



Women's Day
8th March

International Women's Day Reading Comprehension

Should we still celebrate International Women's Day? Do we need to anymore? Read the article carefully and answer the questions at a challenge level of your choice.

International Women's Day is celebrated every year on the 8th of March. It is a day that celebrates the cultural, political and economic achievements of women all over the world, and the positive contributions they have made to society. The concept of International Women's Day has since been criticised by some, who argue that it is counterproductive and unnecessary. Throughout this article, we will consider some of these arguments in more detail.

"Women have already gained equality, and the need for campaigning has ended."

It's true that, on paper, women have exactly the same rights in society as men. They can vote, own property, and choose their own career path. The issue of equality, however, runs far deeper than what is 'allowed', and what is not. Women are often treated unfairly by society in very subtle ways. For instance, they pay more for common household items than men do, such as shampoo, deodorant and even socks. Additionally, although women are able to perform exactly the same jobs as men, they are paid, on average, 16 percent less. These factors leave women at an economical disadvantage, which can hinder their chances of achieving goals such as home ownership. Society also has rigid

expectations of women. For instance, if a couple decide to start a family, it is the woman who is expected to take time off work to take care of the baby. If she decides to have two or three children, she is far less likely to be able to achieve the same professional success as her male counterparts.

Some of the ways in which women have yet to achieve equality are more obvious.

Women are hugely underrepresented in local and national government - in the UK, there are 208 female MPs out of 650 members. In the House of Lords, there are just 199 female peers out of 826. This makes it much harder to bring attention to women's issues at a national level. International Women's Day gives us the chance to explore and discuss all of these points, many of which would otherwise go unnoticed.



"Treating women as a minority is condescending and unnecessary."

Whilst women are not a statistical minority, they are still considered a minority group because they do not share the same privileges, power, and opportunities as men. Furthermore, women's struggles take place within the context of a patriarchal society. This means that in most systems and institutions, men still have authority. Because we see women and men doing similar things on a daily basis, with each enjoying the same rights and freedoms, it is easy to forget that sexism is built into the fabric of society. Again, celebrating International Women's Day gives us the opportunity to highlight and examine these kinds of complex issues.

"These days, women enjoy greater privileges than men."

This is a common argument amongst certain Men's Rights organisations, who feel that women are given special treatment in society. They argue that women are not expected to do any jobs that include manual labour, and are less likely to work risky jobs, such as combat positions in the military. Some also say that the legal system more often than not works in women's favour, claiming that they

are often given lighter prison sentences, and are more likely to win family court disputes. However, all of these 'privileges' exist within the private or domestic arena. Men are still far more easily accepted as the head of a company, or a country. Additionally, none of these 'privileges' have been established by women themselves - they have been established as social norms, largely by men.

"If there's an International Women's Day, there should be an International Men's Day!"

To a certain extent, it is International Men's Day every other day of the year! Men are granted recognition of their achievements within society and are fairly rewarded for them, which is not the case for women. In spite of this, however, there IS an International Men's Day on the 19th of November.

International Men's Day focuses on the value men bring to their families and to society, highlighting positive role models and raising awareness of emotional wellbeing. The fact that men wield the most power in society does not mean that they don't also face challenges - for instance, men are more likely to suffer from undiagnosed mental health problems than women, and also have a significantly higher suicide rate. By raising wider awareness of the problems faced by each gender, we have a much better chance of affecting positive change, and achieving true equality.

Pick one set of challenges and answer in your book or on a separate piece of paper, in full.

Challenging

1. State TWO facts about disadvantages women face today from the first three paragraphs.
2. State TWO reasons why some people argue women have greater privileges than men.
3. Highlight all the connective phrases that are used in this article.

4. Write out the sentence which proves that the writer thinks that International Women's Day is a good idea.

5. Define the terms 'sexism' and 'society.'

More Challenging

1. Describe the gender inequality in the British political system.

2. Highlight and label THREE stylistic techniques that the writer of this article has used in order to interest the reader.

3. Define the terms 'privilege' and 'condescending.' Use each term in a sentence of your own.

4. How does the writer use their opening and closing paragraphs to impact on the reader? Use quotations in your answer.

Mega Challenging

1. Explain whether you think the writer believes International Men's Day is a good idea. How do you know?

2. Highlight any metaphors and superlatives that you can spot in this text. What is the effect of using these?

3. How formal or informal is this text? How does this help the writer to achieve their purpose? Explain your answer in detail, using evidence to support your points.

4. Has the writer been successful in arguing their viewpoint in a sustained and engaging way? Explain two techniques the writer uses to convey their argument successfully.