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## Gender Equality and the Status of Women during WWI in Britain (1914-1918)

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## **Abstract**

This study provides an overview of the status of women in Britain during the period between (1914-1918), and the British society's view of women prior WWI. The purpose of this study is to show case the changes that altered the lives of British women during the great war and its impact on women's fight for equality and fair opportunities to hold the same positions as men. Using existing studies and historical context, this study analysis women's success in Britain obtaining positions in the public sphere in several areas including the field of work. World War One paved the way for women to achieve a certain degree of equality in some sectors to play important roles in British society and having their voices heard. Women gained the right to vote and engage in artistic forms of expression. The war gave them the chance to follow different lifestyles and create different views than women were taught to be.

**Keywords:** World War One, women, equality, Britain.

## **Dedications**

Thanks to God Almighty first. After that, I would like to dedicate this work to my beloved parents, who were the main reason for who I am now, and who made me an ambitious, passionate, persevering person in order to achieve a better future through their recommendations and education for me and for providing me with all the love and affection without any compensation. So thanks to these two wonderful parents for supporting me ever since I started studying till I attained the level of accomplishment I do today. To my dear brother and sister who share with me all the moments of my success and wish me the best. To the person closest to my heart, my beloved grandmother, who I wish her continued health and wellness. I extend my thanks to my best friends who keep pushing me forward every time I am discouraged with their encouragement especially Youcef, Nada, Nihad, Sarah and Eya. And to my friend Fatima, whom I owe all thanks and appreciation for her assistance in the last year of my educational carrer. Last but not least, I want to express my gratitude to myself for all the work I put in to finally get to the day I've been patiently awaiting, I am proud of me.

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## **General Introduction**

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### **General Introduction :**

From 1914 to 1918, there was World War I, usually referred to as the Great War. Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire engaged in combat with Canada, Japan, the United States, France, Russia, Italy, Great Britain, and Romania. World War I saw unprecedented amounts of death and damage because of new military innovations and the horrors of trench warfare (World War I). Britain's war against Germany was one of the most powerful conflicts of the Great War. Britain lived a difficult war time, as the conflict had negative effects on its society and many of its soldiers died as a result. The first war period followed years after the Victorian era in which the British, especially women, were obligated to preserve and adhere to Victorian traditions, customs and values that no one could cancel until the time of the Great War.

Many people think that only men were affected by the first war and participated actively in wartime jobs, however women played a major role that is less discussed in that time period in Britain. The war left lasting changes in the life of British women and gave them rights that were ignored. The effects of the war could be seen on British women as much as it could be seen on British men, both the genders have suffered from the repercussions and difficulties of the war, as they were indispensable members in the time of the conflict. This was represented in many women who proved themselves in British society throughout the war, like many of the feminist movements that cannot be forgotten. It can be said that the war had a strong impact on women as well, whether positively or negatively.

This research aims to show the benefit of the First World War on British women in the period between 1914-1918. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the impact of the First World War on women in Britain, the role that women played in the struggle, and the ways in which gender equality was attained in some areas during the war. The goal of the current dissertation is to emphasize the most significant changes that occurred in British women's lives during the First World War.

Consequently, these following questions have been raised :

- What is the impact of the World War I in women's lives in Britain ?
- Did British women gain equality during World War I?

## General Introduction

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Considering the impact of the First World War on the lives of women in Britain. Perhaps the war had changed the position of women in society contrary to what they were before it, so that it might have included them in the war environment as well.

Probably British women in the Great War enjoyed some equality and freedoms such as leaving the house and entering the world of work that many men left to engage in the war.

This study contributes to showing the tasks undertaken by the British woman and her effective role as the effectiveness of her male counterpart in the Great War. In addition to the movements of woman to make her voice heard in the British society, and the contribution of the war to create gender equality.

The main factor that led to British women having higher status and rights than they did from 1914 to 1918 was the First World War. Due to the contributions that women made during that time in British society, they had the freedom to speak up for and defend their rights, and as a result, they distinguished themselves as an important part of the community.

This study consists of 3 chapters ; chapter one is titled " The Historical Background of British Women During The Victorian Era (19th Century / Early 20th Century)"; which summarizes the position of women in the Victorian society, when this society revolved around the values and beliefs that had to be imposed on women. Chapter two addresses "Impact of the WWI on the Position of the British Women's Life", and it contributes to pointing out the most important areas in which women's situations have changed due to the war. Finally, chapter three is dedicated to knowing "The Cultural Position of Woman During The WWI in Britain", which will show particularly her place in literature, that British women had not experienced prior to the First World War.

Chapter One:  
Historical Background of the  
British Women During the  
Victorian Era (19th Century/  
Early 20th Century).

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## 1.1 Introduction :

Victorian, foundations and ideas created principles that could not be changed in the Victorian society. These principles structured an inequity between men and women as a result of the socially and culturally built gender differences, Women are expected to be weak and have limited influence under the patriarchal system. It was clear that the Victorian woman was a victim of the values of her society, she was restricted and persecuted through the domination of men and her existence in a patriarchal society before she started trying to achieve equality in her environment (Raharjani).

This chapter explains and reveals many fields where Victorian British women suffered before they fought for their freedom and their violated rights in the 19th century and before the outbreak of the First World War, which was the first step for the radical change for British women. These fields include: Education, work, women in marriage, women in Politics, victorian women suffrage, and women in literature in the Victorian era. Also in view of this, this chapter will illustrate an example of the struggle of British Victorian women in building equality between them and their male counterparts in Charlotte Bronte's book.

## 1.2 Women in the Victorian Society :

The Victorian society believed in the idea that a woman's place, activity and life was confined and represented in her home only. The society viewed her as if her work and priorities represented in taking care of her home, her husband and her children only, and nothing should matter to her other than her assigned duties. A woman had no rights, whether inside or outside the home, her only objective in life was to marry and become obedient and servant to her husband (Appell). According to Francoise Basch in her book, *Relative creatures*, "when the woman is denied all capacity for creation, action and authority, her contribution in the masculine world becomes the emotional and moral guidance which are her vocations as wife and mother".

When it comes to married life in Victorian society, When a woman get married, the husband has complete control over her personal property, however the matter is not limited to controlling the property only, but he also controls her body, meaning that the woman has no right to reject her husband's sexual desires, and if she does, he will beat her, assault and rape her without any fear. There is no law punishing him or defending her about this matter (Allingham).

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Victorian society classified both sexes in different roles and fields from each other. Victorian society believed that men had a high intellectual level and that they were the ruling sex, while women were represented as the weaker and sensitive sex. Victorians were making clear boundaries and divided work that should be done by males, and which that should be done by females. A man has to earn money and make it available to his wife, mother, daughters and sisters. Women's tasks on the other hand, are the responsibility for children's education, and taking care for their children, shopping, organizing the household and by providing tranquility in a peaceful and comfortable home (Hughes). According to Dr. Bahreldin Haroon Guma Abaker, Assistant professor in College of Arts, Jouf University, "inside the shelter building, a woman's work is performed: it is religious and educational because it consists of teaching good morals and moral values by her tenderness the woman is to be the social protector of society".

The status and position of both men and women in Victorian society was completely separate from one another, women had no rights other than a few that were almost counted. It was believed that a woman should always be under the control of her father or husband, meaning she had no right to enjoy freedom in a society that always thinks that women are intellectually and physically inferior to men (Gender roles in the 19th century). Victorians followed their queen, they considered her as a great example of loyal and obedient wife. The Queen Victoria represented the ideal womanhood, she was considered as an icon of late-19th-century middle-class femininity and domesticity (Abrams). So, the pure woman, for them, is associated with the private sphere. Aside from the Queen, the ideal Victorian lady would have been like Mrs. Frances Goodby, the wife of Reverend J. Goodby. Mrs. Goodby was the model of a decent and virtuous woman whose life centred on the domestic realm of the house and family. She had no free time because she was active, obedient, and religious. Frances Goodby served as a role model for other women because of her effort and seeming unwavering devotion to both her husband and her God. She acknowledged her position in the sexual hierarchy (Abrams).

So, the world of the Victorian man was outside the house, while the work of the woman was confined to the inside. the woman was inferior to the man in all aspects, she did not benefit from sharing her ideas in her patriarchal society. Women in Victorian England had a specific role and place, they were expected to take care of their household – meaning their husband and children, and were generally viewed as less than their male counterparts. Major differences between men and women could be seen when it came to education, employment

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and more generally, human rights (Bland). One critic, Richard D. Altick states "a woman was inferior to a man in all ways except the unique one that counted most [to a man]: her femininity. Her place was in the home, and emphatically not in the world of affairs". The Victorian man believed that a woman should enjoy feminine qualities and absolute innocence in order to attract a man's attention and be able to marry, and if she was not distinguished by innocence and femininity, she could not do that. The woman must show innocence through her dress as well, such as the white dress, which means that she is a virgin, therefore, the woman had to be innocent of all the qualities that made her unloved by the Victorian man, in other words she had to be ignorant, obedient, meek and weak. Therefore, a woman should be an element of few opinions outside her home, this expresses her inferiority to men (Apell).

Victorian society viewed women as the moral guidance in the home for the community, the woman was not allowed to practice any activities outside her home because this was the man's job. She was not allowed to achieve or accomplish anything. From the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, women were still vulnerable to oppression and had no legal protections. Women were considered to be the weaker sex in the nineteenth century, and for such, they should be under the care and supervision of a man, typically the father or the husband (Otmani et al)

It was decided that the masculine sphere was the public sphere of business, politics, and professional life. Women's territory was referred to as the personal domain of love, feelings, and domesticity. The private sphere, on the other hand, was thought to be ruled by women specifically to serve as a place of renewal for men after their strenuous activities in the harsh, competitive public sphere. The public sphere was seen as the exclusive domain of men, while the private sphere was thought to be ruled by women (Gorham, 4).

### **1.3 Education of the Victorian Women :**

The morals of the British Victorian woman were appreciated by her society because she was preparing a moral generation for the future in her home, so the woman of the upper class had to marry and her only profession is to be confined to her home. She had no right to education or gain knowledge, except Small accomplishments include drawing, singing, and learning languages or playing the piano to be unique and entertain her home guests, educating women was not necessary. The prevailing rule about women at that time was that women

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should take care of their household affairs, and that they should only be housewives and mothers, it was believed that education would strip them of their femininity (Picard).

Victorian society believed that women had few unskilled occupational rights such as housekeepers, childcare, nursing, needlework, and cleaning for lower-class girls who had to work to help their families (Tomkins). Queen Victoria told her uncle, the King of the Belgians: 'We women are not made for governing - and if we are good women, we must dislike these masculine occupations', this comment was built by the woman who was ruling most of Britain at that time, and despite her control, she was thinking and believing that the woman's place belongs in her home (Arildsen). Mary Wollstonecraft asserted that lack of education made women frivolous and socially irresponsible, unfit to be companions to their husbands, good mothers to their children or self supporting in the absence of a male provider (Demir).

Before 1847, Victorian females in Britain did not have the same education given to males. The lessons that were received by males differently from females are: Language, Latin, Literature of Ancient Greece and Rome, mathematics, algebra, history and Philosophy. As for females, their education was limited to playing instruments, sewing, dancing, Drawing, singing, And lessons in etiquette. Only the distinguished few of them had obtained a higher education than the previous ones, such as mathematics (Howard).

Victorian girls had fewer and more standardized opportunities for employment and educational opportunities. Reading, sewing, and increasingly writing skills were demanded of girls. These abilities were seen as the cornerstone of a girl's education, if she didn't learn anything else, she would at least pick up sewing and some basic reading. As Eliza Farrar commented in 1837, in *The young lady's friend*, "a woman does not know how to sew is as deficient in her education as a man who cannot write" (Kortsch).

In the late 1840's, two colleges were opened, one of them was "Bedford College." This college was opened by a woman and all its employees were women. This college received all the females who were considered non-conformists, thus, many girls who belong to extremist families joined the feminist groups who were interested in educational reform for women. Among the well-known schools of the time, which were reorganized and were academically superior for women was Cheltenham. The education of women was seen as a key for her to receive more freedoms and to take other rights and also an opportunity to eradicate boredom. It could be seen that the Victorian society supported the education of boys only so as not to

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disturb the balance of stability in the home, which was the responsibility of women. Despite the success achieved in opening small schools and colleges for women, the controversy still existed over the fear that women would neglect their duties around their homes. But the education of these boarding schools for females lacked accuracy and the need for a curriculum, so many feminists pressured the Taunton Committee to consider and improve education in female schools. It had not been for their pressure on the Taunton Committee, the committee would have investigated the secondary schools for boys only. In spite of the education laws of 1870 and 1878, public schools gave educated girls lessons and skills related to housework, such as lessons in embroidery, washing clothes, and others, unlike the boarding schools run by women that provided a curriculum almost as well as a lesson for boys. Despite all that, the goal of educating the Victorian society for women was not for the purpose of work or for her to gain freedom of education like boys in order to gain a position, but rather the goal was only for the woman to be able to engage with her husband in a cultural conversation and dialogue (The Victorian Woman and Education).

Despite the achievements made by the feminist movement and the progress of women in The Victorian Era in gaining an education similar to men in colleges, their entry to university was very difficult. Victorian society believed that too much education for women might hinder their ability to have children and lose their femininity. So many families were afraid, they prevented their daughters from studying at the university. Despite the progress made by feminism in order to provide a good education for women, they did not obtain university recognition (Hughes).

Later on, Oxford and Cambridge opened their doors to women. However, many families refused to send their clever and intelligent daughters to them. Those families feared the idea of unmarried women which goes against what they were expected to follow. According to Hughes Kathryn, woman who devoted herself too enthusiastically to intellectual pursuits, was known as a "blue-stocking" (Abdessattar et al).

#### **1.4 Victorian Woman and her Working Roles :**

It was known that the Victorian society did not favor any tasks or interests that push the Victorian woman outside her home, for it was seen that her only duty is limited to how the system and values of her family succeed, as she was the guide and moral builder of the members of her home. But despite these beliefs, the woman was forced to work outside the

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home because she needed to support her family since the man's income was only enough to survive, this is for the families that forced their women to work. For Victorian society, women were always inferior to men and were the secondary character after their male counterpart (Allingham).

British Victorian society in the first half of the nineteenth century expected women to stay at home and raise their children because they are the source of morals and the basis for the family's up bringing in a home environment with high morals, principles, and respect. So when poor women, needed to work to support Their families, these women's needs affected the society's view of them. The labor of girls and women in the mills was a considered the roused general concern. The women in the factories were treated brutally and badly by the male workers. The practical atmosphere inside the factory for the woman was never appropriate, but the women had no other choice but to work in this kind of inappropriate work to help the man in her house to provide necessities for her family. In addition to the lack of rights for British women in the Victorian era to obtain a decent job to lead a decent working life, women were denied equal pay and the opposite of what men receive in terms of wages (Barrett).

An example of a patriarchal Victorian society not accepting women working in highly skilled professions in education such as medicine, is Elizabeth Garrett Anderson whom became the first woman to earn a medical degree toward the end of the 19th century (GP). She then had to overcome significant challenges to advance in her career. Men would avoid her because of her gender, while women would often continue visiting a male GP as was customary at the time. Years passed before Anderson found success (WOMEN IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES).

### **1.5 Status of a Married Victorian Woman :**

To marry and have a family to dedicate her life to, was the highest goal and destiny a Victorian woman could achieve. Queen Victoria was an example of the ideal married female who takes care of her home and her children. The Queen strengthened family life and its importance, and through the happy and successful family life that Queen Victoria established with her husband Albert, she presented what the role of a Victorian woman should be as a mother, wife and the foundation of the house. The patriarchal Victorian society expected the woman to be in her home with her husband and her children, and to build her home on high

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moral foundations and to preserve the integrity and blessed values upon which a true family should live on in their eyes as The angel of the house. The manner in which Queen Victoria behaved in her marriage showed to those who were not members of the royal family or members of Victorian society, how a marriage should be conducted and how a wife should respect and value her husband. Whether this was an example to be taken into account or not, author Joan Perkin said that: " If the Prince of Wales (the Prince Regent, later George IV) could treat his wife so badly, what hope was there for other cast off wives? If Queen Victoria never knew such happiness existed as was hers and Albert's might there not be hope for all eager young brides? and if a later Princess of Wales (Alexandra) could get much of her own way and escape excessive childbearing by accepting her husband's mistresses, wasn't that a royal example of civilized behavior for aristocratic ladies in the know?" (McDonnell). "Mrs ellis and Mrs beeton placed the wife as the centre of the family as the source of all thought, all feeling, all influence. Ruskin invested her with an absolute power over the spirit of man, war, and the fate of humanity" (Basch, 5).

Women had little possibility for independence because men had authority over their life from the moment they were born. The authority shifted when they moved from their father's care as the family's head to their husband's care. Following their marriage, their spouses received full ownership of any assets and income they may have had. All of the wife's rights are transferred to the husband upon a Victorian man and woman's marriage. Women were treated like machines because, once married, they had to grant their husband rights to anything their bodies generated, including sex, children, and household duties (Dehak).

The ideal English woman and mother is kind, compassionate, and selfless, with a heart so pure as to be completely unaware of and opposed to any indulgence in sensuality yet so devoted to her partner that she is willing to sacrifice her own desires and sentiments for his benefit (Basch, 9). Women frequently experienced terrible practical problems as a result of the law. The law damaged a woman's freedom, identity, and self-respect by treating her like a tool, even a chattel, of her husband. Therefore, one of the most significant successes of 19th century feminism is the reform of the common law as it pertains to women. Personal belongings of the woman became her husband's sole possession, during his lifetime, he was free to put it to whatever use or dispose of it as he pleased. He may also prepare a will in which he could dispose of his own belongings, including any that had been given to him by his wife. The common law regulations governing married women's property may be

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supported by the fact that the husband, as the head of the household, was required to support his wife and children and should be entitled to his wife's property to do so (Vicinus, 3,6).

Married women had some strict laws they had to follow prior to the first Married Women's Property Act being established in 1870. The coverture concept referred to a married lady as a "feme covert". Being a "feme covert" implied that a woman's rights and obligations, as well as what was expected of her, were combined with those of her husband. Husbands were supposed to "guard" their wives and everything they owned. They were neither individuals nor a part of a whole; rather, their entire existence was consumed by that of their husband. This was also known as the law of coverture, which stated that a married woman had no independent existence separate from her husband. Thus, all married women were dependant (Bland).

Married women had no identity apart from their husbands in the eyes of the common law. In legal terms, "husband and wife are one person, and the husband is that person," as the adage goes. In terms of property, this effectively meant that a husband assumed legal possession or control of any assets that belonged to his wife upon marriage and any assets that might be acquired by her during the marriage. The nature of the property determined the scope of his possession and control because real and personal property were clearly separated under common-law norms (Vicinus, 4,5).

The laws governing real property provided women some control over assets they had inherited, but the laws governing personal property did not treat women as favorably. Upon marriage, a woman's husband acquired ownership of her personal property, which included all items she had that were not pieces of land. The rights of a woman in regards to personal property are described by historian Lee Holcombe as follows: "While the common law relating to real property granted married women substantial protection, the law relating to personal property held that all such property that belonged to a woman at the time of marriage and all that she acquired after marriage were her husband's absolutely" (McDonnell).

Contrary to all the things that caused misery in the hearts of women who suffered from the failure of marital harmony with their husbands, the new women in the Victorian era sought to take places in work, financial independence and opportunities to obtain rights like men. The husband "had merely to prove basic adultery by his wife". Additionally, he had the option to separate from her, which leads the lady to lose her status in society and custody of her children, whom would then be returned to her husband. Children were apart of the father's

rights because of the notion that women were frail, unstable, and unable to make sane decisions. The woman had to prove more in addition to adultery on the part of her husband as the aggravated offenses he had committed, so that she could divorce him (Abdessattar et al).

### **1.6 Victorian Women Status in Charlotte Bronte's 'Jane Eyre' :**

Charlotte Bronte's novel "Jane Eyre" was one of the most famous novels in the Victorian era, as she wrote her books under a pseudonym "Currer Bell" because Victorian society at the time did not allow women to write novels. The novel was criticized for its content, vocabulary, and "subversive tendency", especially after Bront's colleagues discovered some indications that Jane Eyre might have been written by a woman. The Victorians believed that men and women should belong in "separate realms" of paid work and domesticity, each with its own obligations. The house should be the proper domain of women. A woman should do her "appropriate duties" within her "proper realm", which include "dedicating oneself to the repetitious routines of domestic labor and to minister to others' needs". The portrayal of Jane Eyre by some of Charlotte Bront's contemporaries was too unlike "the Angel in the House" (Xiaojie).

Returning to the Victorian women who inclined to literature, women's writing in the Victorian era was not appreciated by men. So some women published their writings under a male pseudonym due to inequality. The Victorian society did not favor female writers, because women living in that era wrote about their violated rights, their freedoms, goals, and the persecution they were subjected to. So Charlotte Bronte wrote her novel Jane Eyre to express her opinion through the tongue of her female character. Above all, Charlotte Bronte believed in marriage for love, freedom and the right of a woman to be educated and to choose the profession to which she aspires, and believes that everyone has the right to do so, and people should not be judged for abstaining from those mentioned rights. These rights and Charlotte's beliefs were embodied in her female heroine character Jane Eyre. Jane is a powerful, passionate heroine who can speak her emotions and fight for her rights. Her traits are totally dissimilar from those of real Victorian women, who suffered from male oppression. She demonstrates a number of Jane's actions that were not permitted for Victorian women to carry out. Jane is the complete antithesis of the stereotypes that portray women as dependant, frail, and sulky (Abaker).

When the gender of the writer was discovered for Jane Eyre's novel, Charlotte wrote to the poet Robert Southey to ask about his opinion on her novel, he replied:

" Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be, the more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation ". This letter shows that Robert Southey is biased about women's work as writers and shows the same view that society sees about women as well (Letter from Robert Southey...).

Looking for and demanding equality and justice is another key motif in Jane Eyre's search for feminist self-realization. Humans in the Victorian era believed that genders were inferior to one another, men were born with superiority over women, and people were not all created equal. Because of this, women like Jane experience discrimination in every industry. Jane frequently rebels when she recognizes she is in the wrong environment. The character Jane Eyre strongly urged to fight the oppression of Victorian women, as the character wanted autonomy and more rights and freedoms, contrary to what British society in that era ordered. Charlotte Bronte introduced to readers the heroine Jane Eyre, who has the strength and ability to express what is on her mind and how to defend her rights whose personality is quite different from that of the Victorian women who were following the orders of the patriarchal Victorian society. Jane Eyre embodied many things that Victorian women were not allowed to do, such as emotions. In the Victorian era, women's emotions were suppressed so that women did not enjoy expressing them or seeming to react to men, so Charlotte embodied the concept of emotion in Jane to allow her to express her thoughts, such as this speech that was a reaction from the character Jane to John Reed : "You are like a murderer - you are like a slave-driver", Such an angry reaction by Jan Eyre that no woman in the Victorian reality did towards the man, in order to preserve her femininity and morals, even if she was wronged by him. So Jane was the liberated girl who was looking for love, freedom and equality that women lacked in British society in the nineteenth century (Abaker).

