

**2018 SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT
RAMAPO INDIAN HILLS HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
ETS 192: GENDER AND LITERARY TEXTS**

Welcome to ETS 192 Gender and Literary Texts, a Syracuse University Project Advance Honors course! Please read the directions for both Part 1 and Part 2 and complete both. Be sure to bring your work to class on **SEPTEMBER 6, 2018**.

Part One: Article

Directions. Read and annotate the following article for its key points and your personal reactions to these issues.

Men and Women Say They're More Different Than Similar

By Claire Cain Miller Dec. 5, 2017

NYTimes article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/05/upshot/men-women-gender-bias-poll.html>

Men are tough; women are in touch with their feelings. Men are providers; women are nurturers. Men should punch back when provoked; women should be physically attractive.

These stereotypical beliefs about gender differences remain strong, found a new survey from the Pew Research Center on Tuesday. Even in an era of transgender rights, a surge of women running for office and a rising number of stay-at-home fathers, most Americans believe men and women are fundamentally different, and that masculinity is more valued than femininity.

The workplace is the one area in which a majority of men and women said the sexes were more alike than different in terms of what they were good at: 63 percent of respondents said men and women excelled at the same things at work, while 37 percent said they were good at different things.

The survey results also shed light on some root causes of sexual harassment and discrimination. Nearly half of men, and 57 percent of men ages 18 to 36, said they felt pressure to join in when other men talked about women in a sexual way.

Sexism was described as widespread, and baked in from a young age. The belief that society placed a higher premium on masculinity than femininity was reflected in views of how to raise children: Respondents more often approved of teaching girls that it was acceptable to be like boys than the other way around.

Three-quarters of people said it was important for parents of girls to encourage them to participate in the same activities as boys and to develop skills considered masculine. But a smaller majority — just under two-thirds of respondents — thought parents of boys should encourage them to do girls' activities or develop skills considered feminine.

A large majority of women thought parents should break gender norms when raising either girls or boys, but men's opinions changed depending on the sex of the child. Seventy-two percent thought parents should break gender norms for girls, and 56 percent for boys. Two-thirds of Republicans thought parents of girls should break gender norms, but less than half thought parents of boys should.

In questions about life outside the workplace, most respondents said men and women were different in how they expressed their feelings and in their physical abilities, hobbies and parenting styles, according to the survey, which was nationally representative. Pew surveyed 4,573 adults in August and September using its American Trends Panel. (See how your views compare by taking Pew's quizon the topic.)

There was a partisan divide about whether these gender differences were the result of biology (and thus unlikely to change) or societal norms. More than half of Republicans said biology determined differences in how men and women parented, expressed feelings or spent their free time. About two-thirds of Democrats described society as the primary driver of these differences.

Women were also likelier than men to attribute gender differences to nurture, not nature.

For instance, 87 percent of survey respondents said men and women expressed feelings differently. But two-thirds of women said this was based on societal expectations, while more than half of men thought it was because of biological differences. This was the gender difference that the largest share of respondents of both sex — about a quarter — thought was a bad thing.

In terms of gender differences in parenting styles and approaches, 60 percent of women said they were societal, while a similar share of men said they were biological. This was the gender difference that the largest share of respondents — just over half — thought was a good thing.

Being a woman, according to respondents, meant pressure to be physically attractive and to be an involved parent.

Being a man meant facing pressure to support a family financially and to be professionally successful, emotionally strong and interested in sports. To a lesser extent, it also meant being willing to throw a punch if provoked. Nearly half of men, and more than half of millennial men, said it also meant facing pressure to have many sexual partners and to join in when other men talked about women in sexual ways.

Democrats were more likely than Republicans to say that society looks up to masculine men — but Democrats were also much more likely to say that society’s esteem for masculinity is a bad thing.

Despite the deep-seated beliefs about gender differences, there were some signs in the survey responses that attitudes about gender roles were becoming less rigid, particularly among women and Democrats, who were more likely to say that society should be more accepting of nontraditional gender roles.

When survey respondents thought about the next generation, there were certain qualities associated with one gender — like taking on leadership for boys and expressing emotions for girls — that most thought should be encouraged more equally.

More than half of respondents said there should be more emphasis for boys to talk about their emotions when they are upset and to do well in school. As for girls, more than half of respondents said there should be more emphasis on being leaders and on standing up for themselves. In playground games, at least, we might see more girls leading the teams, and more boys explaining how winning or losing makes them feel.

Part Two: Poem

Directions. Print out and read the following excerpts from a collection of poems by Judy Grahn . As you read, annotate the poem for literary devices and make connections to the article. These annotations should reflect a combination of academic and personal responses.

The Common Women Poems

by Judy Grahn

I. HELEN, AT 9 A.M., AT NOON, AT 5:15

Her ambition is to be more shiny
and metallic, black and purple as
a thief at midday; trying to make it
in a male form, she's become as
stiff as possible.

