



Examining Women's Roles in Latin America and Europe, 1450-1750

9-12 Grade World History or AP World History

This activity is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.

This study belongs in a unit on Spanish colonization of Latin America in the 1500s and after the study of the Italian Renaissance.

Description of activity: Students will explore the limitations placed on women by the Roman Catholic Church and Latin American society. They will draw comparisons to gender norms of the Italian Renaissance.

Activity Goals: Students should gain a greater appreciation of the opportunities afforded to noble women and the limitations placed on them by the Church and social norms.

Focus Question: How equal could a woman be in Latin American or European society in the early modern period?

Context: Period 4 Gender Roles in the Early Modern Period - Spanish Latin America, Key Concepts 4.1, 4.2, 4.3

Objectives: AP World History 4.2.III.C

Virginia SOLS

STANDARD WHII.4a

The student will demonstrate knowledge of the impact of the European Age of Discovery and expansion into the Americas, Africa, and Asia by

a) explaining the roles and economic motivations of explorers and conquistadors.

STANDARD WHII.4b

The student will demonstrate knowledge of the impact of the European Age of Discovery and expansion into the Americas, Africa, and Asia by

b) describing the influence of religion.

STANDARD WHII.4c

The student will demonstrate knowledge of the impact of the European Age of Discovery and expansion into the Americas, Africa, and Asia by

c) explaining migration, settlement patterns, cultural diffusion, and social classes in the colonized areas.

STANDARD WHII.4d

The student will demonstrate knowledge of the impact of the European Age of Discovery and expansion into the Americas, Africa, and Asia by

d) describing the Columbian Exchange, including its impact on native populations.



Assessment: Class discussion, written analysis SAQ

Activity Details, Primary Sources, and Procedure: provided below

What you will need before implementing: This lesson would be most effective with computer access for all students. The documents and direction could be shared digitally with all students (in Google Doc.s. or another format). This activity could be accomplished with paper copy of the materials for each student.

1. Have students research a bit of history on Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz and Laura Cereta. Discuss who they were, when and where each lived, the circumstances of their lives. Spend 5-7 minutes on this at the most.
2. Have the class view the self portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and discuss the following:



<https://www.loc.gov/item/2002707871/>

What messages was she attempting to convey about herself? How do you know?

3. Read and analyze the poem, "You Foolish Men."

Students should read and mark up the poem individually. You may want to have students discuss it with a partner or small group.



You Foolish Men

You foolish men who lay
the guilt on women,
not seeing you're the cause
of the very thing you blame;

if you invite their disdain
with measureless desire
why wish they well behave
if you incite to ill.

You fight their stubbornness,
then, weightily,
you say it was their lightness
when it was your guile.

In all your crazy shows
you act just like a child
who plays the bogeyman
of which he's then afraid.

With foolish arrogance
you hope to find a Thais
in her you court, but a Lucretia
when you've possessed her.

What kind of mind is odder
than his who mists
a mirror and then complains
that it's not clear.

Their favour and disdain
you hold in equal state,
if they mistreat, you complain,
you mock if they treat you well.

No woman wins esteem of you:
the most modest is ungrateful
if she refuses to admit you;
yet if she does, she's loose.



You always are so foolish
your censure is unfair;
one you blame for cruelty
the other for being easy.

What must be her temper
who offends when she's
ungrateful and wearies
when compliant?

But with the anger and the grief
that your pleasure tells
good luck to her who doesn't love you
and you go on and complain.

Your lover's moans give wings
to women's liberty:
and having made them bad,
you want to find them good.

Who has embraced
the greater blame in passion?
She who, solicited, falls,
or he who, fallen, pleads?

Who is more to blame,
though either should do wrong?
She who sins for pay
or he who pays to sin?

Why be outraged at the guilt
that is of your own doing?
Have them as you make them
or make them what you will.

Leave off your wooing
and then, with greater cause,
you can blame the passion
of her who comes to court?

Patent is your arrogance
that fights with many weapons
since in promise and insistence
you join world, flesh and devil.



4. Task

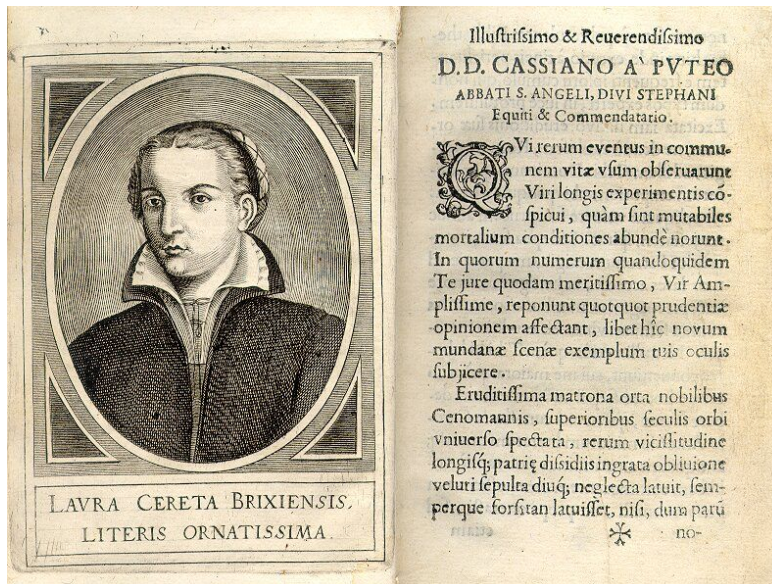
Students will analyze this poem by providing responses to the following questions:

- A. What argument is she making to the reader? What evidence did she include to convince the reader she was right?
- B. Explore authorial perspective. (Think about the life and experience of this woman. Why did she have this perspective?)
- C. Provide historical context by addressing how women in her society were viewed, what rights and opportunities they had, etc.