### **1.7 Women's Suffrage in the Victorian Era:**

The British women's suffrage movement was one of the largest movements made by women since before the First World War in Britain, and for which some women's organizations in Britain fought only in order to win this demand to achieve sexual equality in the suffrage and many freedoms Which British women hoped for to improve their lives. As

for the women's suffrage movement, it took a long time to reach a conclusion. The working-class women had no good reasons to support their claims for voting rights because the working-class men gave them no right to hope. In contrast, when voting rights were exclusively granted to men with landed property, one of the strong arguments for granting women voting rights was that they should enjoy equal rights to men did. Working-class men in this era were economically, politically, and socially a crabbed and limited element of the nation, were fervently battling to establish rights, and did not take their proper place in politics until the 1832 Reform Act. Even this success was not unlimited, the vote in the boroughs of England and Wales was only available to male homeowners with property. Britain's educational system underwent modification in the 19th century with the goal of giving women more challenging coursework. Women started to have access to higher education. Instead of being supplements to husbands in 1883 as a result of legal reforms strengthening women's independence and rights as people, the huge popularity showed that it is reasonable to assume that many middle-class women at the time were reluctant to express outright support for women's suffrage because it implied entering the traditionally male-dominated political sphere. In the 1840s and 1850s, two Victorian magazines, *Family Herald* and *London Magazine*, reported on the concerns of middle-class Victorian women and their interests in remaining feminine and respectful in accordance with Victorian ideals of femininity. Despite receiving little attention for a long time, women's influence in politics was far from nonexistent. Before adult women were granted the right to vote, aristocratic women took an indirect involvement in British politics. The women in the aristocratic order communicated their political concerns and demands through their relationships with influential men, their participation in the patronage system, and their involvement in charitable and social organizations. Suffragists were among the earliest proponents of women having voting right. They mostly employed nonviolent means, such as making posters, sending letters, holding meetings, and handing out flyers. The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and the majority of its members were established in 1896. They attempted to enlist the aid of numerous political parties in their quest to win over men, These tactics, however, were unsuccessful, the Liberal Party refused to back women's suffrage activists out of concern that it would increase support for its conservative competitors. The Labor Party was the sole party to endorse this demand, but because it is a minor party, its support was not of considerable significance. The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), another suffrage organization, was founded as a result of the frustration that many women felt over the lack of progress. They sought to bring attention to the issue through non-

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peaceful and violent means. One of their most popular strategies, which they embraced is boycotting political gatherings; nonetheless, they were detained due to their roughness in maintaining their demand, this image painted them as fighters for the cause of women's suffrage. So Although the WSPU's tactic effectively increased its membership base and financial resources, it hampered the legal reform for women's suffrage. Additionally, Pankhurst's tactics undermined the group's attempts to promote a sense of empowerment for women by reinforcing the Victorian stereotype of submissive women and powerful men. As education and professional opportunities for women improved in the late nineteenth century, Women in Britain felt bitter of being denied the right to vote since it would have allowed them to voice their concerns for the good of society. In addition to that, Shopkeepers, professionals, and trades people started to demand universal suffrage in the final decade of the eighteenth century, claiming that their patriotism and the belief that liberty is an inherent human right were sufficient justifications for them to participate in society. These assertions backed up women's demands for a bigger voice in politics. The justification was straightforward, if men's voting rights shouldn't be restricted by the property they own, how could the denial of extending the same rights to women be justified. However, there are opposing views that claim women are incapable of participating in politics and its activities, that they are emotional, submissive, and not like men. They also claim that a woman's place should be in the home, and that if she engages in politics, she is likely to neglect her family (Yun).

### **1.8 The Transition of British Women from the Victorian Era to the Rain of King Edward VII :**

The status of women in the Edwardian era did not differ much from what it was in the Victorian era. Edwardian women were seen as the family's property since they were ready to be married, start families, and manage a home. Edwardian Women had a difficult time getting any kind of acknowledgment at work. They had a servile function, catering to the demands of the males who hired them. The unions intended to bar women from participating. Legislation was made to keep some jobs closed to women because they did not want women to compete for well-paying jobs. Women had few opportunities to progress in the workplace, had unequal pay, and were frequently separated from men in the workplace (Women's Roles...).

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## 1.9 Conclusion :

This chapter dealt with the historical background of British women in the Victorian era. It can be said that the Victorian era was very strict with women, unlike men who lived rich in all the rights that made them of higher value, status and importance than women in Victorian British society. As the historian Elena Cossar said, in her article *The Role Of Women In Victorian England*, "The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation, and invention; his energy for adventure war, and for conquest. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle – and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision... she must be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise, wise not for self development, but for self-renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she man never fail from his side". Therefore, it can be concluded through this quote, that the position of the man was represented outside the house, he had the right to do whatever he wanted or the duties that he specified, but the woman had the duty to be distinguished by her morals and moral principles that she must perform at home to provide an atmosphere comfortable for her husband and family members. Meaning that women did not enjoy many rights in Victorian society except after some feminists decided to demand their rights to achieve gender equality in a society that favors males over females.

Chapter Two: Impact of WWI  
on the Position of the British  
Women's Life.

## **2.1 Introduction :**

British women lived a difficult time and a harsh period in terms of the inequality that was imposed by the male British society between them and their male counterparts in the period before 1914. However, the First World War was an opportunity to change the position of British women in society, and to gain some rights that were looted by the British man. Women also became significant and effective in their society, just like the opposite.

The First World War was notable for having a significant impact on women's lives in Britain since it fundamentally altered their circumstances. The Great War helped British women to get out of the house, which was her inevitable fate. British society became in need of women due to the lack of male workers, whom departed to war. Therefore, women occupied many positions that were meant for men only, although this change was not forever (Kina et al). WWI helped them make their voices heard and to prove that they were capable of doing what men could do, through many sacrifices and movements they made. This chapter deal with how the First World War changed the status of women in the period between (1914-1918) in terms of work, politics, sports and defended their position in several aspects.

## **2.2 British Women at Work in the First World War :**

As a result of the war, the british workforce suffered from a shortage of men who had to report for duty, British women took up this problem by replacing the men in the tasks they previously performed to maintain the workforce. This oppurtunity brought women to places they had never seen before, the war brought women from different classes such as the middle class, who had not worked in many handicrafts before (castelow). Dr Deborah Thom, a teacher at Robinson College Cambridge, said that Women's wartime contribution has been an object of fascinated attention since the first year of the war. Historians have argued about how far women did men's work, new work and how much benefit did they got from these opportunities.

British women took many positions in various businesses during the First World War. After 1915 many women entered the munitions industry, the Marshalls factory which became a munitions works started employing women on the factory floor by the order of the owner Geoffrey Marshall. As more men left to fight, the factory could not run without its female workforce (How life for women changed). Many women suffered from the health risks of their work in munitions factories because of the chemicals they used, which is TNT, an

explosive substance that turns the color of the skin yellow for those who come into contact with it a lot. So the workers whose color turned yellow were called canaries. Some of the women workers died because of this Toxic substance due to their long-term handling (World War I : 1914-1918).

Therefore, it can be seen that the British woman risked her life for the sake of her country and to help her community, and proved she was as strong as her male counterpart. She left a great positive impact with her initiatives and effectiveness during the First World War in British society, she was able to do what a man did to the fullest. Gladys Sangster, now aged in her late 90s, was born while her mother was working at National Filling Factory Number 9 near Banbury Oxford, Said that she was called a canary baby as a resemblance to the yellow skin she had while being with her mother in the factory during the time of the war (Potts and Rimmer). So the ammunition that Britain desperately needed, was made better available by the help of the female workers who were working in those ammunition factories in the place of the men who went to war, these women exposed themselves to danger to provide assistance. As stated by Deborah A.K Brobst, a student at university of Lehigh, in his dissertation "Women munitions workers in Britain during the Great War", Munitions Workers in the Great War, makes the case that women munitions workers and the production of munitions should be viewed as an integral part of the war experience, complete with its own set of risks, discomforts, and ethical dilemmas. By the end of the war, British industry (and British women) had created nearly 170 million artillery shells, 25,000 artillery pieces, 52,000 airplanes, 2800 tanks, 50,000 machine guns, 4,800,000 rifles, and 25,000 artillery pieces.



