4.4 Feminist Thinkers: Kate Millett and Sylvia Walby

Total Marks

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 45 minutes · Write-in edition

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Write full sentences for extended responses (questions worth 4 marks or more). Spend about 75 minutes in total, allowing about 35 minutes for the final 30-mark essay.

1 State the year Kate Millett's book Sexual Politics was first published, as it is used in A-level discussions of radical feminist critique.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 State one public policy implication that follows from Sylvia Walby's account of public patriarchy, and give a brief explanation of how it addresses a structural cause.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 State two features of Kate Millett's argument in Sexual Politics about how literature and culture support male power, giving the context of Millett's literary and cultural analysis.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Evaluate the extent to which Kate Millett and Sylvia Walby agree on how patriarchy operates.

(Total for Question 4 is 24 marks)

5 Explain, with brief development, Sylvia Walby's claim that patriarchy shifted from being primarily private to being increasingly public in late twentieth century societies.

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

6 Explain Sylvia Walby's account of male violence as one of the patriarchal structures, and outline briefly why she treats it as a structural, not only an individual, problem.

(Total for Question 6 is 5 marks)

7 Analyse two reasons why Kate Millett saw the family as central to patriarchy, using examples from Sexual Politics and her cultural analysis.

(Total for Question 7 is 10 marks)

Mark scheme · 4.4 Feminist Thinkers: Kate Millett and Sylvia Walby

Question 1

states the year 1970 cao	**B1**

Answer: 1970.

Question 2

states a plausible policy implication, e.g. equal pay legislation, family support services, or policing reform to address male violence	**B1**
briefly explains how it addresses a structural cause, e.g. equal pay reduces economic dependence and tackles the paid work structure	**B1**

Answer: One implication is stronger equal pay and employment equality measures, which address the paid work structure by reducing economic dependency and barriers to womens progression, thereby targeting a structural source of patriarchal inequality.

Question 3

one accurate feature, e.g. that literary texts reproduce male sexual dominance through characterisation and narrative voice	**B1**
a second accurate feature, e.g. that culture normalises male authority and eroticises female subordination	**B1**

Answer: Any two of: literary texts reproduce male sexual dominance via characterisation and narrator perspective; cultural myths and representations normalise male authority; eroticisation of female submission in literature helps legitimize unequal sexual relations.

Question 4

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Basic and generalised knowledge of Millett and Walby with minimal analytical or evaluative development. May include unsupported assertions about agreement or disagreement.	**1-6**
Level 2 Clear and accurate knowledge of both thinkers with some analysis of similarities and differences. Evaluation is present but tends to be partial or descriptive rather than sustained.	**7-12**
Level 3 Detailed knowledge and clear analysis comparing Millett and Walby. Evaluation weighs arguments and evidence and begins to reach a reasoned judgement, though treatment of counterarguments may be limited.	**13-18**
Level 4 Sophisticated, balanced and comprehensive evaluation that integrates detailed AO1 knowledge, critical AO2 analysis and sustained AO3 evaluation. The response recognises nuance, addresses limits and implications of each theory, uses well-chosen examples and reaches a clear, substantiated conclusion on the extent of agreement.	**19-24**

Indicative content:

