Mr. Gorham/Modern American History **American Women in the 1950s:**

*The Cold War/1950s*  **A Decade of Lost Power**

The following may be an excerpt from a 1950's high school Home Economics textbook:

**How to be a Good Wife**

HAVE DINNER READY: Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal--on time. This is a way to let him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned with his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home, and having a good meal ready is part of the warm welcome that is needed.

PREPARE YOURSELF: Take fifteen minutes to rest so that you will be refreshed when he arrives. He has just been with a lot of work-weary people. Be a little gay and a little more interesting. His boring day may need a lift. Greet him with a smile.

CLEAR AWAY THE CLUTTER: Make one last trip though the main part of the house just before your husband arrives, gathering up children's books and toys, papers, etc. Then run a dust cloth over the tables. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you lift too.

PREPARE THE CHILDREN: If they are small, wash their hands and faces and comb their hair. They are his little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part.

MINIMIZE ALL NOISE: At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise from the washer, dryer, or vacuum. Encourage the children to be quiet.

MAKE HIM COMFORTABLE: Have a cool or warm drink ready for him. Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or suggest that he lie down in the bedroom.

Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soothing voice. Allow him to relax and unwind.

LISTEN TO HIM: You may have a dozen things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

In 1973, Alice Courtney and Sarah Lockeretz published a large-scale study of eight general interest magazines from the 1950s, namely *Life, Newsweek*, and *Time*. After analyzing the advertisements in them, they came to several conclusions about the role and portrayal of women in the ads. Based on the **primary sources** you examine today, do you think these conclusions are accurate?

1. “A woman’s place is in the home.”

Which ad(s):

3. Women are consumers. But what are they buying?

“The important buying decisions (for items such as cars, stocks, appliances) are left entirely to the men.”

Which ads:

2. “Women do not make \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ decisions or do \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ things.”

Which ads:

5. “Men regard women primarily as sex objects.”

Which ads:

4. “Women are dependent and need men’s protection.”

Which ads: