

All

SEMINAR 5

Women in History

1 The woman who can't influence her husband to vote the way she wants ought to be ashamed¹ of herself.
– **E. M. Forster**, British novelist (1879–1970)

2 I can think of nothing worse than a man-governed world – except a woman-governed world.
– **Nancy Astor**, British politician (1879–1964)

3 In politics if you want anything said, ask a man. If you want anything done, ask a woman.
– **Margaret Thatcher**, Prime Minister of the UK from 1979-1990 (b. 1925)

4 I see little hope for a peaceful world until men are excluded² from the realm of foreign policy altogether and all decisions concerning international relations are reserved for women, preferably married ones.
– **W. H. Auden**, English poet (1907–73)

5 But history, real serious history, I cannot be interested in. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or disease, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all -- it is very tiresome.
– Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* (1817) by English novelist **Jane Austen** (1775-1817)

Discussion questions

- 1 Is there any difference in perception of men and women in history?
- 2 What is the typical image of a woman in history, in politics, in power?
- 3 What kind of women tend to be famous in history? In which areas?
- 4 When women did not have access to official power, how could they influence society? How is it today?
- 5 How would the situation change if women were in total power of politics or top decision making in general?

Task 1 – Match the pieces of texts below with the names of the following women in history.

1. Nefertiti (14th Century B.C.)
2. Cleopatra (69-30 B.C.)
3. Joan of Arc (1412-1431)
4. Catherine de Medici (1519-1589)
5. Mbande Nzinga (1582-1663)
6. Catherine the Great (1729-1796)
7. Tzu-hsi (1835-1908)
8. Liliuokalani (1838-1917)
9. Golda Meir (1898-1978)

a) Born into a peasant family, she became a French heroine by leading the army of Charles VII against the English at Orleans. Captured by the Burgundians, and held by the English, she was put on trial on charges of witchcraft and fraud³. She was charged only for wearing male clothes, an offence against the Church, and was burned at the stake. Her legend grew and she was canonized in 1920.

- b) Her rule was short and stormy. Upon inheriting⁴ the throne, she had to deal with a depressed economy and a constitution that was forced on her people by the United States, leaving the monarchy powerless. She was determined to free the country from overseas control. Her push for a new constitution led to a confrontation with the Americans. She was imprisoned on charges of supporting an uprising⁵, which never actually took place, and a provisional government was set up.
- c) She was joined in a political marriage to Henri, Duke of Orleans, who became the French King. As queen she brought aspects of Italian culture to France, such as the theatre and food. After her husband's death, she gained political power and was involved in political intrigues of the court. She was blamed⁶ for the idea of the massacre of St. Bartholomew (1572).
- d) Starting out as a low-ranking concubine of Emperor Hs'en Feng, she rose in status when she gave birth to his only son. At the king's death, and her son's succession, she became active in state affairs and refused to stop even when her son came of age. She used state funds to build herself a palace. Under her rule, the western powers forcefully increased their presence in the country.
- e) She was the powerful wife of Akhenaton, who worshipped a new religion honouring only one god, Aten. She later rejected this religion, backing her half-brother who re-established the old worship of the sun-god Amon. Her beauty was immortalized in beautiful sculptures made at the time.
- f) As the queen of the Ndongo and Matamba kingdoms she was honoured for her resistance against the Portuguese occupying these parts of Africa. She organized a powerful guerrilla army, conquered the Matamba, developed alliances to control the slave routes, and even formed an alliance with the Dutch, who helped her stop the Portuguese. She eventually negotiated a peace treaty with the Portuguese, but still refused to pay tribute to their king.
- g) This ambitious last ruler of the Macedonian Dynasty of Ancient Egypt was a highly intelligent and educated person. In her struggles to win the crown and keep her country free, she needed the support of Julius Caesar, later gaining the protection of Rome through an affair with Mark Anthony. Financing his failing military campaigns, she was defeated in a battle against Octavian in 31 B.C. and committed suicide.
- h) Born in the Ukraine, she emigrated in 1921. Her work within the Labour movement led her to achieve high political positions, including diplomatic missions, Minister of Labour and Minister of Foreign Affairs; in 1969, she was elected Prime Minister. She was a powerful, tough leader, but her defence policy was criticised because the country was unprepared in the 1973 Yom Kippur War; she retired from politics when the Labour Party fell from power as a result of this war.
- i) She arrived in Russia from Germany in 1744 to marry the 16-year-old Grand Duke Peter. His unpopularity allowed her to remove him from power, plan his death, and declare herself the ruler of Russia. She supported progressive ideas, such as reforms in law, education, and administration. However, she ruled as an autocrat, suppressed Polish nationalists (which led to Poland's partition), and took the Crimea and parts of the Black Sea coast from Turkey.

Discussion questions

- 1 Why are these women remembered?
- 2 What do they have in common?
- 3 Do you know any other women of a similar kind?
- 4 Who are some of the most important, impressive, powerful or influential women in history?
- 5 Can you name any important woman in Czech history?

Task 2 – Gap fill – Women of the Crusades⁷

Eleanor of Aquitaine was one of the most _____ and fascinating personalities of feudal Europe. At the age of 15, she married Louis VII, King of France, bringing into the union her _____ from the River Loire to the Pyrenees. At the age of 19, she offered thousands of her _____ for the Second Crusade to Bernard of Clairvaux. While the church may have been pleased to receive her thousand fighting vassals, they were less happy when they learned that Eleanor, with 300 of her ladies, also planned to help "tend the _____." The presence of Eleanor, her ladies, and wagons of female _____ dressed in armour, was widely criticized.

Later Eleanor fell in love with her uncle Raymond, the prince of Antioch, who was only a few years older than her and more interesting than her husband, Louis. When Raymond and Louis _____ on the next goals of the Crusade, Eleanor agreed with Raymond. Louis commanded Eleanor to _____ him to Jerusalem, but she announced that their marriage was not _____ in the eyes of God, for they were related through some family _____ that was prohibited by the Church. Nevertheless, Louis still forced Eleanor to ride with him, but their expedition failed.

The defeated Eleanor and Louis were returning to France in separate ships when she learned that her uncle had been killed in _____. For the next Crusade, it was forbidden for any women to join in. All the Christian monarchs, _____ King Louis, agreed to this.

Her _____ with Louis was over and in 1152 their marriage was annulled; she then regained her estates. At the age of 30, she married 20-year-old Henry who two years later became king of England. Henry's infidelities caused her to establish her own court at Poitiers (in 1170), which became the scene of much artistic _____. She supported her sons in their _____ revolt (1173) against Henry and was confined by him until 1185. In 1189 she helped Richard gain the throne. Later, her other son, John, became king of England.

**follow vassals connections including powerful activity possessions
injured servants valid battle disagreed relationship unsuccessful**

Task 3 – Reading – Shagrat al-Durr of Egypt

Shagrat al-Durr, a slave⁸ of Turkoman origin, became the wife of Salih Ayyub, the sultan of Egypt. In 1249, while the crusading armies of France were threatening Egypt and Salih was away in Damascus, Shagrat, acting on his behalf, organized the defence. The sultan came back, but died soon after his return. Shagrat concealed⁹ his death by saying he was "ill" and continued to rule in his name.

When Turan, his son and her stepson, returned, she finally announced her husband's death and gave power over to him. Retaining control over the army, Shagrat defeated the Crusaders. The leaders of the army did not respect Turan; they wanted Shagrat, seeing her as a Turk, like themselves. They plotted against Turan and had him murdered. In 1250, Shagrat al-Durr was put on the throne and peace was made with the Franks.

Shagrat al-Durr became the first sultan of the Mamluk dynasty. However, Egypt of that time was under the authority of the Caliphate at Baghdad, who did not approve of Shagrat. The Caliph said that no woman was to be ruler, and appointed in her place a Mamluk soldier named Aibak. Shagrat was humiliated, as she had been Egypt's sultan for only two months. She stepped down but was not finished. Either for love or political ambition, she managed to seduce Aibak, who married her to legitimize Mamluk's rule. With her experience at administration and leadership, it was Shagrat rather than Aibak who really ruled for seven years. A historian who lived at the time comments: "She dominated him, and he had nothing to say." Shagrat continued to sign

the sultan's laws, had coins struck in *both* their names, and had people call her Sultana. However, Shagrat al-Durr was a jealous¹⁰ woman who did not want to share power. When she married Aibak, she made him divorce his wife, with whom he had a son. In 1257, Aibak proposed to take another wife. In Shagrat's eyes this was unthinkable. Out of jealousy¹⁰, she planned his murder and carried it out when he was having a bath after a game of polo.

In desperation, Shagrat al-Durr tried to conceal⁹ the crime, but Aibak's former wife and son wanted revenge¹¹. The army divided into those supporting Shagrat and those opposing her. Rioting broke out, and Shagrat was cornered. Encouraged by Aibak's ex-wife, Shagrat was beaten to death with wooden shoes by the harem slaves. Her half-naked body was thrown into the moat of the citadel¹². Eventually, her bones were placed in what today is known as the mosque of Shagrat al-Durr.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Shagrat al-Durr was a slave, sultan's wife, sultan and Sultana. | T/F |
| 2. Shagrat killed his first husband in 1250 when he returned from Damascus. | T/F |
| 3. Shagrat fought against Turan, who defeated the Crusaders. | T/F |
| 4. The Caliph of Baghdad did not agree with Shagrat ruling the country. | T/F |
| 5. Shagrat resisted Caliph's orders for two months. | T/F |
| 6. Aibak and Shagrat were of the same origin. | T/F |
| 7. Apparently, Aibak and Shagrat were a well-balanced couple. | T/F |
| 8. Shagrat killed Aibak when he married another woman. | T/F |
| 9. Aibak's former ¹³ family took revenge. | T/F |
| 10. The army was always loyal to Shagrat; she was killed in the harem. | T/F |

Task 4 – Listening – Eva Perón

María Eva Ibarguren was born in 1919 as the illegitimate daughter of a ranch manager and his mistress. At the age of 17, Eva left her home for Buenos Aires and within three years established herself as a radio and film actress. In January 1944, Eva met an very popular politician named Juan Perón. Within weeks, they were living together and then married. Later he was elected President of Argentina and ruled in the style known as "Peronism", which was a mixture of democratic principle and despotism.

Eva became the object of intense, almost mystical adoration¹⁴ by the country's common people. She gained international attention during her Rainbow Tour of Europe to promote Argentinean interests, and at home she was famous for The Eva Perón Foundation for charitable works among the nation's poor. In turn, the poor wanted her to become the vice-president. Eva would never realize this goal, because she had cancer and died in 1952 at the age of 33. The popularity she had among her fellow citizens could be seen in the sadness that followed her death. Nearly a million Argentineans crowded the streets of Buenos Aires for her funeral procession, and about three million came to pay their last respects. The myth of "Saint Eva" was kept alive by requests to the Vatican for her canonization: forty thousand appeals were received in the two years following her death.

Oh, What a Circus

Lyrics by Tim Rice, music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, vocals by Antonio Banderas and Madonna

(Che:)

Oh what a circus, oh what a _____

Argentina has gone to town

Over the death of an _____ called Eva Peron

We've all gone crazy

_____ all day and _____ all night

Falling over ourselves to get all of the _____ right

Oh, what an exit, that's how to go
When they're ringing your _____ down
Demand to be _____ like Eva Peron
It's quite a _____
And good for the country in a roundabout way
We've made the _____ of all the world's _____ today

But who is this Santa Evita?
Why all this howling, hysterical _____?
What kind of _____ has lived among us?
How will we ever get by without her?

She had her moments, she had _____ style
The best show in town was the _____
Outside the Casa Rosada _____, "Eva Peron"
But that's all gone now
As soon as the _____ from the funeral clears
We're all gonna see and how, she did _____ for years

(Crowd:)

Salve regina mater misericordiae	Hail, oh queen, mother of mercy
Vita dulcedo et spes nostra	Our life, sweetness, and hope
Salve salve regina	Hail, hail, oh queen
Ad te clamamus exules filii Eva	To you we cry, exiled sons of Eve
Ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes	To you we sigh, mourning and weeping
O clemens o pia	Oh clement, oh loving one

(Che:)

You _____ your people Evita
You were supposed to have been _____
That's all they wanted, _____ to ask for
But in the end you could not deliver

Sing you fools, but you got it wrong
Enjoy your prayers because you haven't got long
Your _____ is dead, your _____ is through
And she's not coming back to you

Show business kept us all alive
Since seventeen October _____
But the star has gone, the glamour's worn thin
That's a pretty bad state for a state to be in

Instead of government we had a stage
Instead of ideas, a primadonna's rage
Instead of help we were given a crowd
She didn't say much, but she said it _____

Sing you fools, but you got it wrong
Enjoy your prayers because you haven't got long
Your _____ is dead, your _____ is through
She's not coming back to you

(Crowd:)

Repeat chorus

(Eva:)

Don't cry for me Argentina

For I am ordinary, _____

And _____ of such attention

Unless we all are, I think we all are

So share my _____, so share my coffin

So share my _____, so share my coffin

(Che:)

It's our funeral too

Grammar – Focus on Verbs

Task 5 – Put one of the verbs into the following sentences.

**retired was feared allowed sought felt described died married became let
brought began allowed kept gave went based was bore knew wrote**

Murasaki Shikibu, the best-known writer to emerge¹⁵ from Japan's glorious Heian period, was born into the Fujiwara family. Her father _____ the governor of a province and a well-known scholar, who _____ Shikibu to study with her brother. He even _____ her learn some Chinese classics, which was considered improper for females at the time.