- Points of agreement: both regard patriarchy as systemic rather than solely individual. Millett links private sexual relations to institutionalised power and Walby models patriarchy as embedded across multiple structures, so both reject purely individualist explanations.
- Agreement on the centrality of the family: Millett explicitly locates the family at the heart of sexual politics; Walby acknowledges the household as one of six structures and accepts that domestic relations are a key site for reproducing inequality.
- Agreement on the role of culture and ideology: Millett emphasises literature and cultural representation as legitimising male power; Walby includes culture as one of her structures and sees cultural norms as facilitating other structural inequalities.
- Points of difference: scope and method. Millett focuses on cultural and interpersonal mechanisms, using literary critique and psychoanalytic ideas; Walby uses sociological, empirical and institutional analysis across paid work, the state and other domains, giving more weight to measurable institutional processes.
- Difference over where patriarchy is rooted and best remedied: Millett suggests deep cultural and sexual transformation is central, implying broad cultural change; Walby suggests targeted institutional reforms in workplaces, law and policy are necessary because patriarchy operates through identifiable structures.
- Difference over emphasis on public versus private: Millett foregrounds private sexual relations and symbolic reproduction of male power; Walby's thesis of a shift to public patriarchy places more emphasis on state and labour market mechanisms producing inequality.
- Evaluation of strengths: Millett's cultural analysis powerfully explains symbolic legitimation and everyday experience of domination; Walby's structural model provides actionable areas for policy and research and can accommodate intersectional variables such as class and race within institutions.
- Evaluation of weaknesses: Millett may understate institutional and economic sources of patriarchy and risks overgeneralising from literary examples; Walby's model may underplay the depth of cultural and psychological processes that sustain gender allocation in families and intimate life.
- Synthesis and concluding judgement: a reasoned conclusion might argue the thinkers substantially agree that patriarchy is systemic and multifaceted, but they diverge on emphasis and remedy: Millett centres culture, sexuality and the family as primary sites of power, while Walby provides a multi-domain institutional account that better captures public and economic mechanisms. A strong answer weighs these perspectives and may conclude they are complementary, with Walby offering a macro-institutional frame that can incorporate Millett's micro-cultural insights.

Question 5

identifies that Walby argued patriarchy moved beyond the household into public institutions such as paid labour and the state	**B1**
develops that this shift means inequalities are produced by employment practices, legal systems and state policies as well as by family relations	**B1**
further development, e.g. cites late twentieth century indicators such as increasing female labour market participation and persistent pay gaps as reasons why public structures matter	**B1**

Answer: Walby argued patriarchy shifted from being mainly private, located in family relations, to being also public, embedded in paid work, the state and culture; this means inequalities are produced by employment practices, legal frameworks and policy as well as by the household, and is illustrated by rising female labour force participation coupled with persistent pay gaps and exclusion from power.

Question 6

identifies male violence as a distinct patriarchal structure in Walby's model	**B1**
explains that male violence operates through patterns such as domestic abuse, sexual violence and public aggression	**B1**
identifies why structural: laws, policing, cultural norms and workplace practices can normalise or fail to prevent male violence	**B1**
development showing consequences, e.g. restricting women's freedom, labour market participation and political voice	**B1**
further development or example, e.g. statistics or policy examples demonstrating systemic patterns rather than isolated incidents	**B1**

Answer: Walby treats male violence as a structural component of patriarchy: it includes domestic abuse, sexual violence and public aggression; it is structural because legal frameworks, policing practices, cultural norms and workplace rules can normalise or fail to prevent it, producing patterns that limit women's freedom, employment choices and political voice. This makes male violence part of a system rather than merely isolated individual acts.

Question 7

Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**
Level 1 Limited or generalised points about Millett's view of the family with little development or evidence.	**1-3**
Level 2 Clear explanation of one or two reasons with some relevant evidence from Millett, but analysis may be partial or not fully developed.	**4-6**
Level 3 Detailed analysis of two distinct reasons with well-developed explanation and appropriate supporting examples from Millett's Sexual Politics and cultural critique, leading to a coherent judgement about their importance.	**7-10**

Indicative content:

- Reason 1, family as site of socialisation: Millett argues the family is where gender roles and expectations are learned, with children internalising male authority and female submissiveness through everyday interactions, rituals and enforced domestic roles.
- Development: examples from literary analysis showing fathers or husbands posed as normative figures whose authority is naturalised in narrative, reinforcing male dominance in subsequent public life.
- Reason 2, family as institutional reproduction of power: Millett sees marriage and household relations as institutions that distribute power and sexual control, with economic dependence and legal structures tying women to male authority.
- Development: the household can confine women to unpaid domestic labour, creating economic dependency and limiting public autonomy, which then reproduces wider gender inequality.
- Cross-link: the family both symbolically legitimises male domination through culture and practically enforces it through economic and sexual control, so Millett treats it as crucial for both ideology and material reproduction of patriarchy.
- Evaluation point: weaknesses or limits of Millett's focus, e.g. critics argue it may downplay class, race or public institutional sources of patriarchy or understate women's agency within families; a strong answer weighs Millett's persuasive linkage of private relations to wider power against these limitations.