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LVE

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Épreuve de : LVE (analyse et commentaire) Anglais

### Consignes

- Remplir soigneusement l'en-tête de chaque feuille avant de commencer à composer
- Rédiger avec un stylo non effaçable bleu ou noir
- Ne rien écrire dans les marges (gauche et droite)
- Numéroté chaque page (cadre en bas à droite)
- Placer les feuilles A3 ouvertes, dans le même sens et dans l'ordre

In her novel The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood features an apocalyptic world in which women are compelled to be ~~mother~~ surrogate mothers. Actually, merely a few women are still fertile and can get pregnant; these ones are all but enslaved and must bear the children of their master. ~~So~~ Through her work, the author ~~was~~ aimed to convey her feminist views on society and her fear of the rebirth of patriarchy.

The first document is an extract from the introduction of The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s (1993). This book was written by Christine Bolt who is a historian specialized in feminism. As a historian, she has the benefit of hindsight and can give ~~an~~ an objective view on feminist movements in Britain and America. In fact, she describes in this passage the history of feminism towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. She does so by drawing a comparison between British and American feminists. Actually, she points out the similarities, notably regarding the origins, but she also insists on the differences as regards their means of action and class consciousness. She traces back the history of



feminism that led to franchise for women in 1918 in Britain and 1920 in the USA. Nonetheless, some hardships to for feminism are underscored towards the end of the text as ~~for~~ conservatism but also class division. Thus, this document does deal with the history of feminist movements in Britain and the USA.

Document 2 is an extract from a speech by Barbara Bodichon who was a feminist activist. It was delivered in Manchester in 1866. At that time, Manchester was a booming, working city. Against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution, social claims emerged as the right to vote for women. In this speech, she enhances the reasons why women should be allowed to vote - as the title expresses it. Actually, this politically - committed text lays emphasis on the evolution in mentalities that the enfranchisement of women could bring about. Indeed, in a conservative, male-dominated society, giving women votes would help ~~raise~~ raise other social preoccupations that could contribute to common good, by contrast with class interests. Therefore, this text deals with the importance of politics in ~~women~~ women's condition.

Document 3 is an extract from Margaret Thatcher's speech to Conservative Women's Conference delivered in 1988. At that time, she had been Prime Minister of Great-Britain for nearly 8 years and was about to quit power. As the first <sup>female</sup> British PM, Thatcher somehow embodies the empowerment of women. Nonetheless, her ~~own~~ staunch conservative ideology prevents her from being a progressive feminist.



Indeed, in this speech, as she addresses an audience that must be full of conservative women, she enhances her conservative viewpoint on over feminism. At first, her words sound like very feminist but she swiftly turns to conservative ideas; she uses women's political empowerment to serve her political interest. This instrumentalisation of feminism is mitigated by her praise of family and women's traditional role. Actually, she leads the opposition to feminism as she lacks the difference in gender roles and the importance of being a good wife and a good mother for a woman. Thus, this document deals with the conservative opposition to feminist ideologies.

The last but one document is an extract from A voice from the South (1892) by Anna Julia Cooper. At that time, black people in America had been freed since 1865 and the abolition of slavery. Between this date and the "separate but equal" doctrine established by Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896, it was a period of relative freedom for black people in spite of racism. Some thought the post-war era would bring about change for the black community. In her work, Anna Julia Cooper praises the greatness of <sup>her</sup> ~~her~~ <sup>black</sup> race, arguing it must develop its potential. This racialization is accounted for by the importance of slavery among ~~black~~ African-Americans. By praising the grandeur of her race, she spurs female black people to honour and expand this race. This leads me to reflect on the importance of ~~race~~ racial issues in feminist movements and the discrepancies it may trigger.

The last document is an extract from the very beginning of The Feminine Mystique (1963) by Betty Friedan. She seems to be a feminist activist as her text deals with the difficulties for women to express themselves in the 1960's. Indeed, in spite of the outset of the sexual revolution, women are still inferior to men as they must continue to



be good mothers and wives. The importance of family roles for women prevents them from achieving gender equality. Against the backdrop of patriarchy, they are often misunderstood and cannot express their feelings and dissatisfaction. ✖ It also underlines the importance of patriarchy and conservatism in America in the 1960's. Thus, this document gives us to understand the hardships feminism faced in the 1960's in America.

These five documents revolve around feminism. Actually, feminist ~~activist~~ activism is emphasized, especially as for franchise. Nonetheless, feminism faces hardships and oppositions, such as conservatism and patriarchy. Moreover, other aspects as racial issues or class awareness may tend to split feminists.

