

**ADVANCED GCE  
CRITICAL THINKING**

Unit 4: Critical Reasoning

**RESOURCE BOOKLET**

**MONDAY 21 JANUARY 2008**

**F494/RB**

Afternoon

Time: 1 hour 45 minutes



**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- You should spend about 10 minutes reading the article “Let’s reclaim the f-word” and use it to answer Section B.

This document consists of **4** printed pages.

## Let's reclaim the f-word

Roll up, roll up, for a spot of that old favourite, feminist-bashing. Anyone can have a go, it's easy. Trot out that readymade, mythological figure of the dungaree-clad, scary, hairy and humourless feminist. It's just as insulting as the slights of 'noisy virago,' and 'shrieking sisterhood,' hurled at women campaigning for women's right to vote more than 100 years ago. And yet history is on the side of those women, on the side of the 70s feminists who campaigned for equal pay, on the side of the women in the early 90s who campaigned to make rape within marriage illegal.

1

The stereotype of the mythological feminist is dangerous because it gives the impression that feminism is all about how women should dress and therefore belittles feminists' serious concerns – the pay gap, violence against women, that women's caring roles are so undervalued, that women are under-represented in positions of power. Add to this the fact that there is no single definition of feminism, and it makes it easier for people to indulge in feminist-bashing; they can choose and exaggerate the elements they want and then knock them down.

2

So why has feminism always provoked such hostility? Unlike other radical movements, feminism is calling for something many women and men find difficult: a profound change in the power relations between sexes – not only in the public sphere, but also, much more trickily, in the private sphere.

3

Feminists aim to transform not just who gets the top jobs in business, but also who gets the job of cleaning the toilet at home. Feminists want to change not just who walks the corridors of power, but who feels safe walking home at night. Feminism is not just about allowing women to lead the same lives as men; it's about changing the rules of the game, mapping out a possible future in which activities that do not directly contribute to further swelling of the coffers of UK plc, such as caring for family and others, are valued much more highly. It's about more than tinkering at the edges – and that feels threatening to a lot of people.

4

Although there are different strands of feminist thought, there is a common agenda on which we can unite. Women still need to work together on the issues which preoccupied 1970s feminists but still are not resolved. The pay gap short-changes women every day; quality childcare is out of the reach of most parents; rape conviction levels are at their lowest ever; and more than 80% of MPs are men. And we now have to contend with the hypersexualisation of our culture, a phenomenon that has developed and snowballed with hardly a murmur of dissent. Against a backdrop of images of women's bodies as sex objects, rates of self-harm amongst young women are spiralling, eating disorders are on the rise, and plastic surgery is booming.

5

We need to harness the beginning of a third wave of feminism. A unified movement must include those who feminism has failed to reach in the past, such as men, many ethnic minority women, working-class women, and young women. It is only together that we can reclaim the f-word. We must challenge the stereotypes. We must hold government and policy makers to account. We must stand up and use our electoral power to call for change.

6

We need to map out the profound changes that feminism could bring – making it clear that our arguments are so much bigger than what women wear. This vision could be centred around five key freedoms: power, rights, autonomy, respect and choice.

7

In a world of equal power, women politicians would no longer be seen as a rare breed, whose clothes attract more comment than what they say. In a world of equal rights, women could expect to be paid the same as a man for a job of equal worth. True autonomy would mean that your teenage daughter could go out without you worrying about her safety. Respect would mean that we valued – and paid – those who look after our children more than those who look after our cars. Choice would make it unremarkable to see a woman managing a Premiership football team, or a male nursery nurse.

8

This world, that feminism could deliver, is one that many ordinary men and women want to see – just imagine how powerful we could be together. To make it happen, we have to reclaim the f-word, show what we are really about and unite for change. If we do, we can put a stop to feminist bashing forever.

9

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