Nicholls, Horace Whalter. 'A munitions factory, World War I.' Alamy, 1917.

British women's role in the workforce during the first world war was very versatile, they occupied plenty of positions from munitions and weapons factories to police corps. In fact the war witnessed the employment of the first female police officers. Upholding discipline was one of the Women's Patrols' primary duties when they first came into existence. One of her duties too as a policeman was to maintain the discipline of the women who worked in the factories and to monitor them also in order to avoid any problem on their part in the factory. Their law enforcement patrol duties were needed in the streets and various places. The WWI also gave British women the opportunity to work in the field of transport, Women worked as bus drivers, collecting bus tickets, on the railways, cleaning buses, and others in the field of transport (12 Things You Didn't Know...).

Referring also to the greatest work of British women in the First World War is their joining the British army and serving in the armed forces, so that more than 100,000 women joined the army. According to the historian Peter Curry, "Women's role in the armed forces Following a War Office investigation, which showed that many of the jobs that men were doing on the frontline could be done by women as well, women began to be drafted into the Women's Army Auxiliary Corp (WAAC)". The entry of the British woman into the military army helped in tasks that helped the soldier man not to do, which are non-combat tasks such as bakers, kitchen tasks, telephone operators, and others (Curry).

Noting also that the British woman had worked as a nurse alongside the man in aiding the wounded soldiers. Female doctors' workloads and responsibilities during the war significantly expanded as their male colleagues enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps. As a result, hospitals were more willing to offer women a wider range of positions, although ones requiring longer hours. By 1918, women made up 40% of medical students (Bourke). They also worked in the agricultural lands to provide the yield. With the advent of the First World War, agriculture witnessed a shortage of manpower, and accordingly women intervened to replace the men, Thousands of women were recruited to serve the land creating the first ever women's land army founded in Britain during the world war (The Women's Land Army In Pictures). Therefore, it can be seen that women during the First World War were the reason for the continuation of businesses and jobs that society needs to succeed in. The British woman worked in various jobs that were available to men, as factories, fields, transport, They worked also with the Department of Agriculture, in industries, munition factories, Transport was another industry with a substantial female workforce, drivers, and other jobs mentioned

previously and not mentioned (Castellow). According to Jessica Bean in her article *Women's Work and Wages during the First World War in Britain* "the entry of female workers into jobs they appear to have been excluded from entirely before the war, as ticket collectors, engine cleaners and porters and ticket checkers".

Although women have entered into several jobs because of the war that they had never done before, equality was not achieved in the beginning with regard to wages. Despite doing essentially the same work as males, women were paid less. According to a 1917 report, equal compensation should be given for equal effort, but it was assumed that women would produce less than men because of their lesser strength and particular health issues. So after a women's organization launched a national campaign against low pay, the government passed legislation in their favor and increased the minimum salary from the previous level. Then, at Cradley Heath, the companies declined to pay the new wage rate. Around 800 women responded by going on strike, which they continued until they obtained concessions (Curry). Dr Deborah Thom, Robinson College Cambridge, who asserted that the War Cabinet Committee of Women in industry was established to appease striking transport workers who were demanding equal pay in the summer of 1918. The committee came to the conclusion that most women had not actually performed men's labor and women typically produced roughly two thirds of a man's level of output, experience was frequently conflated with gender. In general, women made less money than men. They got their cost-of-living increase later but had reduced wage rate. Even when performing the same tasks as males, women did not receive an equal wage. A Special Arbitration Tribunal for Women's issues helped some individuals attain equal pay rates.

### **2.3 The Impact of the WWI on Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain :**

The First World War was a turning point in the life of the British woman. She achieved some freedoms and rights that were out of her reach before, these rights also extend to the political field, which was not within her competence before as it was the competence of men. Attitudes toward women changed as a result of the contribution women made throughout the war. The general population and politicians both agreed that women deserved more political rights. It also removed any lingering, pervasive notion that women couldn't do jobs that were traditionally held by men, and that it's possible that women's contributions to the workforce would have eventually led to political development. It was the war that brought to light the importance of women to the nation's economy and strategy (*Why women won...*). Emmeline Pankhurst focused her efforts on assisting the government in hiring women for war employment when the First World War broke out suspending the Women's Social and

Political Union's operations. Emmeline saw that there was no point in fighting to vote in a country afflicted by war, many other women's rights organizations made the decision to halt their operations as well, and the majority of them supported the activities of the war (Suffrage in wartime).

The whole suffrage movement split apart when World War I started. Women filled the many diverse tasks that males left unfilled when they quit their employment and went to fight in the war, so women's suffrage leaders offered their members to take man's places. Therefore, (NUWSS) put an end to its political campaign and gave its complete cooperation with the government. For that, when Emmeline Pankhurst recognized there was no use in continuing the conflict, her organization, (WSPU), did the same to support the war activities and the (WSPU) gave up their violent tactics and began demonstrating their patriotism and their deservedness of the vote (Kina et al). It can be said that the war was the main contributor to the development of the events of women's suffrage. It has been claimed that the perseverance of the suffragists and suffragettes during the war put a stop to the threat of militancy and gave the suffrage movement prestige. This demonstrated that women who were active in the suffrage campaign were capable of standing up for democracy and exercising responsibility. Then, in the midst of the war, a large number of upper- and middle-class women took up jobs that would have been unsuitable in times of peace and had a taste of wage work. In light of the fact that the war had altered how males saw women's roles in society, it was also expected that women were granted the right to vote, therefore, it can be seen that the war played an important role in gaining the right to vote for women (How important was the First World War...).

By Angela K. Smith in her book "Suffrage Discourse in Britain in the First World War" 2016, The notorious WSPU was the most significant suffrage organization in 1914. The WSPU's campaign of fear and violence was long condemned by the authorities. These women believed they were engaged in a battle against the tyranny of their gender and were prepared to put in ever-increasing efforts to further their cause. Their slogan was (Deeds not Words). However, unlike many other suffrage organisations, the WSPU decided to take a patriotic stance when war broke out. The Pankhurst family thought that a woman could gain nothing by opposing the government during a moment of national crisis, but that she might gain everything by seeming to be on the same side as the government and thereby the country. So suffragette was reborn when Britain and the Union actively backed the government on issues like women's right to work in munitions factories because women's cooperation with the

British government in the war would improve their reputation and enable them to perform the same tasks as men. Also, the WSPU served as a useful vehicle for the British government. As World War I broke out in 1914 and despite hostility in previous years, Pankhurst contributed in fighting the national crisis and pledged their support. The writing that these women continued to produce during the war provided the government with valuable propaganda as well. Using the technique developed in the antebellum years to make sure their messages were up to par, they were able to continue their campaign to vote, this time on the right side of the law (Smith, 7).

Perhaps it was fear of the old ways that inspired the government to act more sympathetically towards women when drawing up the wartime reforms. Despite the fact that she herself continued to campaign with her sisters Sylvia Pankhurst argued that the large part taken by women during the war in all branches of social service had proved a tremendous argument for their enfranchisement. Yet the memory of old militancy, and the certainty of its recurrence if the claims of women were set aside, was a much stronger factor in overcoming the reluctance of those who would again have postponed the settlement (Smith, 7).

