4.3 Feminist Thinkers: Mary Wollstonecraft and Betty Friedan

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 50 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short-answer items may use brief sentences. For levels-marked questions, write structured responses with accurate political knowledge, named thinker references and clear evaluation where required. The final question is the 30-mark essay.

1 State the year Mary Wollstonecraft published A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and name its author as required for A-level Politics topics on feminist thinkers.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 State two legal or civic domains from which Mary Wollstonecraft argued women were unjustly excluded in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, 1792.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Explain Mary Wollstonecraft's argument about why equal education is essential for women's rational development, as discussed in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, 1792.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

4 State one concrete policy area Friedan advocated to improve women's access to employment and education in The Feminine Mystique, 1963.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

5 Explain how Betty Friedan argued that educational and employment opportunities contributed to women's liberation in The Feminine Mystique, 1963. Give two linked points, one on education and one on employment. Develop each point and explain how the two routes reinforce one another.

(Total for Question 5 is 6 marks)

6 Analyse two ways in which Wollstonecraft's ideas reflect liberal feminism, using A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, 1792, as your source. Answer should focus on the two specified ways and include developed explanation and an evaluative reference to liberal feminist principles.

(Total for Question 6 is 10 marks)

7 Evaluate the extent to which Mary Wollstonecraft and Betty Friedan agree on how women's equality should be achieved. Refer to A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) and The Feminine Mystique (1963) in your answer. Make a sustained judgement.

(Total for Question 7 is 24 marks)

Mark scheme · 4.3 Feminist Thinkers: Mary Wollstonecraft and Betty Friedan

Question 1

1792 and Mary Wollstonecraft cao	**B1**

Answer: 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft.

Question 2

one accurate domain, e.g. education cao	**B1**
a second accurate domain, e.g. property rights or citizenship/political participation cao	**B1**

Answer: Education; property rights or citizenship/political participation.

Question 3

identifies Wollstonecraft's claim that women are rational beings capable of moral reasoning	**B1**
explains that she argued lack of education produced artificial weaknesses and vanity, not natural inferiority	**B1**
explains the consequence: equal education would enable women to be independent, virtuous citizens and equal partners	**B1**

Answer: Wollstonecraft argued women are rational beings and that denying them education creates apparent weaknesses like vanity and dependence rather than natural inferiority. Equal education would develop women's capacity for moral reasoning and independence, enabling them to be virtuous citizens and partners rather than merely ornamental companions.

Question 4

states one relevant policy area, e.g. access to higher education or childcare provision to enable women to work	**B1**
brief development linking the policy to increased employment or education opportunities	**B1**

Answer: Examples: expanding access to higher education for women; improving childcare provision so women can combine paid work with family responsibilities.

Question 5

identifies that Friedan argued higher education broadened women's horizons and intellectual opportunities	**B1**
explains that education challenged the cultural messages of domestic confinement and fostered ambition	**B1**
identifies that Friedan argued access to paid employment offered economic independence, reducing dependence on men	**B1**
explains that employment provided a public identity beyond the home, so women were no longer defined solely by their domestic role	**B1**
links both education and employment as mutually reinforcing routes to autonomy	**B1**
explains that meaningful employment offered personal fulfilment through pursuing ambitions beyond domesticity	**B1**

Answer: Friedan argued that higher education broadened women's horizons and intellectual opportunities. This challenged cultural messages that confined women to domesticity and encouraged ambitions beyond the home. Paid employment gave women economic independence, reducing their dependence on men. It also provided a public identity, so women were no longer defined solely by their domestic role. Meaningful work offered personal fulfilment through pursuing their ambitions. Education and employment therefore reinforced one another as routes to autonomy: education widened women's ambitions, while employment provided the independence and opportunities to pursue them.

