

CHAPTER
25

Section 4

SKILLBUILDER PRACTICE *Developing Historical Perspective*

When you view events and people from a historical perspective, you view them in the context of their times. You consider the conditions that existed and the attitudes that were commonly accepted at a certain time in history. You do not judge the past solely by the standards and values of today.

As you have read, the middle class rose in status and wealth as a result of the Industrial Revolution. The excerpt below is from a book published in 1842 counseling middle-class women on their proper role in society. Use historical perspective as you read the passage. Then answer the questions that follow. (See Skillbuilder Handbook)

Domestic life is the chief source of her influence; and the greatest debt society can owe to her is domestic comfort: for happiness is almost an element of virtue; and nothing conduces more to improve the character of men than domestic peace. A woman may make a man's home delightful, and may thus increase his motives for virtuous exertion. . . .

Perhaps one of the first secrets of her influence is adaptation to the tastes, and sympathy in the feelings, of those around her. . . . It is for woman, not for man, to make the sacrifice, especially in indifferent matters. She must, in a certain degree, be

plastic herself if she would mould others. . . .

Nothing is so likely to [win over] the affections of the other sex as a feeling that woman looks to them for support and guidance. In proportion as men are themselves superior, they are accessible to this appeal. On the contrary, they never feel interested in one who seems disposed rather to offer than to ask assistance. There is, indeed, something unfeminine in independence. It is contrary to nature, and therefore it offends.

from Elizabeth Poole Sandford, *Woman in Her Social and Domestic Character* (Boston: Otis, Broaders, 1842).

1. According to the writer, what is the primary role of a middle-class woman? _____
- _____
- _____

2. How do the writer's images of middle-class men and women reflect the attitudes and values of an expanding industrial society? _____
- _____
- _____

3. The writer advises women to be dependent and ask assistance. How might such advice be viewed in today's society? _____
- _____
- _____