Perhaps the contribution that women made to the war effort persuaded parliamentarians to grant women the right to vote more than any protest they had done before. As a result, it can be concluded that on June 19, 1917, the House of Commons approved a women's suffrage clause. All women registered in the local government registers, or wives of men in the local government register who were over the age of thirty, were granted the right to vote. In the general election in 1918, 8.5 million women joined in voting. However, women's suffrage remained limited to women over the age of thirty who were local government electors in Britain, meaning that the first war ended with the realization of their demand, and the general election of 1918 was also the first election in which a woman could run for parliament. But unfortunately, it is not a universal legal right for all British women of all ages (Hébert).

In his book *An Illustrated History Of Britain*, author David McDowall stated that the war in 1914 changed everything. Britain would have been unable to continue the war without the women who took men's places in the factories. By 1918, 29 per cent of the total workforce in Britain was female. Women had to be given the vote. But it was not until ten years later that the voting age of women came down to twenty-one, equal with men (McDowall, 163).

The decision to provide women the right to vote in Britain during the World War One was debated by historians to a different degree. According to the author Arthur Marwick in his

book *THE DELUGE Second Edition*," While most feminist writers have preferred to stress the significance of the women's suffrage movement, they do usually recognize that women's participation in the war effort did play a part in changing the opinions of influential men who had hitherto been opposed to votes for women" (Marwick, 30). Gifford Lewis, a historian, asserts that the highly skilled and hazardous job performed by women during the war was undoubtedly the largest influence in the awarding of the vote to women.

#### **2.4 Some of Other Freedoms Women Gained in the WWI in Britain :**

The First World War in Britain was a blessing in some positive aspects, even something as simple as neglecting domestic duties and Victorian values was a positive outcome for women. The liberation of women took other forms. They started to wear lighter clothing, shorter hait and skirts, began to smoke and drink openly, and to wear cosmetics. Married women wanted smaller families, and divorce became easier (McDowall, 163).

When British women during the war entered the field of work and did all kinds of jobs that were the right of men before the war, they paved their way to the field of sports as well. One of the most famous sports in which women participated was Football. Large-scale collaboration gave women additional options for leisure and pleasure. Women in the workforce were encouraged to participate in sports since it was believed that it would improve their overall morale and health. Many firms that produce weapons have created their own women's football teams. The most well-known of these groups was Dick, Kerr's Ladies FC from Preston. Its games garnered sizable crowds from their founding in 1917 (12 Things You Didn't Know..).

#### **2.5 Conclusion :**

This chapter dealt with how the war contributed to the changing position of British women in several aspects of society in the period between 1914-1918. The Great War transformed the lives of women in Britain, turning them from housewives, mothers, and daughters into laborers outside the home to take the position of the men who had left to fight during that time. Because of this new status, which gave them opportunity to accomplish many things and assisted them in obtaining their rights, many British women felt liberated. As a result, many women experienced the independence that historians have characterized (Kina et al). British women have finally tasted some of the freedoms in fields that were not their share before. This new lifestyle women adapted helped politicians see that women are not less in terms of

what men can do, they granted many women over the age of thirty the right to vote. It can be said that the war was the main key, for women to prove their presence in the British society.

# Chapter Three: The Cultural Position of Woman during WWI in Britain

### **3.1 Introduction :**

Both sexes in the First World War had their own roles. Women played a big role in helping during the First War as nurses, ammunition workers, and housekeepers were in high demand. Women were not permitted to serve as front-line soldiers. Many of these women turned to writing, particularly poetry to describe how they felt about the war (Rand). Literature was one of the cultural arenas most affected by the first war for British women, women began to write about their opinions regarding the First War through poems. In addition, many women in Britain during the period between 1914-1918 practiced cultural activities to show their impression of the war.

The performance of female artists and writers played a major role in documenting the war and how they viewed it, in contrast to the situation they were during the Victorian era, which did not allow women to enter the world of literature or art. This chapter will deal with how the position of women in literature was in relation to poetry in particular, in addition to novels and books to express their views regarding the war. This chapter will also deal with the relationship of women with art during the war period in Britain.

### **3.2 Women's Literature During the WWI in Britain :**

During the First World War, which extended from 1914 to the end of 1918, women participated in the war to extend a helping hand. In addition, women used many methods to express their opinion about the war and to support their army through their writings. One of the most important female writers of World War I was Vera Brittain. The events of the war drastically altered the lives of the people living in all the countries that took part in it. One of the victims of the First World War's devastation was the British citizen Vera Brittain (Carrillo).

Vera Brittain's life was significantly impacted by World War I in many ways. The war gave her a sense of obligation to contribute to the effort, introduced her to new experiences she would not have had otherwise, and had an impact on her mental health. She only really cared about her immediate family; however, just before the war started, she met Roland Leighton, Victor Richardson, and Geoffrey Thurlow, three of her brother's closest friends. Vera stayed in contact with Roland, and the two quickly grew close. Vera looked forward to travelling to Oxford's adjacent schools with Edward, her younger brother, and Roland because of their new friendship. Then Vera was motivated to help with the war effort because of

World War I. Vera's dream finally came true when she won a scholarship to attend Somerville College, Oxford in 1914. She imagined she would attend Somerville College and her brother and fiancé at the nearby school, she thought this would allow her to see her esteemed brother and Roland even while away from home. Vera's life was directly impacted by World War I in that she decided to forgo her studies to become a nurse in order to fulfill her moral obligation to help with the war effort, just like her friends and her fiancé whom took part in combat. In a letter to Roland, Vera explains that she wants to be a nurse and that she won't go back to school until the war is ended. After that as Voluntary Aid Detachment (V.A.D.) nurse, Brittain had achieved success during the WWI. Vera was exposed to facets of life during the war that she would not have otherwise experienced. Vera Brittain had a luxurious existence before the outbreak of World War I, which did not adequately prepare her for the difficulties she would experience as a V.A.D. She was instructed to boil an egg on her first day as a volunteer, but she didn't do it correctly, resulting in the egg being undercooked. In her diary, Vera wrote that she felt ashamed of her "colossal ignorance of the basic home activities". Moreover, Vera realized that her status as a woman began to change because of the war, and that was when no one suggested to her that she should go with a companion to see Ronald, who had taken leave from the war, because it was impossible for the woman to meet her fiancé alone before the war. She suffered from despair, in addition to having to deal with unpleasant living situations and male nudity, as well as having more freedom. During the war, four people Vera loved dear to her heart served as soldiers and all four of them lost their lives, This is what made her sadder and more hateful of war. Her fiancé Roland also died as a result of the war, which affected her so incredibly, she wrote after his death " I felt as though I had gone down to death with Roland and been disinterred as someone else". Vera penned in her diary another entry that is a blatant manifestation of her desperation "Everything I loved and love, everything I lived for, worked for, prayed for, seems to be slipping away.... Oh, God! How unhappy I am!". Vera's sadness worsened after the deaths of Geoffrey and Victor. Because of these factors, Vera only wanted to finish the nursing profession, which made the situation worse by seeing the injured and wounded, and despite that, she did not want to remain without a job because she could not be alone with her isolation after losing the people dearest to her heart (Carrillo).

Among the books of Vera Brittain, through which she expressed her feelings, is "VERSES OF A V.A.D", that was published during the last year of the First World War (1918). This is a book of poetry that contains many poems written by Vera Brittain in the four years from 1914-1918 regarding the war. Among those poems there is a poem called 'The German

Ward'written in September 1917. It recalls the time Vera spent caring for wounded German soldiers in France. Notably, "The German Ward" emphasizes Brittain's own compassion for the dying Germans, underscoring the fragility of human life and the futility of warfare although the Germans were the enemy side in the war against Britain. Vera Brittain adopts a sympathetic stance toward all people suffering, regardless of their ethnicity, in contrast to much of the Great War poetry that was written about the German soldiers by the British. The first stanza in the poem "The German Ward" expresses Brittain's indelible memories of her time being spent in the German Ward by expressing the idea that, even if her memory of the horrors of war were to fade, her memory of the injured would endure:

When the years of strife are over and my recollection fades

Of the wards wherein I worked the weeks away,

I shall still see, as a vision rising 'mid the War-time shades,

The ward in France where German wounded lay.