Task Assessment

This response will be assessed according to the SAQ scoring model. One point will be awarded for adequate responses to parts A through C for maximum of 3 points.

5. Examine the portrait of Laura Cereta.



<http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/desbillons/cereta/seite3.html>

What messages are being conveyed by this portrait? What makes you think so?



6. Read this introduction and then the excerpt from Cereta's "Defense of the Liberal Instruction of Women."

Laura Cereta to Bibulus Sempronius: Defense of the Liberal Instruction of Women

http://www.sjsu.edu/people/andrew.fleck/courses/Hum1bSpr15/Lecture_22%20Laura%20Cereta.pdf San Jose State University

Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction to the preceding selection, Cereta recovered her spirits after her husband's death by immersing herself ever more deeply in her literary studies. These efforts, in turn, brought forth critics, both male and female, who, jealous of her accomplishments, belittled her work. Two principal charges were brought against her: that a woman could not be learned and that her father had written her letters for her. She turned against her critics with a ferocity at least equal to theirs. One of her surviving letters is an invective against two males whom she had known since childhood. But here we find, addressed to a man, as reasoned and thorough a defense of learned women as was penned during the Quattrocento. The letter is particularly interesting for its suggestion that the correspondent was disguising his contempt for women in singling out Cereta for praise.

The correspondent is unknown to us from other sources and may well be fictitious. "Bibulus," which we have not found elsewhere among the names of this period, means "drunkard." No other letter is addressed to such a correspondent.

This translation is based on the Latin text in Tomasini, *Laurae Ceretae epistolae*, pp. 187- 95.

Text

MY EARS ARE WEARIED BY YOUR CARPING. YOU brashly and publicly not merely wonder but indeed lament that I am said to possess as fine a mind as nature ever bestowed upon the most learned man. You seem to think that so learned a woman has scarcely before been seen in the world. You are wrong on both counts, Sempronius, and have dearly strayed from the path of truth and disseminate falsehood. I agree that you should be grieved; indeed, you should be ashamed, for you have ceased to be a living man, but have become an animated stone; having rejected the studies which make men wise, you rot in torpid leisure. Not nature but your own soul has betrayed you, deserting virtue for the easy path of sin.

You pretend to admire me as a female prodigy, but there lurks sugared deceit in your adulation. You wait perpetually in ambush to entrap my lovely sex, and overcome by your hatred seek to trample me underfoot and dash me to the earth. It is a crafty ploy, but only a low and vulgar mind would think to halt Medusa with honey.' You would better have crept up on a mole than on a wolf. For a mole with its dark vision can see nothing around it, while a wolf's eyes glow in the dark. For the wise person sees by [force of] mind, and anticipating what lies ahead, proceeds by the light of reason. For by foreknowledge the thinker scatters with knowing feet the evils which litter her path.



I would have been silent, believe me, if that savage old enmity of yours had attacked me alone. For the light of Phoebus cannot be befouled even in the mud. But I cannot tolerate your having attacked my entire sex. For this reason my thirsty soul seeks revenge, my sleeping pen is aroused to literary struggle, raging anger stirs mental passions long chained by silence. With just cause I am moved to demonstrate how great a reputation for learning and virtue women have won by their inborn excellence, manifested in every age as knowledge, the [purveyor] of honor. Certain, indeed; and legitimate is our possession of this inheritance, come to us from a long eternity of ages past.

...

Only the question of the rarity of outstanding women remains to be addressed. The explanation is clear women have been able by nature to be exceptional, but have chosen lesser goals. For some women are concerned with parting their hair correctly, adorning themselves with lovely dresses, or decorating their fingers with pearls and other gems. Others delight in mouthing carefully composed phrases, indulging in dancing, or managing spoiled puppies. Still others wish to gaze at lavish banquet tables, to rest in sleep, or, standing at mirrors, to smear their lovely faces. But those in whom a deeper integrity yearns for virtue, restrain from the start their youthful souls, reflect on higher things, harden the body with sobriety and trials, and curb their tongues, open their ears, compose their thoughts in wakeful hours, their minds in contemplation, to letters bonded to righteousness. For knowledge is not given as a gift, but [is gained] with diligence. The free mind, not shirking effort, always soars zealously toward the good, and the desire to know grows ever more wide and deep. It is because of no special holiness, therefore, that we [women] are rewarded by God the Giver with the gift of exceptional talent. Nature has generously lavished its gifts upon all people, opening to all the doors of choice through which reason sends envoys to the will, from which they learn and convey its desires. The will must choose to exercise the gift of reason.

...

I, therefore, who have always prized virtue, having put my private concerns aside, will polish and weary my pen against chatterboxes swelled with false glory. Trained in the arts, I shall block the paths of ambush. And I shall endeavor, by avenging arms, to sweep away the abusive infamies of noisemakers with which some disreputable and impudent men furiously, violently, and nastily rave against a woman and a republic worthy of reverence. January 13 [1488]

7. Task

Students will analyze this excerpt by providing responses to the following questions:

- A. What are the main points made by the author?
- B. What seems to have motivated her to write this letter? What was the main purpose of the letter?
- C. What cultural reasons account for similarities and differences in the views of Cereta and de la Cruz?

Task Assessment

This response will be assessed according to the SAQ scoring model. One point will be awarded for adequate responses to parts A through C for maximum of 3 points.



Improving Historical Thinking Skills through Source-Based Instruction
Paige K Solomon, Norfolk Collegiate