



POL.NCI3 Feminist Thinkers: Mary Wollstonecraft and Betty Friedan

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

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** Define the term 'feminine mystique' as used by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963, and explain its relevance to the topic of women's roles.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** 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 2 is 1 mark)

- 3** 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 3 is 2 marks)

- 4** State two harms Betty Friedan associated with the domestic confinement of women under the 'feminine mystique' in *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

- 5** 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 5 is 3 marks)

- 6** Explain Betty Friedan's critique of postwar suburban domesticity in *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963, and how she linked it to the loss of female ambition.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

- 7** Define Wollstonecraft's claim that women possess 'rational individualism' as used in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

- 9** Explain Mary Wollstonecraft's critique of women's property rights and how she linked property dependence to female subordination in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

- 10** Explain how Betty Friedan argued that educational and employment opportunities contributed to women's liberation in *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963. Give two linked points.

(Total for Question 10 is 6 marks)

- 11** 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 11 is 10 marks)

- 12** 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 12 is 24 marks)

Mark scheme · POL.NCI3 Feminist Thinkers: Mary Wollstonecraft and Betty Friedan

Question 1

- **B1** a concise definition identifying the 'feminine mystique' as the idealised belief that women's fulfilment comes mainly from domesticity and motherhood
- **Answer: The 'feminine mystique' is the idea that women should find complete fulfilment through housework, marriage and motherhood, a cultural ideal Friedan argued trapped many women in unsatisfying lives.**

Question 2

- **B1** 1792 and Mary Wollstonecraft
- **Answer: 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft.**

Question 3

- **B1** one accurate domain, e.g. education
- **B1** a second accurate domain, e.g. property rights or citizenship/political participation
- **Answer: Education; property rights or citizenship/political participation.**

Question 4

- **B1** one valid harm, e.g. psychological malaise or lack of identity/fulfilment
- **B1** a second valid harm, e.g. wasted educational and occupational potential or economic dependence
- **Answer: Psychological malaise or lack of personal fulfilment; wasted educational and occupational potential leading to economic dependence.**

Question 5

- **B1** 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
- **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 6

- **B1** identifies Friedan's description of the suburban, consumer-oriented domestic ideal as constraining and isolating for many middle-class housewives
- **B1** explains the 'problem that has no name' as the psychological malaise and sense of unfulfilment experienced by women confined to domestic roles
- **B1** explains how Friedan linked this malaise to the suppression of ambition, education and paid work opportunities
- **B1** offers a clear consequence, e.g. Friedan argued that social expectations, media and educational guidance channelled women away from careers and higher education, producing wasted talent
- **Answer: Friedan criticised the postwar suburban domestic ideal as culturally and psychologically constraining, producing the 'problem that has no name' where many housewives felt a deep sense of unfulfilment. She argued this social model suppressed women's ambitions by encouraging them to prioritise marriage, homemaking and consumer roles over education and careers, thereby wasting talent and reducing autonomy.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies that Wollstonecraft argued women are autonomous rational beings with the capacity for independent moral judgement
- **B1** links this to her rejection of the idea women are naturally suited only for emotion and domestic roles
- **Answer: Wollstonecraft claimed women are autonomous, rational individuals capable of independent moral judgement, rejecting the notion that they are naturally suited only to emotional or domestic roles.**

Question 8

- **B1** 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
- **Answer: Examples: expanding access to higher education for women; improving childcare provision so women can combine paid work with family responsibilities.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies that Wollstonecraft criticised laws and customs that left married women economically dependent on husbands
- **B1** explains that economic dependence undermined women's autonomy and reinforced social expectations of subordination
- **B1** links critique to call for legal reform, e.g. property rights and opportunities for economic independence
- **B1** gives a consequence or example, e.g. dependence limited women's ability to be full citizens and rational actors
- **Answer: Wollstonecraft criticised laws and customs that left women, especially married women, economically dependent on their husbands, arguing that this dependence undermined autonomy and reinforced expectations of subordination. She linked economic dependence to the denial of full citizenship and argued for legal reforms and economic opportunities so women could be independent, rational actors.**

Question 10

- **B1** 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
- **B1** explains that employment provided personal fulfilment, a public identity beyond the home and reduced economic dependence on men
- **B1** links both education and employment as mutually reinforcing routes to autonomy
- **B1** offers brief evidence or example, e.g. Friedan's accounts of suburban women who sought work or education to escape malaise
- **Answer: Friedan argued that higher education broadened women's horizons, challenging the cultural messages that confined them to domesticity and fostering intellectual ambition. She also argued that access to paid employment gave women economic independence, a public role and personal fulfilment; together, education and employment were mutually reinforcing routes to autonomy and a life beyond the 'feminine mystique'.**

Question 11

- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **Level 1** (1-3): Identifies one or two basic ways with limited development or explanation and little linkage to liberal feminist principles.
- **Level 2** (4-7): 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.
- **Level 3** (8-10): 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.
- **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 12

- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **Level 1** (1-6): Basic, limited knowledge of Wollstonecraft and Friedan with little or no developed comparison or evaluation. Responses are descriptive with few accurate references.
- **Level 2** (7-12): 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.
- **Level 3** (13-18): 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.
- **Level 4** (19-24): 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.
- **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.