka (AFP) The denims look tattered and frayed, but shoppers in Europe and the United States are prepared to pay good money for “distressed” jeans and Sri Lanka is cashing in.

In the industrial town of Avissawella east of the capital Colombo, it takes workers around 13 minutes to cut and sew basic five-pocket denims. They then spend another four days torturing the pants by dying, bleaching, and sandpapering them to get a “distressed” look. “Each garment is dyed or dipped around 16 and sometimes as many as 30 times to achieve the proper torn, tattered look,” explains Indrajith Kumarasiri, chief executive of Sri Lanka’s Brandix Denim. “We earn more money by making denims look dirty and torn, the classic clean look doesn’t bring us much,” Kumarasiri told AFP during a visit to the 10-million dollar plant, which can make over three million pairs of jeans a year. Basic denim jeans cost around six dollars to make, but the shabbier “premium” ones cost twice as much. “In many ways, premium denims are replacing the little black dress as the wear-anywhere fashion staple,” he said.

Overseas buyers such as Levis, Gap and Pierre Cardin are now regular buyers of premium jeans from Sri Lanka where they can be made for as little as 12 dollars a pair, and often sell for over 100 dollars.…. 

Sri Lanka’s three-billion dollar garment industry accounts for more than half its annual seven billion dollars of export earnings, and it provides jobs for nearly one million people.…. 

Brandix, Sri Lanka’s biggest exporter with annual sales in excess of 320 million dollars, and MAS Holdings, are also expanding overseas. In an attempt to get an advantage over the competition, Sri Lanka is trying to position itself as an ethical manufacturer in the hope of getting greater access to the US and European markets at lower duty rates. “We have high labor standards. We don’t employ child labor, we provide rural employment and we empower women,” said Suresh Mirchandani, chief executive of Favorite Garments.…. 


I just loved everything about Katunayake. I loved working in the factory. I liked all my new friends. Just walking to work and back one learns a lot. Those days everything looked rosy to me. I felt adventurous as if I was finally living life and not just looking at it. I have to tell you about the other residents in my boardinghouse. They never left me alone. Included me in everything they did. I liked to spend time with them at the boardinghouse. Those days I just counted my fingers to the day I got my salary. The first thing I did was to go shopping and buy things that all the other girls here seemed to own, you know, dresses, shoes, colorful hair braids, perfumes, and, of course, gold rings. I just love to collect gold rings. I have two more at home…But after about one year of this buying frenzy, I started helping my parents more. I bought school supplies for both my brothers every year. I gave money so that my father could add two more rooms to our house. They really appreciated this help. Now that I have been working here for six years, I have all my jewelry and I also bought some furniture for my dowry.

Source 5: Poem by Mainke, a garment factory worker, 1990s

Life
I awake early morning at 4.30 a.m.
I have to kindle the fire
Having washed my face, I gulp down some tea
I leave for work early morning.

I start work at 7 a.m.
The supervisor demands the production
I regret my inability to meet this target
She scolds us for this.

At 10.30 a.m. we get a sip of tea.
The tea contains no flavor, no sweetness
We drink it to quench our hunger
We tolerate these because we are poor.

I came to Katunayake because I was without work
I came to the Free Trade Zone to work
I worked at Star Garments
Now I am tired and disgusted with the job.

The other day I fell sick.
But I was not allowed to leave the factory
I know that one day I will have to work
- even through sickness.
I will surely fall dead, at Star Garments.

I work throughout the month
I am paid Rs. 800 for the month
An attendance bonus of Rs. 72 is paid
We are paid with no further allowances.

At 7 a.m. I sit at the machine
By 8 a.m. the supervisor is already at my side
She asks me what my production is
I tell her only the amount I can give

I often get a pain in my chest
The supervisor asks me to go to the sick room
I can stay there around quarter of an hour
I come back again and sit at the machine.

My mother does not know how much I suffer.
Only I know how much I suffer.
I leave in the morning and come back at night.
I suffer with the pain in my body.

We are not given any leave.
Leave is allowed only in emergencies.
That leave is also granted after much argument.
We who are poor are made to suffer so much.
My mother who fed me with her own milk.
My father who worked so hard to bring us up.
My teacher who gave me the knowledge.
To them I pay my respects.


Comprehension Exercises:
3. Make a list of the different opinions expressed about garment factories as an industry and as a place of work.
4. What are the different benefits and problems of garment factory work? How does it help or harm Sri Lankan society? How does it help or harm the female workers? Cite specific examples from the documents to support your answer.
Juki Girls

Source 6: Photographs of women working in garment factories in Sri Lanka, 2000s


Comprehension Exercises:
5. How do the photographs visually portray work in a garment factory and the female workers? Do the photographs offer new information about women’s factory work or reinforce information already provided in earlier documents? Explain your answer citing the documents.
Source 7: Interview with boarding house owner, published 2008

My girls are very good. I won’t take each and every girl who comes here asking to stay. I will only take girls who are accompanied by their parents. Girls who come with that elder brother and this elder brother…I won’t accept them. There are boardinghouses that are appropriate for such women. I only take girls who come right from the village; uncorrupted, innocent ones. Then I look after them like my own daughters. Ask anyone around here, my girls come home at decent hours. They would even fight with factory managers saying that they can’t work overtime because boardinghouse auntie will throw them out if they are late. No unrelated men can visit them here. They live here with me for years, and I have arranged marriages and settled some of them, too.


Source 8: Photograph of garment factory worker in boarding house, 2008

![Photograph of garment factory worker in boarding house](http://southasia.oneworld.net/todaysheadlines/bad-management-causing-closures-in-sri-lanka-say-unions)


**Comprehension Exercises:**

6. What are the concerns expressed by the woman who runs boarding house? Is her attitude toward the workers similar or different from attitudes expressed in earlier documents? Support your answer with evidence from the documents.

7. Compare the photograph to the quote by the woman who runs a boarding house. How are the portrayals similar? How are they different?

8. Overall, what is your opinion of factory work and the changes it has brought to Sri Lanka society and women’s lives in Sri Lanka? Use examples from the documents to support your answer.
Additional Resources


*Sweating for a T-shirt*. Portland, OR: Global Exchange, 1998. VHS or DVD.
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.

For more information, visit the Hemispheres Web site at: http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/ or e-mail: hemispheres@austin.utexas.edu