

4. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Unit overview: In this unit you are going to learn how women have been discriminated against within our society and how this ultimately has brought violence upon them. You will also have the opportunity to know up to what extent this violence is taken and the measures that need to be implemented to stop it. You will do a campaign to help fight this blot over society.

Vocabulary: discrimination and violence-related words.

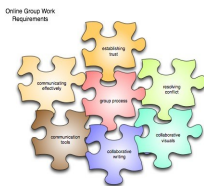
WOMEN: A STORY OF DISCRIMINATION

The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that in all respects, men and women should be considered equals. There should be no discrimination based on gender differences, in any society.

- Read the following underlined expressions. Without reading the whole text, say what you think this text is about. If you do not know any words or expressions look them up in your dictionary.



During the Spanish dictatorship **women's rights** and status became seriously compromised. The Franco-headed, right-wing authoritarian regime defined motherhood as the basic role of women toward their families and toward society. The regime strongly opposed women performing any kind of waged work. Working for some women was, as a result of this, really difficult. Laws were even passed that prevented women from engaging in any kind of paid work once they were married unless their husbands consented to it. In addition to that, all through the dictatorship years, a fierce Catholic Church was in power. Government and Church supported one another. The church ruled the schools and religious teachings and practices were compulsory in most of them. Schools were unisex. The curricula were also different in boys-only schools and in girls-only ones. The schools were therefore to support and mould Franco's idea of women concentrating all their efforts familywise. Franco also thought the ideal woman to be pretty enough to her husband's eye, but not so beautiful as to attract the attention of other men. She had to be innocent and refined, but on the other hand she had to understand the hierarchy of the family and her inferior position as regards her husband. Thus women sacrificed potential brilliant future expectations to become wives and mothers; they sacrificed their own freedom to become slaves and suffer repression in their own houses.



GROUP ACTIVITY - Read the text now. In groups, consider if this distorted picture of women persists to this day and say if it is responsible for both: cases of discrimination against women and escalating numbers of domestic violence cases.

- Look at the following advertisement from the Franco era and answer the questions immediately below:



GIMNASIA CASERA
 Una mujer que tenga que atender a las faenas domésticas con toda regularidad, tiene ocasión de hacer tanta gimnasia como no lo hará nunca, verdaderamente, si trabajase fuera de su casa. Solamente la limpieza y abrillantado de los pavimentos constituye un ejemplo efficacísimo, y si se piensa en los movimientos que son necesarios para quitar el polvo de los sitios altos, limpiar los cristales, sacudir los trajes, se darán cuenta que se realizan tantos movimientos de cultura física que, aun cuando no tienen como finalidad la estética del cuerpo, son igualmente eficacísimos precisamente para este fin.

[Teresa, revista de la Sección Femenina, marzo de 1961. Reportaje sin firma]

- What was the basic role of women during the dictatorship?
 - Were women allowed to work back then?
 - Would you say that women were discriminated against?
 - Who ran the schools in those times?
 - What was the Dictatorship's idea of the ideal woman?
-
- Nowadays the role of women within our society has changed. They have moved on from the little wife of the fifties. Now they run important companies, have important jobs and hold important seats in the different Government bodies. They compete with men at the same level and they are not confined at home, nor do they have private-only roles. The family is generally supported by two working parents (the housewife and the househusband) who share responsibilities as regards housework and raising children. The schools are either public or private and some are denominational and some are non-denominational but the Church has little to say regarding curricula. Most of the schools are unisex; that is to say that boys and girls are mixed in the classroom, follow the same curricula and have the same possibilities. Consequently, they are raised the same way and will presumably enjoy the same opportunities. There are sectors of the population, however who, mainly due to the fact that they are deeply rooted in a traditional society, have therefore a traditional point of view and encourage their children to share their very values.
 - Bearing this data in mind complete the following table with information from the texts above and, shortly, say immediately afterwards which society you prefer.

	In Dictatorship's time	Now
Women's role		
School		
Church		

➡ I (would) prefer to live in because.....



