

## Thesis & Evidence Reading

### Directions:

1. Read the passage below and circle any words you do not know or are confused by.
2. Go back and Re-Read the passage with annotation.
  - a. Create a Thesis Statement from the reading.
    - i. The thesis statement should answer your Lesson Question.
    - ii. The thesis statement is broad enough to encompass your evidence.
  - b. Highlight/Circle the evidence that supports that thesis statement.

**Unit Question:** *How did Westward Movement affect the rights of various groups differently?*

**Lesson Question:** *How did the conditions in the west impact opportunities available to women?*

Many of the mining towns that sprouted alongside major strikes bore little resemblance to the lawless outposts imagined in Wild West fiction. Virginia City, which bordered the Comstock Lode, has an abundance of churches, schools, theaters, and family homes. While still outnumbered by men two to one in 1880, women has a significant presence, keeping house, providing lodging, teaching schools, or cooking for miners. A small percentage of the city's women worked as prostitutes. By the mid-1870's, Virginia City was an industrial hub of over twenty-five thousand people, one of the largest cities in the West; but when the silver veins were depleted, the city, like other mining boomtowns, became a ghost town.

Prostitution was far more common in camps and smaller mining towns, where the majority of men were single. Thousands of women, both American and Chinese and European immigrants, looked for economic opportunities in such communities. Some opened their own brothels and made a fortune. Others- particularly Chinese and Mongolian women who did not speak English- worked for a pittance or nothing at all. Thousands of Chinese women were sold by impoverished parents to Chinese agents and brothel keepers. In the mining boomtown of Helena, Montana, white women controlled most of the brothels and reported high levels of property ownership. Chinese sex workers, on the other hand, held no property and had little to no rights at all.

By 1873, over eight hundred thousand settlers had been granted 160-acre sections of the farming frontier under the Homestead Act of 1862. Due to Homestead Act's provision that single, divorced, or widowed women would apply, anywhere from 5 percent to 22 percent of the West's homesteaders were women. Never before had such a high percentage of the nation's women owned land. The experience of working one's own farm, although tough, often proved exhilarating. Idealized stories of the fiercely independent female homesteader became a literary genre and a common feature of popular magazines. The women homesteader, who was prepared to put in the hard work, wrote Wyoming's Eleanor Pruitt Stuart, "will have independence, plenty to eat all the time, and a home of her own in the end."

Excerpted from *Becoming America*, McGraw Hill (2014).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Women in the West**  
**Thesis/Evidence Processing Chart**

**Unit Question:** *How did Westward Movement affect the rights of various groups differently?*

**Lesson Question:** *How did the conditions in the west impact opportunities available to women?*

		<i>Was this a positive or negative opportunity? To whom? Why?</i>
<b>Thesis</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>		
<b>Evidence</b>		

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Women in the West TEACHER KEY**  
**Thesis/Evidence Processing Chart**

**Unit Question:** *How did Westward Movement affect the rights of various groups differently?*

**Lesson Question:** *How did the conditions in the west impact the opportunities for women?*

		<i>Was this a positive or negative opportunity? To whom? Why?</i>
<b>Thesis</b>	The conditions in the west impacted the opportunities for White women positively and immigrant women, especially Chinese, negatively.	
<b>Evidence</b>	Significant Presence: Keeping house, providing lodging, teaching school, cooking for miners.	
<b>Evidence</b>	Prostitutes more common in smaller mining towns- a serious economic opportunity for women	
<b>Evidence</b>	White women controlled most brothels, made lots of money, and reported high levels of property ownership.	
<b>Evidence</b>	Chinese and Mongolian immigrants held no property and no rights.	
<b>Evidence</b>	Homestead Act allowed women Single, divorced and widowed to apply for 160 acres	

<b>White Women</b>	<b>Immigrant Women</b>