Through her profession as a V.A.D abroad , she did not care about the nationality of those whom she helped through nursing, only because she felt pity for them, also that mercy has passed on the Germans as well, so that she said in the sixth quatrain of the poem :

And I learnt that human mercy turns alike to friend or foe

When the darkest hour of all is creeping nigh,

And those who slew our dearest, when their lamps were burning low,

Found help and pity ere they came to die.

Through this poem, the opinion of the writer Vera Brittain can be seen about the war and the devastation it left even for the enemy, and the sympathy she showed for the Germans by carrying out her mission as a V.A.D (I shall always see the Vision...).

It can be said that poetry was abundantly manifested by British women because of its importance that women benefited from in expressing their opinions and ideas on the war and communicating their messages through it. So that the position of women in literature was abundantly manifested in poetry. It is obvious that the First World War gave female writers additional opportunity to have their work read. According to the author Joanna Montgomery Byles, women writers play a crucial role in documenting women's historical experience and

provide us with priceless insight into women's lives, as well as their reactions and emotions during these critical periods (Fisher). One of the British female poets who wrote about the First World War is Jessie Pope. One of her poems is "Who's for the Game?", it was published in a newspaper in 1915. As she sees war as a test of manhood, this poem elevates the concept of war and encourages males to engage in it, as she wrote in the third and fourth stanzas of her poem :

Who'll grip and tackle the job unafraid?

And who thinks he'd rather sit tight? (Rand).

In her poem "Who's for the Game?", Jessie Pope asks each young man on stanzas 7 and 8 whether they want to participate in the "show" of war or just watch from the "stands". In stanza 11 "Who would much rather come back with a crutch?", Pope makes the argument that, rather than dying, the worst thing that might happen to a soldier is to return home on crutches. However from the stanza 11, it can be seen that pope has portrayed war as not only honorable and glorious, but also harmless (Daniel's Poetry Analysis).

With the manifestation of the renaissance of literature in the nineteenth century in Britain during the First World War, the conflict witnessed the most famous writer of that period, Katherine Tynan. By the beginning of the war, she was a significant figure in Irish literary circles. Her experience in the war was that she contributed by literature to deliver her messages to the soldiers, for the duration of the conflict she wrote every day to them and their families. In addition to compiling the memories and ideas of soldiers for a publication to aid the effort, she authored four books of poems about the conflict. She kept thorough a diary the early years of the conflict and throughout, she made notes of significant talks and endeavors to preserve these moments for future generations to remember. Katherine advocated for women's suffrage, stating in a letter that if her gardener could vote, why couldn't she. She had also backed the war and saw no reason for her Irish nationalism to contradict with that (Mulhall). Poetry by Katherine Tynan exposes the lies that so many soldiers were given before participating in the military and depicts the harsh and horrific realities of war. Her poems demonstrates her understanding of the realities of war despite the fact that she had never participated in combat. Although the tone of her poem "Joining the Colors" seems upbeat, the message is unmistakably anti-war as she describes the difficulties of joining in a war for the sake of glory. In the poem's opening lines, Tynan describes young soldiers leaving for battle ;

There they go marching all in step so gay!

Smooth-cheeked and golden, food for shells and guns.

Blithely they go as to a wedding day,

The mothers' sons.

In the opening lines above, joyous men marching to war with their young figures are depicted, but they have no idea that they are nothing more than nourishment for the weapons. When Tynan compares their happy marching moves to their marching to their weddings, the cruelty of her message is only made more apparent. She refers to the lads as "their mothers' sons" in the final line of the poem, so that there is no pure relationship like a mother and her child. Several of Tynan's poem's readers were moms whose sons served in the military, so they would be concerned and afraid to read that their sons were the targets of deadly weaponry. Not with standing the hardness of the message, tynan's poem was an effort to discourage males from enlisting in the military without fully understanding the repercussions of war itself (Rand).

In addition to poetry, which was popular in the First World War in Britain, women had a place to express their opinions on any field during the war period. Novels also had an impact on British women's literature, one of the most famous female novelists of the First World War period was the English writer Rose Macaulay. Macaulay was one of the female writers in the war, which had a significant impact on her as a female author. The war deeply troubled Macaulay, as it did to many other writers. In addition to being a pacifist, Macaulay also appeared to support the government's war efforts. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which was founded during the First World War, never included Macaulay as a member. She did not join any peace movements, particularly those that were headed by men. Instead, she offered her services as a volunteer nurse for the V.A.D (Voluntary Aid Detachment) in 1915, albeit she was unable to hold the position for very long due to her extreme sensitivity to the suffering and wounds of her patients. Until the war was done, she also held a position at the War Office (Birdsong). She worked as a V.A.D at Mount Blow, a military rehabilitation center in Great Shelford. The author LeFanu said it was like she was in "a comedic film about the helplessness of the middle classes who have always had servants to do their dirty work" since she performed a basic job so poorly (Rose Macaulay...).

Macaulay wrote *Non-Combatants and Others*, one of her most famous war novels during World War I in 1916. In Macaulay's novel, Alix, a young crippled lady, refuses to take part in the war at all and instead spends her time socializing with her art school classmates and drawing. Her mother Daphne Sandomir, is among the leading figures in the peace movement, She makes an effort to persuade significant stakeholders that the war can be ended. Alix's aunt Eleanor has a busy schedule as well. Eleanor, however, participates in the war effort as a member of several committees rather than making an effort to end the battle. In contrast to Alix, who is portrayed as self-centered and neurotic due to her lack of engagement in any way in the war, Daphne and Eleanor are both shown to be healthy and purposeful. The fact that Alix is disabled in a wartime setting is really important. The divisions between soldiers and civilians, the injured, male or female combatants, and noncombatants themselves are all challenged by Macaulay using Alix's lameness (Jaillant).

*Non-Combatants and Others*, written by Rose Macaulay and released in 1916, is a powerful illustration of the changes that war had brought about. Not only is the book set in 1915, but it is also widely regarded as the first anti-war book of World War One (Unspeakable war...). The book *Non-Combatants* discusses how to fight in a war and for what one ought to fight. According to the author Selina Hastings, this book is about the effects of war on those who are unable to participate or fight. The title refers to men and women who are either physically incapable of fighting or who choose not to fight. In this novel, every man who returns from the battle has been injured, though sometimes not obviously. It contains some incredibly graphic details of physical harm and emotional anguish for a novel that was released in 1916 (Macdonald).

In this novel, the writer talked about the situations of both sexes in many areas in their daily lives during the First World War in Britain. For example, as for Macaulay's view of British women in the war period. sadly, when women approach their forties, they start to feel like time has passed, so, Macaulay hired the character Daphne, who is Rose Macaulay's spokesperson for eliminating subjectivity and empowering all women to be impartial and evaluate themselves more favorably than they deserve. Macaulay delved much more into the psychological aspect of how the characters were affected by the war. Like Alix, who plainly suffered greatly as a result of all these agonizing experiences of her friends and family, including Basil, who had lost one of his fingers, and Alix's brother, who had been shot and passed away from an infection in the trenches. The war image that arose from Macaulay's *Non-Combatants and others* sources had moral and civic lessons to impart. The tragic finality