Creative writing

Write a short essay comparing your mother's and your father's tasks. Say whether they share the same responsibilities home and away.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Go over the following information on *domestic violence* with the help of your teacher.
 - **Domestic violence**, also known as domestic abuse, is the expression commonly used to describe any violent or abusive behaviour within an intimate relation between two or more people. This definition not only covers any physical aspects of abuse, such as hitting, slapping, etc, but also emotional, verbal, sexual, mental or even economical mistreatment of one person by another. It is, now that you know its meaning, a kind of bullying. The difference with traditional bullying is that you are permanently dealing with the bully, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
 - **Who is it perpetrated upon?**

This kind of abuse prevails in every social structure, whether it is the educated or uneducated, rich or poor and it is perpetrated on any member (elderly included), however old he or she might be (from a shocking starting age of 2 months), or of any sex (women are the most frequent victims of this kind of violence and, therefore, they will be our main focus of attention) and it is not strictly limited to a domestic setting. It can take place among young couples too.
 - **Does it take place in specific countries?**

This issue is not country specific. Domestic violence is a menace that is found all over the world. of global concern — violence against women is completely unacceptable, wherever it takes place. Bangladeshi women experience some of the highest rates of domestic violence in the world. We will study a case from this country below. In Spain the number of women victims of domestic abuse is getting alarmingly higher.
- **Domestic violence** depends to a great extent on the image society projects of women. Society openly favours men's needs over women's. As we have seen in the previous point, women did not have the same rights as men in Franco's time. They were considered inferior and men had the authority over women. Even though lately the idea of equal treatment has become widely accepted some groups say that there is still a long way to go. Domestic violence is still deeply entrenched in our society and number of violence cases in Spain are far from reducing but, on the contrary, they are increasing. In some countries, women find themselves in even more precarious circumstances and are regarded as goods to trade or sell.
- **Cycle of violence**

Look at the diagram below and read the vocabulary. Make sure you understand what

the words mean. Look words up if necessary. In pairs, try to explain the evolution of stages of domestic violence.



This cycle can happen hundreds of times in an abusive relationship. Each stage lasts a different amount of time in every relationship. The total cycle can take anywhere from a few hours to a year or more to complete. It is important to say, however, that not all domestic violence relationships fit this cycle. There are variations and in some instances, as time goes on, the 'calm' stage disappears giving way to an endless 'harassment' and 'violence' stage ending up in some extreme cases in death.

- Describe situations that you think may trigger conflicts and imagine what happens within the relationship then.

- **WORDSEARCH PUZZLE**

Find nine domestic violence-related words:

D D N P W Q R A C L A H
 E I A O J E L Z L J A S
 S S K Q I U S T S R A B
 T T U C Z T H U A I D X
 R R D K J R A S B Y D I
 U U E L E J S L R A C X
 C S I A V M Q I O E F G
 T T T C E P S E R S I D
 I O N N L A I N E D I P
 O A T C R I T I C I S M
 N U Q D C R Q F X K D T
 F A D T P A X A C N N G

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE ABUSE?



Abusers do not show themselves as such. They are “normal” people to victims, friends, relatives and fellow workers. It is, therefore, difficult to tag someone as abuser. They are even friendlier outside the relation to make up for a total lack of balance. Unfortunately, when their abusive behaviour is publicly known, it is occasionally too late for the victim. The victims, on the other hand, struggle to find out what the reason for their behaviour is. They even blame themselves for it as they remember how nice this person was in the past (“*am I responsible for this change?*”, they ask themselves). To top it off, they do not enjoy much credibility at first, as their partner is seen as a nice person outside the relationship. It is a true case of a “*Jekyll and Hyde*”.

There are quite a few theories which try to explain why abuse happens. As we have seen previously, women’s role in society in the Franco era was that of a subjugated, denigrated person. Nowadays we still live in a male-dominated society. Within this society men feel it is their role to exert control over women. They think they are naturally born superior and therefore they will not accept women as equal. Some men's primitive instincts will arise and lead them astray, making them lose control and turn violent. This, however, does not explain why domestic violence is not country specific. Some people claim that people who witness abuse at earlier stages develop this behaviour later on in their lives. This again, fails to explain why not all the abused children develop this pattern. Schizophrenia or any similar illness could be another explanation for that, although this would be the cause of a minor number of incidents.

Psychologists state that the common thread that links all the people who abuse is their self-esteem, or rather, the lack of it. They do not have feelings of self-worth, they do not feel in control of their lives and have the need to do so in a more private context.

● CASE STUDY: NADINE

Nadine is a young lady from Bangladesh who moved to the United States together with her husband. Her husband started hitting her following the couple’s arrival in New York. The mistreatment she was suffering was getting more and more brutal and it went on non stop for a month before the police rescued her from an inevitable end.



(Nadine before)

● Nadine’s note

Here is the note Nadine herself wrote to an internet blog. In it she explains that she considers herself lucky; many women have not had the chance to write it...

