Beyond the Home

Women reformers challenge expectations before the Civil War

SS24.US1.7 "Assess how women challenged their societal roles under the Cult of Domesticity through their participation in social movements prior to the Civil War..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline one action in each paragraph that challenged women's expected role. Circle one limit or objection in each paragraph to trace how reform met resistance.

Who Gets a Public Voice?

1 In the decades before the Civil War, many Americans praised the Cult of Domesticity, an ideal that placed white middle-class women in the home as wives and mothers. It described men as public leaders and women as moral guides within their families. Yet reform movements created a way for women to act in public. In the 1830s, sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimké spoke against slavery, sometimes to audiences of both men and women. Critics objected to women speaking publicly. Sarah also argued in print that women deserved equal rights. Their speeches made a demand for freedom and challenged limits on who could lead reform.

2 Education was another battleground. Many girls studied fewer advanced subjects than boys, and women had limited chances to pursue higher education. Mary Lyon opened Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in Massachusetts in 1837. Its demanding courses included science and mathematics, and its relatively low tuition made study possible for more women. Lyon believed education could prepare women to teach and serve others, goals many people considered acceptable for women. Even so, her school pushed against the idea that women needed only household skills. Better schooling gave women more tools to earn a living and take part in reform.

3 Women also pressed for political rights. After working in the abolition movement, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton helped organize a women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Its Declaration of Sentiments argued that women should have equal rights, including the right to vote. Calling for a voice in government went beyond the domestic role assigned to women. These campaigns did not immediately give women equal opportunities or voting rights. Together, public speeches, demanding schools, and rights conventions exposed a contradiction: society trusted women to shape moral values but often denied them equal power to shape laws and institutions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Grimké sisters use abolition work to challenge the role expected of women?

2. How did Mary Lyon's school expand women's opportunities while still reflecting an accepted role for women?

3. How did Mott and Stanton's work move from one reform movement toward a demand for political opportunity?

4. What contradiction about women's roles did public speeches and rights conventions bring to light?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 100 word museum label for an exhibit called "Beyond the Home." Compare two different strategies from the passage, explain how each challenged the Cult of Domesticity, and identify one limit of these reforms before the Civil War.

ANSWER KEY

Beyond the Home

GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.7

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline one action in each paragraph that challenged women's expected role. Circle one limit or objection in each paragraph to trace how reform met resistance. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Grimké sisters use abolition work to challenge the role expected of women?	**They spoke publicly against slavery, sometimes to audiences of men and women, despite objections to women speaking in public. Sarah also argued in print for women's equal rights.**
2	How did Mary Lyon's school expand women's opportunities while still reflecting an accepted role for women?	**Mount Holyoke offered demanding courses, including science and mathematics, at relatively low tuition. Lyon also described education as preparation to teach and serve others, roles many people accepted for women.**
3	How did Mott and Stanton's work move from one reform movement toward a demand for political opportunity?	**After working in abolition, they helped organize the Seneca Falls women's rights convention. Its Declaration of Sentiments called for equal rights, including voting rights.**
4	What contradiction about women's roles did public speeches and rights conventions bring to light?	**Women were expected to guide moral values at home, yet faced objections when they spoke publicly or sought a voice in the laws governing society.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A public speech and a school could both unsettle the rules of a woman's life. Angelina and Sarah Grimké spoke against slavery before mixed audiences, insisting that women's moral concerns belonged in public debate. Mary Lyon built a school with serious science and mathematics courses, showing that women could study subjects beyond household training. One strategy challenged who could speak; the other challenged what women could learn and do. Neither strategy secured equal voting rights before the Civil War, but both widened the possibilities women could claim.

Accept accurate comparisons of any two distinct strategies in the passage. The museum label should explain how each challenged an expected role and identify a limit supported by the text.