

Essay Prompts for Women's History in the U.S. by Era

Colonial Era (1600s–1776)

1. How did Puritan values shape women's roles in colonial America?
2. Compare the lives of European, Indigenous, and African women in the American colonies.
3. How did women contribute to the American Revolution beyond the battlefield?

Revolutionary & Early Republic (1776–1830s)

4. Analyze Abigail Adams' plea to "remember the ladies" in her letters to John Adams.
5. How did the ideals of Republican Motherhood influence women's roles in the new nation?
6. What were the experiences of enslaved women during the Revolutionary period?

Antebellum Period & Reform Movements (1830s–1860s)

7. How did the Grimké sisters challenge gender and racial norms in the abolitionist movement?
8. What role did women play in the temperance and education reform movements?
9. Compare the tactics and ideologies of the women's suffrage and abolitionist movements.

Civil War & Reconstruction (1861–1877)

10. How did women contribute to the Civil War effort on both sides of the conflict?
11. What were the challenges faced by newly freed African American women during Reconstruction?
12. How did the 14th and 15th Amendments impact women's rights movements?

Gilded Age & Progressive Era (1877–1920)

13. How did the rise of industrial labor impact women's economic and social status?
14. Compare the strategies of the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association.
15. What role did women play in the settlement house movement and social work?

Women's Suffrage & The 19th Amendment (1920s)

16. What were the most effective arguments for and against women's suffrage?
17. How did the passage of the 19th Amendment affect women's political participation in the 1920s?
18. What role did race and class play in the suffrage movement?

Great Depression & World War II (1930s–1940s)

19. How did the Great Depression shape women's roles in the workforce and at home?
20. Analyze the impact of Rosie the Riveter as a cultural icon during WWII.
21. What challenges did women face when transitioning from wartime labor back to domestic roles?

Postwar America & The Feminine Mystique (1950s–1960s)

22. How did the ideal of the “perfect housewife” contrast with women's real experiences in the 1950s?
23. What was the significance of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in sparking second-wave feminism?
24. How did women participate in the Civil Rights Movement, and why are their contributions often overlooked?

Second-Wave Feminism & Women's Liberation (1960s–1980s)

25. Compare the goals and strategies of second-wave feminist organizations such as NOW and radical feminist groups.
26. How did the Roe v. Wade decision change the conversation about women's rights?
27. What impact did Title IX have on women's education and sports?

Intersectionality & Third-Wave Feminism (1990s–2000s)

28. How did third-wave feminism challenge the limitations of earlier feminist movements?
29. What role did women of color play in redefining feminism in the late 20th century?
30. How did the rise of LGBTQ+ activism in the 1990s influence feminist movements?

Modern Movements & Contemporary Issues (2010s–Present)

31. How has the #MeToo movement reshaped conversations about workplace harassment and gender equality?
32. What are the ongoing challenges in achieving equal pay for women in the U.S.?
33. How has social media changed the way feminist activism is organized and spread?