Lady Murasaki _____ her distant relative, and _____ him their only daughter in 999 A.D. Her husband _____ in 1001 A.D. The imperial family _____ of her writing talent and her brilliant mind, and _____ Lady Murasaki to court.

At court, Lady Murasaki _____ a diary she _____ up for two years. She _____ a vivid account of court life. She also _____ to great pains to hide her knowledge of Chinese. She _____ the criticism of those who _____ it to be unladylike to be happy reading this unknown language. Shikibu _____ the novel *The Tale of the Genji* at the court. She _____ it loosely on her years as lady-in-waiting to the Empress Akiko. The very long novel _____ complications in the life of a fictitious prince called Genji. The tales of Prince Genji, known as "the Shining Prince," _____ popular from the moment of its release. Little is known about Lady Murasaki's later life. Perhaps, she _____ from court and _____ seclusion in a convent.

Task 6

Fill in the gaps in the sentences below with the modal verb in the past (*could have, may have, must have, might have, had to, couldn't have, -modal + past participle*) so that the sentences have the same meaning as the bold ones.

Anna Comnena is considered the world's first female historian and a major source of information about the rule of her father, Alexius I. Her works are full of details about daily life at court, the activities of her family, and the exchanges between the Byzantines and western crusaders⁶ during the first crusades.

1. Anna was an Emperor's child. **It is sure, that she received an excellent education.** She _____ an excellent education.

2. **Perhaps, she expected that at her father's death she would take his place as head of an empire which stretched from Italy to Armenia.** She _____ that at her father's death she would take his place as head of an empire which stretched from Italy to Armenia.

3. But the birth of her brother destroyed all her hopes. Anna married a historian in 1097. **Probably, her mother encouraged her to try and seize the imperial throne for him.** Her mother _____ her to try and seize the imperial throne for him.

4. **The attempt failed, and she was forced to retire from court life.** The attempt failed, and she _____ to retire from court life.
5. After her husband's death, she entered a monastery. **We are sure, it was where 55-year-old Anna began serious work on *Alexiad*, a 15 volume history of her family, the Comneni.** It _____, where 55-year-old Anna began serious work on *Alexiad*, a 15 volume history of her family, the Comneni.
6. In her works, Anna directed most of her hatred toward the crusaders from the West. Her father had asked Pope Urban I for help. **It is obvious he wanted to stop the Turkish attacks which had left the southern and eastern borders of the Byzantine empire virtually defenceless.** He _____ to stop the Turkish attacks which had left the southern and eastern borders of the Byzantine empire virtually defenceless.
7. Urban II's response was positive. The First Crusaders soon arrived in the magnificent city of Constantinople. **It is clear that to Anna, they appeared as uneducated barbarians, with manners far beneath those of the wealthy and cosmopolitan Byzantines.** To Anna, they _____ as uneducated barbarians, with manners far beneath those of the wealthy and cosmopolitan Byzantines.

Task 7 – Put the verbs in the brackets into the correct past form. (For each sentence, put one verb into the past tense and one into the past perfect.)

- Five-year-old Mary, who _____ Queen of Scotland already six days after birth, _____ home to live in France. **(become, leave)**
- She _____ King Francis II in the French court, where the French _____ her _____. **(marry, bring up)**
- Mary _____ to Scotland as a widow, because her husband _____ one year after their wedding. **(return, die)**
- Protestants _____ a revolt against her because she _____ a series of politically unwise love affairs. **(lead, have)**
- She _____ escape to England for more safety, but faced the fears of Queen Elizabeth I, who _____ always _____ her as a rival to her throne. **(must, see)**
- Finally, Elizabeth _____ the execution of Mary, who _____ under a form of imprisonment for 19 years. **(allow, keep)**

Vocabulary

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. *to be ashamed of | stydět se za |
| 2. *to be excluded | být vyloučen |
| 3. witchcraft and fraud | čarodějnictví a podvody |
| 4. *to inherit | zdědit |
| 5. *uprising | povstání |
| 6. *to be blamed for | být obviněn z |
| 7. crusades | křížácké tažení |
| 8. slave | otrok |
| 9. *to conceal (hide) | zatajit (skrýt) |
| 10. jealous; jealousy | žárlivý; žárlivost |
| 11. *revenge | pomsta |
| 12. moat of the citadel | pevnostní příkop |
| 13. *former | dřívější |
| 14. adoration | obdiv |
| 15. *to emerge | objevit se |