

# CHANGE-OVER-TIME ESSAY: WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN KOREA

**GRADES:** 9-12

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**SUBJECTS:** Women's Issues, Language Arts

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Students will learn about events shaping the women's rights situation in historic and modern South Korea by reading and analyzing three articles, or article excerpts, from various sources of the teacher's choosing.
2. Students will compose a change-over-time essay that reflects at least three events that changed or influenced the human rights situation in South Korea, and the consequences or implications of those events.

## **MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

- Various online articles dealing with Korean Women's Rights issues may be found at the following sites:

<http://countrystudies.us/south-korea/72.htm>

<http://english.moge.go.kr/index.html>

[http://ieas.berkeley.edu/cks/k12\\_kang.html](http://ieas.berkeley.edu/cks/k12_kang.html)

<http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla64/112-122e.htm>

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2000/04/05/seoul.2.t.php>

<http://everything2.com/title/Glabalization%2520Korean%2520Women>

Or Google "Korean Women's Movement" and find the articles below:

Women Taking the Initiative: The Women's Movement in South Korea"

South Korean Women Movement in Politics: How Big a Revolution?

IngentaConnect Minjung feminism: Korean women's movement for gender and class liberation

The Women's Movement in South Korea

Women's Development and Information on Women in Korea

- Handout 1: The Advanced Placement-style format for the Change-Over-Time essay (attached)
- Handout 2: Sample Essay
- 3 differently colored highlighters for each student.

## **PROCEDURE:**

1. Introduce Korea or other lead-in topics.
2. Assign one-page excerpts from articles for students to read, with the instructions for students to highlight, in one color, major events that changed the course of women's rights in Korea. Ask students to highlight consequences in a second color.
3. After reading is completed, discuss the articles as a whole class or in small groups, with emphasis on events and consequences.
4. Request students to revisit the articles using the third colored marker, to search for continuities (things that may have remained constant throughout the changes). These

may be more difficult to detect in the writings, and therefore may be discovered through group discussion.

5. Present the short outline provided below, for students to understand the format of the change-over-time essay.
6. Ask students to diagram two or three major periods and events from the articles, with their consequences or implications, using phrases and arrows. Check for accuracy before proceeding. Simplified Example:

1392\_\_Confucian influence creates various laws, limits women's freedom of movement\_\_\_1462  
1471\_\_\_\_\_various laws remove women's inheritance and names from public register\_\_\_\_\_1800  
1900\_\_\_\_\_Korean women used as "comfort women" by Japanese army\_\_\_\_\_1945  
1950\_\_\_\_\_various laws/organizations enacted to strengthen women's roles\_\_\_\_\_2009

7. Assign the written essay, based on the student-created diagrams, including your requirements for thesis, essay length, citation method, etc.

## **HANDOUT 1: OUTLINE OF THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT-STYLE FORMAT FOR THE CHANGE-OVER-TIME ESSAY**

Change-over-time essays not only show how situations, and resolutions to issues and problems, evolve over the course of time (change), but also illustrate how some things continue to remain constant (continuities). The change-over-time essay should discuss any given topic by:

- using 3 time divisions within the time frame provided by the prompt
- discussing 3 specific events that caused change within the timeframe
- discussing continuities as well as changes
- discussing briefly how these events fit into what the rest of the world was doing at the time (global context)
- using direct analysis (“because,” “caused,” “caused by,” “led to,” “in order to,” “came from,” “evolved into,” etc.)

## HANDOUT 2: SAMPLE ESSAY

**Prompt:** Analyze how women's rights in Korea have changed over time, from the 1400s to the present. Discuss specific reasons or events for change, as well as the consequences of change. Be sure to briefly include continuities as well as global context.

(composed by sophomore high school student, 2nd draft):

Women's legal rights in Korea have changed significantly over time, from suppression of women's movement and inheritance during the 15th to 18th centuries, to women being used as "comfort" during the Japanese occupation of Korea in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the ongoing liberation of today's Korean women. Like similar feminist movements across the world, Korean women, having struggled with sexual violence and legal suppression for centuries, are gaining rights and increasing their roles in modern society.

While women in ancient Korea enjoyed relative equality with men, it didn't last forever. Confucian influence from China made its way into Korea during the 1400's. Neo-Confucianism's belief in the superiority of men over women allowed the Korean government to begin restricting women's freedom by not letting them walk down the streets or go to Buddhist temples (Martina Deuchler). Women even had to be covered up in public (JaHyn Haboush). Later, when men were allowed multiple wives, the wives were ranked, as were their children. Eventually women were not allowed to conduct the ancestor rites any longer, as that honor was handed over to the eldest son only. In time, women weren't even allowed out of the inner rooms of their homes (MD). It is evident that all of these restrictions must have resulted in women playing a smaller and less important role in society than before, and probably made it easier for them to be the targets of sexual violence and abuse at the hands of their families.

In the 1900s, the government of Korea submitted to the occupation of Japanese troops. In order to demoralize their enemies, the Japanese soldiers used Korean women as "comfort women," which is just a polite way of saying that they raped the Korean women with the assent of the (silent) Korean government. Because the Korean government did not value women as much as men, they did nothing to stop the assaults. These actions on the part of the Japanese and the Korean government resulted in further oppression of women of all classes, and caused a rise of Korean-Japanese children born to Korean mothers, who were then further shunned by their families as being "dishonorable." At a time when even Korean men had little say in the affairs of the time, women had even less of a voice (Country Studies).

However, in more modern times, Korean women, paralleling other women's movements around the world, are taking the initiative in gaining more rights for themselves, and are taking a more active part in their society. Because women world-wide are gaining more respect, more Korean women are running for public office and are being elected to high positions in Korean government. This is resulting in legislation that is more sensitive to gender equality. For example, in 2005, Korea abolished the family headship system, allowing for more gender equality within families. Other laws are designed to crack down on sexual violence toward women. Judging from all the new feminist organizations gaining momentum in Korea, Korean women are having more say in their lives and futures. This appears to be resulting in more females attending secondary schools and universities in South Korea (Jang Hajin). Common sense tells us that the more educated Korean women become, the more they will be able to contribute to their society.

Women's rights have changed dramatically over the centuries in Korea, from early times of suppression, to modern times that are witnessing the women taking greater part in guiding their own lives as well as their country. While the future looks brighter for Korean women than the past, still the shadow of sexual violence and exploitation that has plagued women for centuries continues to be part of society.