**Olympe de Gouges’ *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman***

Women in the French Revolution

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**History Standards: 10.2**  
Students compare and contrast the Glorious Revolution of England, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution and their enduring effects worldwide on the political expectations for self-government and individual liberty. 4. Explain how the ideology of the French Revolution led France to develop from constitutional monarchy to democratic despotism to the Napoleonic empire.

**CCSS Standards: Reading, Grade 9-10**2.Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.   
5. Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).   
6. Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.  
  
**Guiding Question:**What does The Declaration of the Rights of Woman demonstrate about the French Revolution?

**Overview of Lesson:**

1. Make sure students have a working knowledge of the early ideals of the French Revolution. This may be accomplished through readings, lecture, and various activities. In particular, students should have read excerpts (or the full text of) *The Declaration of the Rights of Man*.
2. Students should begin by reading the brief biography of Olympe de Gouges. As a class, discuss what sort of woman de Gouges was. What were her goals? What actions did she take? What made her an “unnatural” woman, and why was this a capital offense?
3. Students will then work through the text following the text dependent questions. It is advisable for the teacher to model the sort of answers they are looking for. The first 3-4 questions should be modeled to the whole class, and a pause should be given after each discussion for students to write their version on the appropriate response. Thereafter, students may work in small groups, partners, or independently to answer each question. Answers should be written on another paper in complete sentences, including references to the text where they seem warranted.
4. Once the students have answered all of the questions (which will likely take the full class period), they should complete a summary of de Gouges’ document. This can be assigned as homework, and should result in a full paragraph blending what they know about the Revolution, de Gouges, and the document. Their summary should connect the text back to the guiding question.

**Olympe de Gouges, *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman***

**(September 1791)**

Marie Gouze (1748–93) was a self–educated butcher’s daughter from the south of France who, under the name Olympe de Gouges, wrote pamphlets and plays on a variety of issues, including slavery, which she attacked as being founded on greed and blind prejudice. In this pamphlet she provides a declaration of the rights of women to parallel the one for men, thus criticizing the deputies for having forgotten women. She addressed the pamphlet to the Queen, Marie Antoinette, though she also warned the Queen that she must work for the Revolution or risk destroying the monarchy altogether. In her postscript she denounced the customary treatment of women as objects easily abandoned. She appended to the declaration a sample form for a marriage contract that called for communal sharing of property. De Gouges went to the guillotine in 1793, condemned as a counterrevolutionary and denounced as an "unnatural" woman. (Source and description found at *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/293/> accessed June 12, 2013.)

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| Questions | Text | Glossary |
| Does the title of the text remind you of other political documents from this time? If so, what?  To whom is the text addressed? Why is this significant?  What does De Gouges argue are the causes of government problems?  How will this declaration solve these problems?  How does she argue men and women are equal?  What are defined as “natural rights”?  Why did she argue that resistance to oppression is particularly relevant?  Who should make the law?  Why does De Gouges refer to “citizennesses and citizens”?  What government positions should be open to women and men?  How did she argue that these positions should be filled? How were government positions filled in pre-Revolutionary France? How was what De Gouges proposed radical?  How did she propose women and men are equal under the law?  Given what De Gouges argues about women being subject to punishment, what can you infer is the meaning of “rostrum?”  How did De Gouges define both men and women’s responsibilities as citizens?  How did she use this to justify women’s rights?  How did she argue that women should be granted equal rights under the new constitution? | To be decreed by the National Assembly in its last sessions or by the next legislature.  Preamble.  Mothers, daughters, sisters, female representatives of the nation ask to be constituted as a national assembly. Considering that ignorance, neglect, or contempt for the rights of woman are the sole causes of public misfortunes and governmental corruption, they have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of woman: so that by being constantly present to all the members of the social body this declaration may always remind them of their rights and duties; … the acts of women's and men's powers may be the more fully respected; and so that by being founded henceforward on simple and incontestable principles the demands of the citizenesses may always tend toward maintaining the constitution, good morals, and the general welfare.  In consequence, the sex that is superior in beauty as in courage, … declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of woman and the citizeness.  1. Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights. Social distinctions may be based only on common utility.  2. The purpose of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of woman and man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and especially resistance to oppression.  6. The law should be the expression of the general will. All citizenesses and citizens should take part, in person or by their representatives, in its formation. It must be the same for everyone. All citizenesses and citizens, being equal in its eyes, should be equally admissible to all public dignities, offices and employments, according to their ability, and with no other distinction than that of their virtues and talents.  7. No woman is exempted; she is indicted, arrested, and detained in the cases determined by the law. Women like men obey this rigorous law.  10. No one should be disturbed for his fundamental opinions; woman has the right to mount the scaffold, so she should have the right equally to mount the rostrum, provided that these manifestations do not trouble public order as established by law.  13. For maintenance of public authority and for expenses of administration, taxation of women and men is equal; she takes part in all forced labor service, in all painful tasks; she must therefore have the same proportion in the distribution of places, employments, offices, dignities, and in industry.  15. The mass of women, joining with men in paying taxes, have the right to hold accountable every public agent of the administration.  16. Any society in which the guarantee of rights is not assured or the separation of powers not settled has no constitution. The constitution is null and void if the majority of individuals composing the nation has not cooperated in its drafting. | sole-only  incontestable-something that is no natural or obvious it cannot be argued against  common utility—useful for the public  dignities-recognition of high stature or power  indicted-charged with a crime  scaffold—she is referring to the fact that women can be hanged  null and void-a law should have no legal effect or standing |