Question 6

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Level 1 Identifies one or two basic ways with limited development or explanation and little linkage to liberal feminist principles. **1-3**

Level 2 Provides clear analysis of two distinct ways Wollstonecraft reflects liberal feminism, with developed explanation for each and some linkage to ideas like individual rights, reason and legal equality. **4-7**

Level 3 Provides detailed, well-supported analysis of two ways, with strong development, precise use of Wollstonecraft's arguments and explicit evaluative linkage to liberal feminist principles such as equal rights, rational individualism and reform through education and law. **8-10**

Indicative content:

- Way 1: Emphasis on individual reason and rational equality, reflecting liberal feminism's core claim that women are autonomous individuals entitled to the same civil and political rights as men; Wollstonecraft argues women possess reason and should be treated as moral equals.
- Development 1: Explain how Wollstonecraft locates the problem in socialisation and lack of education rather than in natural inferiority, matching liberal feminist faith in reform through equal rights and institutions rather than radical overthrow of social structures.
- Way 2: Demand for legal and educational reforms, reflecting liberal feminism's focus on achieving equality through legal change, access to education and gradual reform rather than revolutionary social transformation.
- Development 2: Show how Wollstonecraft's proposals for access to education, property reforms and civic participation exemplify liberal feminist policy prescriptions aimed at removing formal barriers to equality.
- Evaluation: Consider limits and complications, e.g. Wollstonecraft's occasional appeals to virtue and the domestic role might be read as partial to the gendered context of her time, or liberal feminism's reliance on legal reform may be critiqued for insufficiently addressing deeper social and structural patriarchy. Balance by noting how her stress on individual capacity and legal rights remains central to liberal feminist strategy.

Question 7

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Level 1 Basic, limited knowledge of Wollstonecraft and Friedan with little or no developed comparison or evaluation. Responses are descriptive with few accurate references. **1-6**

Level 2 Clear, accurate knowledge of both thinkers with some developed analysis of similarities and differences; evaluation is present but may be one-sided or underdeveloped. Some use of textual or historical detail. **7-12**

Level 3 Detailed, accurate knowledge deployed in a sustained comparison that addresses both agreement and disagreement on how equality should be achieved, with well-chosen examples and developed evaluation leading to a supported judgement. **13-18**

Level 4 Sophisticated, wide-ranging and accurate engagement with both texts showing deep understanding of their methods and aims, a balanced evaluation that weighs theoretical and practical differences and similarities, and a clear, well-justified final judgement on the extent of agreement. **19-24**

Indicative content:

- Areas of agreement: both argue women are constrained by social institutions and expectations rather than by innate inferiority, and both stress the importance of education as a route to greater autonomy and equality.
- Wollstonecraft: emphasis on rational individualism, formal legal and educational reforms, and equal civic status; method is Enlightenment-influenced argument that reason and rights should be extended to women via legal and educational change.
- Friedan: emphasis on cultural critique of domestic ideology, the psychological effects of the 'feminine mystique', and the need for structural supports such as access to higher education, paid employment and childcare; method is sociological and experiential, drawing on interviews and contemporary social analysis.
- Key differences: Wollstonecraft focuses on legal reform, rights and civic participation within the late 18th-century context, while Friedan foregrounds cultural norms, psychological liberation and structural supports in mid-20th-century America; Friedan is more concerned with changing social attitudes and institutions that limit opportunities, whereas Wollstonecraft emphasises formal equality and cultivation of reason.
- Points of evaluation: assess whether the thinkers' different historical contexts explain methodological differences; consider whether Friedan's focus on social supports goes beyond liberal legalism to address practical constraints that Wollstonecraft may underplay, or whether Wollstonecraft's insistence on rights and education provides a foundational framework that complements Friedan.
- Consider criticisms from other feminist perspectives: both might be critiqued by radical feminists for insufficiently challenging patriarchal structures or by intersectional approaches for insufficient attention to class and race, but the question focuses on their relative agreement on routes to equality.
- A concluding judgement might argue that there is substantial agreement on the centrality of education and the rejection of natural inferiority, but important differences in emphasis and method mean they do not fully agree on the means: Wollstonecraft prioritises legal and moral arguments for rights and education, while Friedan supplements legal equality with a cultural and structural programme to enable women to exercise those rights in practice.