of the effects of war taught lessons difficult to achieve under normal circumstances, despite the fact that it became a source of pain that destroyed art, divided people, and caused gaps in all areas of British society. The 1916 novel *Non-Combatants* and others is a prime example of one of the unique contributions that women made to the field of war writing (Al-Banna). The novel succeeds in addressing a broad range of topics that had an impact on individuals active in the war, as well as those who were not; the role of women, the work of the VAD nurses, the reintegration of injured ex-soldiers back into society, and the effects of shell shock. Alix could come out as a somewhat egotistical person. She has no interest in participating in the war effort; unlike her aunt and cousins, she declines to volunteer, work as a nurse, operate an ambulance, or assist refugees. Instead, she immerses herself in her artwork, and when the chance arises, she travels to London to be with a different set of cousins while continuing her art-school studies. Because they are trying their best to deny that the nation is at war, like herself, she finds her new friends to be easier to get along with, But Alex does all this because she feels helpless due to a disease in her leg that makes her ineffective in war actions, and she is referred to the novel as the Non-combatant (NON-COMBATANTS...). There are examples in the novel of Alix's hatred of war, In the second chapter of the novel, the writer tells during dinner that everyone discussed the issue of ammunition except Alix (Macaulay, 11). In another scene after dinner, they put out a map of the western front on the table and had John describe, as best as he could, where the different battalions were located at the time. Dorothy then scribbled the names of the battalions down the length of the map in very small letters. While they were doing this, Alix slipped away to smell the garden (12). In another dialogue between Basil and Alex, where Basil was talking about the war and its effects, Alix replied; "Why talk about rotten things like these? Why not talk about the weather, or the countryside, or birds and leaves, or servants, as at Violette, instead of these futile speculations on the effects of a war that should not be thought about, should not be mentioned"(Macaulay, 88).

The examples mentioned are about women who wrote in literature during the First World War and used writing to communicate their views and messages to society, also many women (particularly in the British tradition) wrote war-related literature, frequently reflecting how the battle affected the Home Front and the soldiers. This suggests that British women had a remarkable place in literature during the first war through their writings on the conflict and its effects on all who witnessed it (WWI Primary...).

### 3.3 Female Artists During the WWI in Britain :

#### 3.3.1 Women and Drawing :

Many women employed their talents to produce great works of art that touched many people's emotions during World War I. The artwork created by female artists portrays their emotions, their duties in a wartime setting, and the interaction between men and women during the war. Female artists' works convey a lot about the first war subtly, it reveals the emotions and challenges experienced during the period of conflict in Britain (Zeeshan).

Women had a great experience in drawing during the First World War in Britain, this experience was used in documenting the events of the war and the British citizens. The British government established the first official war-artists' program in 1916, mostly for propaganda reasons and to commemorate the country's wartime efforts. Numerous artists were contracted for this project, but only four women were chosen against 47 males, and of the four, three had their work rejected and one did not accept the commission, so there was essentially no "official" representation of women. The more tenacious female artists, on the other hand, found themselves close to the front lines through their employment as doctors in hospitals and ambulance units, and they started capturing what they observed. One such lady was Olive Mudie-Cooke, a talented artist who began operating ambulances for the British Red Cross in France in 1916 (Women at war...).



Mudie-Cooke, Olive. 'In an Ambulance.' Leeds Living, between 1916 and 1918.

This painting called *In an Ambulance* painted by Olive Mudie-Cooke between 1916 and 1918. This watercolor illustrates women's efforts to lessen the suffering of soldiers. This piece of art was chosen because the painter used a very complex palette to emphasize the wounded person's emaciation (Female Artists...).



Lion, Flora. 'Women's Canteen at Phoenix Works, Bradford.' Imperial War Museums, 1918.

The picture above shows a drawing of Flora Lion, which was painted in 1918. *Women's Canteen at Phoenix Works, Bradford*, is an oil painting by Flora Lion that depicts a canteen for female munitions workers. The weariness the female employees are experiencing is visible in this painting. Their glum expressions and slumped posture highlight the physical and emotional exhaustion of this crucial but hazardous line of work during the First war (Robinson).

### 3.3.2 Women Photographers of the First World WAR in Britain :

Compared to later conflicts, the First World War photography contribution of British women has received little notice. The presumption that a war photographer must be a professional photo journalist with access to the front lines of fighting is largely to blame for this neglect. When thinking about women's photography in this era, Between 1914 and 1918, there were no professional female photojournalists allowed near the front lines of battle. However, in 1917, a sizable collection of women's professional and amateur photographs from the First World War that were taken for governmental, commercial, or private purposes had amassed. Photographs by Christina Broom, Olive Edis, and Florence Farmborough are included in three collections, are especially fascinating because of the variety of perspectives they provide on the war and the way that women were using photography at the time. Following that, Broom's reporting on the war in the London region through her photographs

is equally expressive. For instance, A 1916 photo by Christina Broom of a group of female police officers conveys a strong message about these former suffragettes who gave up their violent political protest in the years prior to the war in favor of upholding the law in wartime Britain (British Women Photographers...).

### **3.4 Conclusion :**

This chapter explained how women's cultural status in British society was throughout the years of World War I, 1914–1918. This applies to her roles in poetry, books, and novels as well as her roles in painting and photography. This chapter discussed the struggles some women went through throughout the war, which had a devastating impact on their lives in many ways, as well as the significant roles they performed in defending their country. The women discussed in this chapter employed writing and arts to convey their ideas and spread their thoughts about any aspect of the war or that time in British society. The experiences of women in Britain throughout the conflict are thus depicted in this chapter from a cultural perspective.

## **General Conclusion**

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### **General Conclusion**

The First World War was a turning point in the lives of British women. They were encouraged by the World War I to abandon the Victorian ideals that persisted up until the start of the Great War. Women had little to know advantages and rights throughout the Victorian era, they were expected to keep their homes tidy for their husbands and to raise their children during this era since society viewed them as belonging to the family domain. The vast differences between men and women during this time gave men more stability, higher financial status, and greater authority over their homes and women. Married women as well as single women had to deal with obstacles and financial and sexual deprivation, bearing the inequality in their marriages and social situations. Additionally, the men had a greater level of education while the women stood out for having a lower level, however, women were unable to change this till they organized numerous protests and movements that were successful in the later years of the victorian era. Women struggled a lot for better rights equal to their male counterparts, these rights and freedoms that women demanded did not reach a good degree of improvement until the outbreak of the Great War. The first world war drastically altered the lives of millions of women in Britain. There was an unparalleled mobilization of British women on all fronts during the war. To fill the void left by the enlisted men, the majority of these women were employed into the civilian labor force. During this time, British women's life expanded to the public sphere as well as the private one.

The First World War affected the position of millions of women in Britain between 1914 and 1918. Contrary to how things were for British women prior to the start of the war, this development allowed women to work alongside males on numerous public responsibilities. Britain was able to mobilize all of its female citizens, which was one of the factors in its success, in addition to the roles women played during times of crisis, the assistance they provided, and the sacrifices they made for the benefit of their nation. It might be stated that British women have made some progress toward equality throughout the battle as a result of the shifting tasks that the war has given them. Prior to the war, domestic work was the most prevalent vocation for women. Many females worked in munitions factories in the places of men, and some women worked as nurses in the nursing service and police corps, others joined the British army and serving in the armed forces to help the soldiers in non combatants tasks such as bakers, kitchen tasks, telephone operators and others. Women in that war period worked in farms alongside men, held several positions in hospitals, in transportation as bus drivers and in many other fields. Women have succeeded in achieving sexual equality with regard to work during the great war, even though some work is often dangerous to their health. Women who experienced wage injustice organized for campaigns and rallies to improve their wages in some factories, which resulted in the success of their demands. This led to the achievement of some equality in wages as well. One of the greatest achievements that women enjoyed with the end of World War I was giving them the right to vote for women over the age of thirty, after they were still fighting for this demand, but thanks to their remarkable efforts and sacrifices during the first war, they supported women over thirty by winning the elections. Women reached a remarkable cultural position during the war period, so they became more interactive in literature and the art to communicate their messages and opinions about the war or about anything else through that time period. As a result of their

## **General Conclusion**

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interaction in these cultural fields, women helped a lot in documenting the events of the war and the events of the period between 1914-1918. Many British female's lives were significantly impacted by the Great War. It is frequently portrayed as having a wholly beneficial effect and giving them new options in the workplace, literature, politics, and in the domains where women were first observed.

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