

Document A: Henry Allen (Modified)

This passage is from The Turkish Transformation by Henry Elisha Allen. Allen was an American writer who based his account on secondary sources and several visits to Turkey during the time of Atatürk. Allen's book was published in 1935, at a time when Atatürk was still ruling in Turkey. In this passage, Allen provides his own description of the overall results of Atatürk's reforms.

In few spheres of Turkish life have the changed viewpoints had greater effect than on the position and status of women in family and public life. . . . The seclusion and inequality of women, so long considered as characteristic of Islam, have lost their popularity, and one finds women **forging** to the front most rapidly in the last twenty years. In cities particularly came an abandonment of the veil. Schools for girls became more numerous. During the World War women received their opportunity to enter positions in industry and commerce which had been left vacant by men at the front. The story of woman's **emancipation** in Turkey would alone furnish material for many books.

Source: Henry Elisha Allen, The Turkish Transformation: A Study in Social and Religious Development, 1935.

Vocabulary

forge: creating a new identity

emancipation: to set free from legal or social restrictions

Document B: Atatürk, Speech 1 (Modified)

In 1923, Atatürk's Turkish forces won Turkey's War of Independence (1919-1923). The excerpts below come from two different speeches that Atatürk delivered in 1923 at a time when his independence movement was just setting up a government to rule a newly unified Turkish state.

The reason for the lack of success of our society lies in the **indifference** towards our women. . . . [If one part] of a society acts while the other lies idle, then it means that society is paralyzed. A society must accept all the conditions and necessities on which its success in life depends. So, if science and technology are necessary for our society, our men and women must equally master them. As you know, **division of labor** is necessary in social life as it is in all the other fields. In the general division of labor, women should not only carry out their duties, but they should also take part in efforts for the prosperity and welfare of the society.

Document C: Atatürk, Speech 2 (Modified)

Our great ancestors and their mothers have always had high virtues. The highest and most important one of these virtues is the fact that they've brought up valuable sons and daughters. I would like to stress that, along with their share in general duties, the most important, virtuous and beneficial duty of all for them is to be good mothers. For today's mothers, to bring up sons and daughters that have the necessary virtues as the active members of today's life, depends on having many high **attributes** in them as mothers. For that reason, our women must be more enlightened, more intellectual and more learned than men if they really want to be the mother of the nation.

Source: *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, 1923.*

Vocabulary

indifference: lack of interest or concern

division of labor: different people are assigned to carry out different types of tasks

attribute: a quality or characteristic of someone

Document D: Sabiha Sertel

Sabiha Sertel was a prominent Turkish feminist, writer, journalist, activist, and socialist. She wrote an advice column in her journal Resimli Ay (The Illustrated Monthly). Under the name Cici Anne, or “sweet mother,” she would respond to letters from women asking her views on various subjects. In 1929, one woman wrote to ask why she should ever marry given that, in her view, 80% of all married couples were unhappy. This passage is part of Cici Anne's reply.

The chances of unhappiness for an unmarried woman are one hundred percent. I may agree with you, society will not. I may applaud you, but they will stone you. Do you think you can live single and free like a man? That's a bigger fantasy than your romantic dreams. People at work will always see you as a woman and focus on your sexuality. The minute you walk down the street arm-in-arm with a man you like, the neighborhood kids will stone you, the door of every house will be closed to you, and everywhere you go, people will judge you. Any man you live with will see you as simply a plaything he has temporarily made his own. Eventually the police will hound you.

Source: Sabiha Sertel, Resimli Ay, 1929.

Document E: Şirin Tekeli (Modified)

Şirin Tekeli is a well-known Turkish author who began her career as a professor in political science at Istanbul University. She later resigned to become a feminist writer and activist. She is quoted here in an article published in 2007.

[According to Atatürk's message, women] should have little ambition in their work, in order to remain one step behind the men. Femininity and **altruism** were therefore encouraged in women, because it was believed that women put harmony and family happiness before everything else. The woman had to sacrifice herself for her own as well as for the nation. . . . So, women's main role, whatever their social environment, was still limited to the one they had in the family, as mother and wife. Almost all modern institutions, the primary and secondary schools, and particularly technical schools designed for them, aimed to produce modern housewives.

Source: Quoted in Katharina Knaus, "Turkish Women, A Century of Change," 2007.

Vocabulary

altruism: unselfish concern for others.

Guiding Questions: Atatürk and Women's Rights

Document A: Henry Allen

1. a) What kind of document is this?

b) When was it written?
2. Allen says the emancipation of women has occurred in Atatürk's Turkey. What specific changes does he see as evidence of their emancipation?
3. According to Allen, did Atatürk's reforms actually improve the status of women in Turkey? Explain.

Document B: Atatürk Speech 1

1. a) What kind of document is this?

b) When was it written?
2. According to Atatürk, how has Turkish society treated women? What does he see as the possible problems with this type of treatment?
3. What was happening in Turkey in 1923?
4. How might this historical context help explain why Atatürk spoke about science, technology, and the division of labor?
5. According to Atatürk, what status should women have in Turkish society?

Document C: Atatürk Speech 2

1. a) What kind of document is this?

b) When was it written?
2. According to Atatürk, why had being a good mother always been the most important virtue for Turkish women?
3. Compare Atatürk's views about motherhood here with what he says about women's equality in Document B. Do you think his views in the two documents match? Why or why not?

Document D: Sabiha Sertel

1. a) What kind of document is this?

b) When was it written?

c) Who is the author?
2. According to Sertel, did Atatürk's reforms actually improve the status of women in Turkey? Explain.
3. Why is this a useful piece of evidence for understanding the status of women in Turkey during Atatürk's rule?
4. This is a reply to a single letter to a woman's magazine in Turkey. How might that affect its reliability as evidence about women's status in Turkey during Atatürk's rule?

5. Compare Sertel's advice column to Documents A-C. How are they similar in regard to the status of women and how are they different?

Document E: Şirin Tekeli

1. a) What kind of document is this?

b) When was it written?

c) Who is the author?
2. Why might this be a useful piece of evidence for understanding the status of women in Turkey under Atatürk's rule?
3. Why might this be a less useful piece of evidence for understanding the status of women in Turkey under Atatürk's rule?
4. According to Tekeli, did Atatürk's reforms actually improve the status of women in Turkey? Explain.
5. In what ways do Şirin Tekeli and Sabiha Sertel seem to agree about the status of women in Turkey under Atatürk?
6. Are there differences between Tekeli's and Sertel's points of view?

Final Claim

Using evidence from these documents, write a paragraph that addresses the question:
Did Atatürk's reforms actually improve the status of women in Turkey?