I am lucky to be alive, and there must be a reason why the month-long abuse I sustained did not culminate in my death. I had said my 'innah lillah's (a prayer) and was prepared to die, but that didn't happen. Instead, he raped me with my head draped with a scarf so that he wouldn't have to look at my disfigured face.

While I come to terms with the aftermath of the events that led to Sept 23 (the day I was rescued by the police) I am thankful to Allah, and to all of you who have been there for me. Please pray for me, pray that I have the strength to stand up against the abuse that I had to endure.



As I write this, several weeks after the rescue operation, this is what I look like. This is what I got for loving him.

Love,

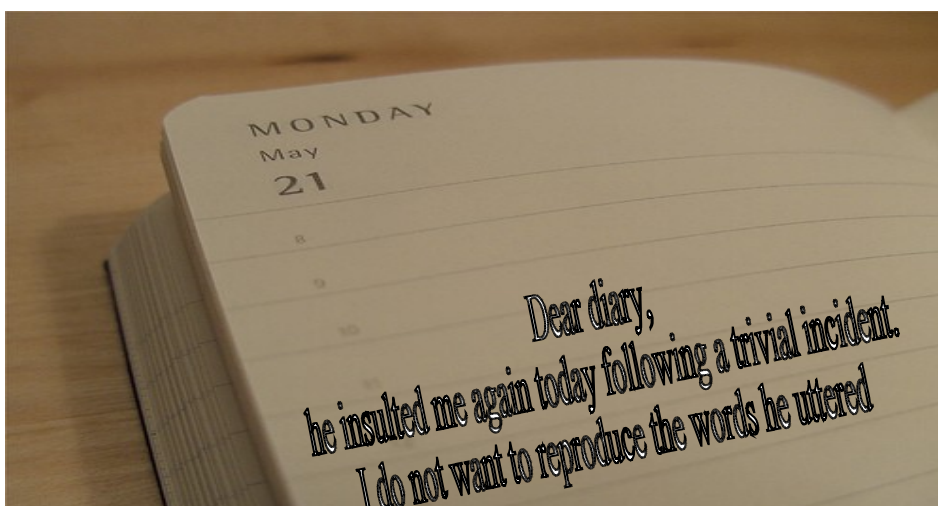
(Nadine after her husband's beatings)

Nadine

TASK



Imagine that Nadine wrote a *diary* over the previous four weeks to her husband's arrest. Exactly the same period of time during which she suffered the most brutal treatment at the hands of her partner. Write a few pages of her *diary*, explaining what her days were like and how the relation with her husband had deteriorated. Use the 'cycle-of-violence' diagram above to help you describe the different stages the couple went through. You may start like this:



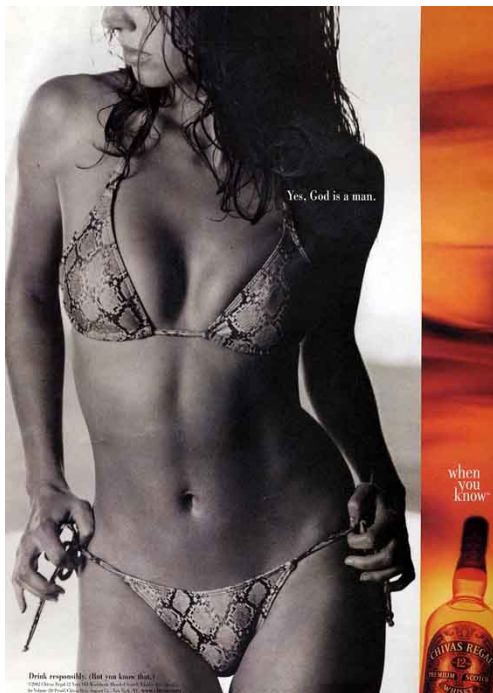
THE MEDIA HAVE A SAY TO IT



Specialists say that the way the media cover some cases of domestic violence has eventually had funest consequences, has helped trivialize some cases and has boosted an increase in such episodes. A study carried out in San Francisco, in the US, showed that most press reports frequently described male abusers in positive terms, thus implying that the perpetrator was a victim of circumstances. For instance, a man who shot and killed his ex-wife and then threw his daughter over the Golden Gate Bridge was referred to as "a sweetheart," a "loving father," and "a hell of a nice guy." Another "nice" description was the one of a man who shot and killed both his children: he was called "a loving father." Also, common are expressions like "a victim of divorce" or that he "acted under the influence of drugs" or "was depressed" or "To him [marriage] was a sacrosanct institution and to violate it was the end of his world." The press are at times extremely sympathetic about the circumstances that brought the abuser to commit the violent act.

