

## *How did the role of Woman change in WW2?*

### The Role of Women Pre-World War II



Life for most women before the war was quite different than it is today. Typically, most women stayed at home and did not go out to work.

Some younger women did go out to work but if they married, they had to give up their job. Women were paid less than men and they were generally only employed to do 'women's jobs', such as nursing or working as a shop assistant.

Men and women's roles were very stereotypical and even from a young age, boys and girls were brought up quite differently.

Lessons in school taught girls how to cook, sew and look after the home while boys were taught woodwork and other practical skills to equip them for the workplace.

How do you think men and women felt about their roles?



With men called up for active service, there was a great need for women to undertake the jobs that the men had previously done. Suddenly, women became more than just homemakers and were given the opportunity to become patriotic heroines. They would contribute significantly to the war effort in a variety of ways.

During the war, women were employed in a wide range of jobs. Some became **munition factory workers** (making weapons); others joined the **armed forces** (army, navy and air force); many worked as **Land Girls**; some **drove buses or trains**; some **worked on the canals**; they worked as **nurses or ambulance drivers**; they **built ships and worked in other engineering industries**; they worked as **searchlight operators** and some became **air raid wardens**. The **Women's Voluntary Service** also employed women, who assisted with a wide range of duties.





At the start of the war, the government relied on women to volunteer for work.

However, by late 1941, it became necessary to introduce conscription (making working compulsory).

Initially this only applied to single women between the ages of 20 and 30, but later in the war this was extended to women between the ages of 18 and 50.

In 1943, almost 90% of single women and 80% of married women were in employment.

Life for woman changed dramatically during WW2, and in the years following. Read the BBC website (link below) to find out about the new jobs that woman took on and why.

### Watch

Watch the 3 videos and read the facts on the following website to learn about the roles of women during WW2.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zvx8jvh>



## Task

Imagine you are a woman taking up a job during WW2. Choose one of the jobs below and produce a diary entry explaining your day in a new job and how you feel about it.

ARP Centre,  
Rossendale Street, London,  
England.

11th November, 1940

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for volunteering to join Air Raid Precautions. I am pleased to confirm that you have been appointed as an ARP warden in central London. You should attend the Rossendale Street ARP Centre next week for training.

Your duties will include:

- patrolling streets after nightfall to ensure blackout;
- directing civilians to the nearest air raid shelter in the event of the siren sounding;
- extinguishing fires and clearing debris.

You will be issued with a metal hat and armband that should be worn whenever you are on duty. You will be expected to work three nights a week and in the case of any emergencies which may arise.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,  
Mr. James Falkirk  
Rossendale ARP Centre Officer

twinkl.co.uk

Queen Anne's  
Chambers,  
41 Tothill Street,  
London,  
England.

10th January, 1941

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for volunteering to join the Women's Voluntary Service. I am pleased to confirm that you will be undertaking the running of a mobile canteen in London. You should attend the London WVS Rest Centre next week for training.

Your duties will include:

- preparing food;
- promoting the health and well-being of ARP staff;
- ordering and organising stock;
- assisting as directed with the safe housing of those affected by bombing.

You will be issued with a uniform consisting of a hat and overcoat that should be worn whenever you are on duty. Your hours of work will vary and more details will be communicated when you attend for training.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,  
Mrs. Enid LK Fitton  
Centre Organiser

twinkl.co.uk

WLA Headquarters  
Balcombe Place,  
Sussex,  
England.

10th September, 1941

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for volunteering to join the Women's Land Army. I am pleased to confirm your appointment at Cherry Hill Farm, Cambridgeshire, working under Mr. William Jollaner. You should attend the farm next week for training after which you will be shown to your accommodation.

Your duties at the factory will include:

- milking the cows;
- planting and growing crops;
- driving the harvester.

You will be issued with a uniform consisting of brown dungarees, hat and overcoat. The wearing of which is at the discretion of the farmer. You will be housed in a hostel in the nearby village of Willingham with sixteen other girls. You will receive £1.85 per week from Mr. Jollaner and in return you will be expected to complete 50 hours of work in this time.

Yours sincerely,  
Mrs. Grace  
(on behalf of Lady Gertrude Denman)

twinkl.co.uk

Elstow Ordnance Factory,  
Elstow,  
Bedford,  
Bedfordshire,  
England.

8th December, 1940

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for volunteering as a munitions factory worker. I am pleased to confirm your appointment at Elstow Ordnance Factory where you should attend next week for training.

Your duties at the factory will include:

- filling shells;
- repairing machinery;
- working on the production line.

You will be issued with protective clothing on arrival that must be worn at all times. You will receive one day off per week.

I look forward to seeing you next week.

Yours sincerely,  
Mr. J. Harper  
Elstow Factory Manager

twinkl.co.uk

## Success Criteria

### **Key details to include:**

- job title and location;
- uniform and pay;
- working conditions;
- key duties;
- how you feel about your new 'man's job'.

