

Topic 9.5: Calls for Reform and Responses After 1900

Standards Table

Theme	Learning Objective	Key Concept(s)	Education Standards Met
Social Interactions and Organization (SIO)	Explain how social categories, roles, and practices have been maintained and challenged over time.	KC-6.3.III.i, KC-6.3.III.ii, KC-6.3.II.C	AP World History: sourcing, causation, comparison, DBQ preparation

Learning Objectives

- Explain how social hierarchies were challenged after 1900
- Analyze how rights-based movements reshaped societies
- Evaluate how access to education and political roles expanded
- Explain how globalization created new forms of inequality
- Use primary sources to support historical arguments

Lesson Overview

After 1900, social structures based on race, class, gender, and economic status were increasingly challenged by reform movements around the world. These movements often used rights-based language to demand equality and access to education, employment, and political participation. At the same time, globalization created new economic inequalities, leading to protests and reform efforts. This lesson explores how traditional social categories were both maintained and challenged, preparing students to analyze these developments through primary sources.

Essential Vocabulary

- **rights-based discourse** — arguments focused on equality and human rights
- **apartheid** — system of racial segregation in South Africa
- **gender roles** — social expectations based on gender
- **globalization** — increasing global interconnectedness
- **social inequality** — unequal distribution of resources and opportunities

Background Reading

The 20th century saw major challenges to traditional social hierarchies. After World War II, the language of human rights became a powerful tool for reform movements.

Documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established global standards for equality, influencing movements across the world.

Civil rights movements challenged racial discrimination and segregation. In South Africa, apartheid laws enforced racial inequality, but activists such as Nelson Mandela led resistance efforts that eventually resulted in political change. Similar movements occurred in the United States and other regions, where activists demanded equal rights and legal protections.

Gender roles were also challenged during this period. Women increasingly demanded equal access to education, employment, and political participation. These movements questioned long-standing cultural norms and contributed to changes in social expectations and legal rights.

At the same time, globalization created new forms of inequality. While economic growth increased opportunities in some regions, it also led to exploitation and uneven development. Protests against globalization highlighted concerns about labor conditions, environmental damage, and unequal access to resources.

Primary Sources

Document 1: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations and groups.

Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government.

Guided Questions

1. Identify ONE major claim made about human rights.
2. Explain how this document challenges traditional social hierarchies.
3. Analyze the purpose of the declaration in the post-World War II context.
4. Explain how this document reflects expanding access to education or political participation.
5. Connect this document to a specific rights movement after 1900.

Document 2: Nelson Mandela, Rivonia Trial Speech (1964)

https://www.africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=32-130-2

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities.

This ideal is one which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die. The struggle has been against a system that denied the majority of the population their rights, their dignity, and their ability to participate fully in society.

The government has used laws and institutions to maintain inequality, restricting movement, employment, and political participation. These policies have forced individuals into positions of poverty and exclusion, reinforcing divisions based on race and limiting access to opportunity.

Guided Questions

1. Identify ONE claim Mandela makes about inequality in South Africa.
2. Explain ONE way the document shows how social categories (such as race) were maintained.
3. Analyze Mandela's point of view as a political leader resisting apartheid.
4. Explain ONE way this document reflects broader global rights-based movements after 1900.
5. Compare Mandela's argument with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Document 1).

Document 3: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949)

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.193726>

Humanity is male, and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. The representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth.

This situation has resulted in a system in which women are confined to roles defined by tradition rather than by their own choices. Social expectations, reinforced by education and culture, limit women's opportunities and restrict their participation in public and professional life.

The liberation of women requires that these structures be challenged and transformed. Women must be allowed to define themselves independently, to participate fully in society, and to have equal access to education and employment.

Guided Questions

1. Identify ONE claim de Beauvoir makes about gender roles.
2. Explain ONE way the document shows how gender inequality was maintained.
3. Analyze de Beauvoir's point of view as a writer in the mid-20th century.
4. Explain ONE way this document reflects broader global gender reform movements.
5. Compare this document to Mandela's argument about inequality (Document 2).

Document 4: Porto Alegre Declaration (2005)

<https://www.forumdesalternativas.org/PortoAlegreDeclaration.pdf>

We are opposed to a system that prioritizes profit over human needs and that has deepened inequalities between and within nations. The current global economic model concentrates wealth in the hands of a few while leaving millions in poverty, without access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and clean water.

The expansion of global markets and multinational corporations has led to the exploitation of labor and natural resources, particularly in developing countries. These processes have often weakened local economies and undermined democratic control over economic decision-making.

We call for a new model of development based on social justice, environmental sustainability, and democratic participation. Economic systems must serve the needs of people rather than the demands of markets, and global cooperation must prioritize equality and human dignity.

Guided Questions

1. Identify ONE claim the document makes about globalization.
2. Explain ONE way globalization contributed to inequality according to the document.
3. Analyze the purpose of the declaration.
4. Explain ONE connection between economic systems and social inequality.

5. Compare this document's argument with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Document 1).

Key Tables

Types of Reform Movements

Type	Example
Human rights	UN Declaration
Racial equality	Anti-apartheid
Gender equality	Feminist movements
Economic justice	Anti-globalization

Social Change vs Continuity

Change	Continuity
Expanded rights	Persistent inequality
More education access	Unequal distribution
Political participation	Power imbalances

Change / Continuity / Comparison

Change over time:

After 1900, social movements increasingly challenged traditional hierarchies, leading to expanded rights and opportunities in many regions.

Continuity over time:

Despite reforms, inequalities based on race, gender, and class continued to exist.

Comparison:

Different regions experienced reform differently—some achieved legal equality, while others faced continued resistance and slower change.

Key Takeaways

- Social hierarchies were challenged globally
- Rights-based language became widespread
- Access to education and political roles expanded
- Globalization created new inequalities
- Reform movements had mixed success