Thus, to what extent is feminism part of British and American cultures? On the one hand, I'll focus on the upsides of feminism in Britain and America, by evoking the reasons to extend women's rights but also the origins of feminism and racial issues. On the other hand, I will elaborate on the oppositions and hardships for feminism, such as conservatism but also race and class divisions.

First, I'm going to focus on the upsides of feminism in Britain and America, by evoking the reasons to extend women's rights, racial issues and what helped develop feminism.

There are numerous reasons to extend women's rights. Actually, franchise for women has a lot of justifications, as Barbara Bodichon puts it. Indeed, she tries to justify the "Enfranchisement of Women" by arguing that "any class which is not represented is likely to be neglected" (p. 26). "If you cannot vote, you cannot be taken into consideration, she claims. This argument is similar



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<p>to those used by Chartist a few decades <sup>before</sup> <del>ago</del>. Chartist campaigned for men's franchise - and not only landlords - so that workers could be better represented. Women in the 1860's are as much neglected as workers in the 1840's. Denying franchise to women enables men not to take them into consideration. But, she also puts forward another argument: "the influence it might be expected to have in increasing public spirit" (l.35). She argues women are more concerned <del>&amp;</del> than men by social preoccupations. Actually, it <del>is</del> allowing women to vote would <del>help</del> be helpful for common good: "it will tend to make all women think seriously of the concerns of the nation at large" (l.40) and not only class interests. There is the idea as women have been excluded for a long time, they could help other down-trodden people to emancipate. I could say it's a form of intersectionality even though the word is contemporary. Finally, to <del>substantiate</del> <sup>underpin</sup> her argumentation, she emphasises a third point. According to her, women's right to vote would help change mentalities: women of the middle class do not attend to "public affairs, because they think it is men's business, not theirs" (l.46-47). "It is this belief (...) that the exercise of the franchise would tend to dissipate" (l.50). This point may well be the most important. Indeed, it would change not only men's mentalities but also</p>		
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women's ones. Even some female ideas need debunking. Other reasons are put forward in the other documents. In document 1, Christine Bolt shows that feminism in Britain and America was pivotal for women's condition around the world: "their respective countries held out the best hope of a changed position for women" (p 40) talking about "British and American feminists". This can recall America's exceptionalism; somehow, it could be American feminists' Manifest Destiny to enhance women's rights around the world. Finally, Margaret Thatcher also gives an argument - but for conservative women; indeed, she argues: "Conservative women are, above all, radical" (p 17) and they "bring common sense to Government" (p 21). She argues as they are good family mothers, they are more down-to-earth and can better address political issues. According to her, it justifies the decision of conservative women. Thus, these documents emphasize plenty of reasons to extend women's rights.

Another reason lies in the racial issue in America. Indeed, feminism may prove to be a way to emancipate one's race, especially for black people. This is what Anna Julia Cooper claims. Actually, she argues the black "race is young and full of the elasticity and hopefulness of your youth" (p 28). "All its achievements are before it". It shows black feminism can help develop "the Negro race" and its potential. This is what she urges black women to do: "May she see her opportunity and vindicate her high prerogative" (p 46). This is a call to act, to take the lead. Feminism according to her can help



emancipate African-Americans. By doing so, black women would somehow honour their race: "To be a woman of the Negro race in America (...) is to have a hostage, it seems to me, unique in the ages?" (l 26-27). It proves black women have the duty to honour their ~~part~~ <sup>part</sup> by developing the greatness of their race. Thus, black feminism proves to be a means to emancipate African-Americans, hence its necessity. It is reminiscent of Toni ~~Moss~~ Morrison's novel Beloved, in which ~~she~~ she features the horror of slavery especially for black women. To her, black feminism is also a way to emancipate black people.

British and American feminists have much in common since the outset. Indeed, as Christine Bolt shows <sup>had</sup> it, "it was rooted in basically similar and encouraging social conditions" with "a share of heri heritage of Enlightenment ideas (...) and a predominantly Protestant culture" (l 26 to 27). Moreover, they were primarily "middle-class, and were strengthened by their religious activism" (l 33). It highlights the importance of religion in the emergence of feminism; moreover, they were inspired by one another as "American feminists looked to Britain for inspiration" (l 59). Finally, feminist claims are better taken into consideration in Britain as "Britain's paternalistic governments might seem more helpful to outside protesters than American administrations" (l 76-77). This ~~is~~ point is illustrated by the fact franchise for women was allowed in 1918 <sup>in Britain</sup>, while much in 1920 in the USA. Thus, feminist movements in America and Britain have had much in common since the beginning.