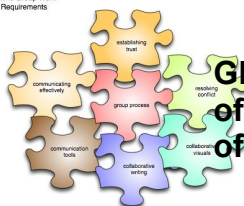
• ADVERTISEMENTS

Look at the following advertisement and answer the questions.



- What kind of product is it advertising?
- Where is the product located?
- Why do you think the picture of the woman is much bigger than the advertised product?
- Who is this advertisement aimed at?
- Do you think it will sell better thanks to the woman's picture?

Online Group Work Requirements



GROUP WORK. Think in which way the image the media project of women can generate violence against them. Think of examples of programs or advertisements to justify your arguments.

**STOP
violence
against
women**

- **What can we do?**

The first thing you should do is find out if you are in an abusive relationship. The BBC web site offers you a quick test to assess your relationship:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/relationships/domestic_violence/youhh_index1.shtml

Do you think you could tell whether you find yourself in such a relationship from the BBC test?

- **PREVENTION**

Preventing domestic violence in the first place and prosecuting those who are responsible of such despicable acts must always be at the forefront of the drive to make any country a better, safer place; a place in which women must be respected as human beings and as persons. That's the bottom line. This drive for better conditions of living should be pushed forward by all governments. Clear policies should be implemented to help fight stereotypes and traditional views of women's roles. The media should be at the head start of this change as it does a weak favour when it is deliberately projecting wrong images of women, as passive figures with family and private roles, thus distorting the real image of the woman figure as engaged, involved and active citizen.

- **What do women say?**

In September 1995, **Hillary Rodham Clinton**, now a US senator running for presidency, gave a speech to the UN's fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. She said:

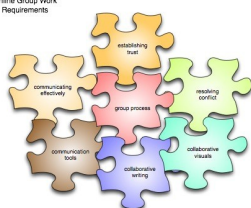
As long as discrimination and inequities remain so commonplace around the world -as long as girls and women are valued less, fed less, fed last, overworked, underpaid, not schooled and subjected to violence in out of their home- the potential of the human family to create a peaceful, prosperous world will not be realised.

Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop company said:

Women want to be free to choose from the same range of options that men take for granted. In our quest for equal pay, equal access to education and opportunities, we have made great strides. But until women can move freely and think freely in their homes, on the streets, in the workplace without the fear of violence, there can be no real freedom.

- The following are steps which analysts say might help put an end to violence against women:
 - Diminish the appearances of women in submissive and weak roles in the media.
 - Tighter controls on pornography.
 - More serious legal treatment of violence against women: tougher sentences for abusers and rapists.
 - Support agencies (ICD, refuges, etc.) which help abused women.
 - Educate children about the relationships between men and women.
 - Step away from a men-dominated society.

Online Group Work Requirements



GROUP WORK – A CAMPAIGN

You are going to do a campaign to demand an end to discrimination and violence and violence against women. The next steps will give you a fair idea on how to organize a campaign:

1. Get a campaign **group** together.
2. Come up with **a plan** to achieve your aims.
3. Think of a catchy, attractive **slogan**.
4. You should **know a lot** about your particular issue. In this case, *discrimination and violence against women*. Ask the teacher if you have a doubt about any particular issue.
5. The local community (school) **support** will be invaluable. A popular cause is more likely to be successful as it will draw more attention. A school-wide campaign, a campaign in which the whole school is involved, will therefore be more fertile.
6. Getting **media coverage** is a key for many successful campaigns. Try to obtain exposure by having your campaign publicised in a local paper or in the school magazine.
7. Use publicity **tools** (such as posters, fliers, stickers, etc.). Pass them out in school or hang posters on walls, for example. Try to draw as much attention as possible.



LOOK IT UP ON THE WEB! – The ICD (L'INSTITUT CATALA DE LA DONA)

There are a number of institutions that offer help and advise to women in distress. The ICD is one of them. Check the internet for some information about this institution. You might be required to get in touch with people within this institution. Answer the following questions:

- What kind of problems does it deal with?
- What services does it offer?
- How can one know about its existence?
- Do many people seek advice from them?
- Would you turn to the ICD for help?

- **KNOWLEDGE QUEST**

Complete the summing report your teacher will give you.