Wearing trim suits and spike heels,
she says "bust" instead of breast;
somewhere underneath she
misses love and trust, but she feels
that spite and malice are the

prices of success. She doesn't realize yet, that she's missed success, also, so her smile is sometimes still genuine. After a while she'll be a real killer, bitter and more wily, better at pitting the men against each other and getting the other women fired. She constantly conspires. Her grief expresses itself in fits of fury over details, details take the place of meaning, money takes the place of life. She believes that people are lice who eat her, so she bites first; her thirst increases year by year and by the time the sheen has disappeared from her black hair, and tension makes her features unmistakably ugly, she'll go mad. No one in particular will care. As anyone who's had her for a boss will know the common woman is as common as the common crow.

II. ELLA, IN A SQUARE APRON, ALONG HIGHWAY 80

She's a copperheaded waitress, tired and sharp-worded, she hides her bad brown tooth behind a wicked smile, and flicks her ass out of habit, to fend off the pass that passes for affection. She keeps her mind the way men keep a knife—keen to strip the game down to her size. She has a thin spine, swallows her eggs cold, and tells lies. She slaps a wet rag at the truck drivers if they should complain. She understands the necessity for pain, turns away the smaller tips, out of pride, and keeps a flask under the counter. Once,

she shot a lover who misused her child.
 Before she got out of jail, the courts had pounced
 and given the child away. Like some isolated lake,
 her flat blue eyes take care of their own stark
 bottoms. Her hands are nervous, curled, ready to scrape.
 The common woman is as common
 as a rattlesnake.

III. NADINE, RESTING ON HER NEIGHBOR'S STOOP

She holds things together, collects bail,
 makes the landlord patch the largest holes.
 At the Sunday social she would spike
 every drink, and offer you half of what she knows,
 which is plenty. She pokes at the ruins of the city
 like an armored tank; but she thinks
 of herself as a rip saw cutting through
 knots in wood. Her sentences come out
 like thick pine shanks
 and her big hands fill the air like smoke.
 She's a mud-chinked cabin in the slums,
 sitting on the doorstep counting
 rats and raising 15 children,
 half of them her own. The neighborhood
 would burn itself out without her;
 one of these days she'll strike the spark herself.
 She's made of grease
 and metal, with a hard head
 that makes the men around her seem frail.
 The common woman is as common as
 a nail.

IV: CAROL, IN THE PARK, CHEWING ON STRAWS

She has taken a woman lover
 whatever shall we do
 she has taken a woman lover

how lucky it wasn't you
 And all the day through she smiles and lies
 and grits her teeth and pretends to be shy,
 or weak, or busy. Then she goes home
 and pounds her own nails, makes her own
 bets, and fixes her own car, with her friend.
 She goes as far
 as women can go without protection
 from men.

On weekends, she dreams of becoming a tree;
 a tree that dreams it is ground up
 and sent to the paper factory, where it
 lies helpless in sheets, until it dreams
 of becoming a paper airplane, and rises
 on its own current; where it turns into a
 bird, a great coasting bird that dreams of becoming
 more free, even, than that -- a feather, finally, or
 a piece of air with lightning in it.
 she has taken a woman lover
 whatever can we say
 She walks around all day
 quietly, but underneath it
 she's electric;
 angry energy inside a passive form.
 The common woman is as common
 as a thunderstorm.

V. DETROIT ANNIE, HITCHHIKING

Her words pour out as if her throat were a broken
 artery and her mind were cut-glass, carelessly handled.
 You imagine her in a huge velvet hat with a great
 dangling black feather,
 but she shaves her head instead
 and goes for three-day midnight walks.
 Sometimes she goes down to the dock and dances
 off the end of it, simply to prove her belief

that people who cannot walk on water
 are phonies, or dead.
 When she is cruel, she is very, very
 cool and when she is kind she is lavish.
 Fishermen think perhaps she's a fish, but they're all
 fools. She figured out that the only way
 to keep from being frozen was to
 stay in motion, and long ago converted
 most of her flesh into liquid. Now when she
 smells danger, she spills herself all over,
 like gasoline, and lights it.
 She leaves the taste of salt and iron
 under your tongue, but you don't mind
 The common woman is as common
 as the reddest wine.

(Section VI omitted)

VII. VERA, FROM MY CHILDHOOD

Solemnly swearing, to swear as an oath to you
 who have somehow gotten to be a pale old woman;
 swearing, as if an oath could be wrapped around
 your shoulders
 like a new coat:
 For your 28 dollars a week and the bastard boss
 you never let yourself hate;
 and the work, all the work you did at home
 where you never got paid;
 For your mouth that got thinner and thinner
 until it disappeared as if you had choked on it,
 watching the hard liquor break your fine husband down
 into a dead joke.
 For the strange mole, like a third eye
 right in the middle of your forehead;
 for your religion which insisted that people
 are beautiful golden birds and must be preserved;

for your persistent nerve
and plain white talk --
the common woman is as common
as good bread
as common as when you couldn't go on
but did.
For all the world we didn't know we held in common
all along
the common woman is as common as the best of bread
and will rise
and will become strong -- I swear it to you
I swear it to you on my own head
I swear it to you on my common
woman's
head.