Nonetheless, feminism faces lots of hardships and oppositions in America and in Britain, such as conservatism and divisions.



The main opposition to feminism lies in conservatism. Indeed, the importance of family and gender roles proves to be hurdles to feminist ideologies. Margaret Thatcher perfectly emphasizes this point: "many women wish to devote themselves mainly to raising a family and running a home" (l 31-32). To her, being a feminist means allowing some women to stay at home so as to look after children and do housework. This conservative feminism clashes with progressivism. Indeed, it perpetuates stereotypes and male domination. While a ~~no~~ woman, she is detrimental to women's cause. To her, ~~from~~ traditional family is the bedrock of society: "the building block of society" (l 36). It justifies the lack of progress for women's rights, family comes first. What is more, progressive feminists are depicted as insane or hysterical: "With feminists like that, who needs male chauvinists?" (l 20). It implies feminists are responsible for male sexism. This conservative view on feminism was already present in America in the 1960's; indeed, Betty Friedan highlights it: "For over 15 years there was no word of this yearning in the million of words written about women" (l 8-9). Women's dissatisfaction is not taken into account as only men can express themselves. Indeed, men tell women how to act: "how to catch a man (...), how to breastfeed children (...), how to buy a dishwasher" and so on. This "mansplaining" perfectly depicts patriarchy and illustrates the importance of conservative ideas in America at that time. Feminists after World War Two ~~came~~ <sup>came</sup> back to conservative ideas that prevented women from emancipating: "some women (...) still remember painfully giving up those dreams, but most of the younger women no longer even thought about them" (l 22-23). It shows young girls did not even think of emancipation, it was no longer a possibility. Women had to look after children and home whereas they had to



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work during the war. Indeed, six million women worked in factories as part of the Victory Program to help America win the war. That work was represented by Rosie the Riveter. In spite of that, they could not break free of gender roles once the war was completed. They must not have the same preoccupations as men as they talk about "problems with their children" (p.36) while men discuss about "shop or politics". "Nobody argued whether women were inferior or superior to men; they were simply different" (p.38-39). It illustrates the traditional differences put forward to justify patriarchy. Feminism was only a "woman problem" that was solved. Furthermore, women's well-being is not taken into account. Indeed, a woman could not be unsatisfied with her marriage: "she was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction" (p.47). No one could understand what was wrong with her, not even her husband or a "psychiatrist". This way, women are depicted as lunatic or hysterical while they are only unsatisfied and would like to divorce. This conservative mentality lays emphasis on the hardships faced by feminism. Women's cause also faced opposition from wealthy men as Barbara Bodichon shows it: "the unwillingness of landlords to accept women as tenants" (p.29-30). It proves women were oppressed because of a narrow-minded mentality. Thus, conservatism



turns out to be a serious opposition to feminism.

Other hardships for feminism lie in class and race divisions. Indeed, ~~it~~ women prove to be divided because of that and it is detrimental to their cause. Christine Bolt illustrates it: "British feminists (...) were willing to concede their cause was complicated by class considerations" (153). It underlines the limits of feminism. While it aims to be universal, the inequalities of income tend to split the movement. The aspect of class division comes along with racial issues: "black women remained largely untouched by middle-class feminism" (186). It shows there is also a racial gap. There are real hardships to gather all women as it is seen by "immigrant women" as being dominated by "middle-class elites" (189). To some, social warfare might be more important than the fight for women's rights. The racial issue for feminism is also emphasized by Anna Julia Cooper. Indeed, as she praises her race, it leads to identity politics and not a universal feminism. She urges the "colored woman" to act and to campaign for her right but not all women. This leads to splits among feminist movements, which is detrimental to the cause. This could be thwarted by an intersectional fight against all forms of domination - gender, race, income... Thus, class and race ~~divisions~~ divisions prove to be serious hurdles for feminism.

In a nutshell, feminism is part and parcel of both British and



American cultures. Indeed, this movement is justified by plenty of reasons that led to extend women's rights as with franchise. Nonetheless, feminism faces lots of ~~of~~ oppositions as the conservative mentality on family and gender roles or class and race divisions. Nowadays, the overturn of Roe v Wade by the Supreme Court in America proves the conservative opposition has not vanished. Yet, intersectionality leads to progress ~~among~~<sup>for</sup> women in spite of class or race divisions.



