



Flowers or Protest? The Two Faces of March 8

Read the passage and answer the questions. (CEFR B1–B2)

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- 1 For many people in Russia, March 8 feels like a second Mother's Day. Men line up at flower markets, and offices hold small parties for female staff. Yet the day was born as a political event, organized by socialist women who demanded the vote and better working conditions. Critics argue that the flowers and chocolates have turned a day of struggle into a day of polite compliments.
- 2 Even the history of the day has been rewritten. For decades, books claimed that it honored a march by New York garment workers in 1857. Historians found no evidence of that march, and the story appears to have first been printed in a French newspaper in 1955. Some researchers suggest that it gave the day an American origin, distant from its Soviet image during the Cold War.
- 3 The debate matters because the problems are far from solved. According to the UN, women worldwide hold only 64 percent of the legal rights that men have. In Japan, which ranked 118th out of 148 countries in a 2025 gender gap report, the question is especially sharp. Perhaps the best answer is to keep both faces of the day: gratitude and pressure for change.

Comprehension

1. What is the main idea of the passage?

- (A) March 8 has two faces, thanks and political struggle, and both are still important. (B) March 8 is mainly a day to buy flowers and chocolates.
- (C) The 1857 march in New York was the true origin of the day. (D) Japan has solved the problem of the gender gap.

2. According to historians, where did the story of the 1857 march first appear?

- (A) In a New York newspaper in 1857. (B) In a speech by Clara Zetkin.
- (C) In a report by the United Nations. (D) In a French newspaper in 1955.

3. According to the UN, how do women's legal rights compare with men's around the world?

- (A) Women and men have equal legal rights in most countries. (B) Women hold only 64 percent of the legal rights that men have.
- (C) Women hold 118 percent of men's legal rights. (D) Women hold 148 legal rights.

4. Why might an American origin story have been useful during the Cold War?

- (A) Because the day was first celebrated in the United States in 1857. (B) Because the United Nations asked for it.
- (C) Because it made the day seem less connected to the Soviet Union. (D) Because New York garment workers wanted a holiday.

5. In paragraph 1, the word "compliments" in "a day of polite compliments" is closest in meaning to

- (A) complaints (B) free gifts from shops
- (C) angry demands (D) nice things people say to praise someone

6. What does the writer suggest in the last sentence?

- (A) We should both thank women and keep pushing for change. (B) We should stop giving flowers on March 8.
- (C) We should move the day back to 1857. (D) We should only march and never celebrate.



Vocabulary, Paraphrase & Summary

Match the words with the definitions. Then rewrite and summarize.

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|---------------|---|
| 1. organize | a. something nice that you say to praise someone |
| 2. demand | b. facts or things that show that something is true |
| 3. critic | c. the place or point where something begins |
| 4. struggle | d. the feeling of being thankful |
| 5. compliment | e. to plan and arrange an event or activity |
| 6. evidence | f. to ask for something strongly, as if it is your right |
| 7. origin | g. a person who says what is bad or wrong about something |
| 8. gratitude | h. a long and hard effort to get something, such as rights or freedom |

Paraphrase — say it in your own words

1. “Yet the day was born as a political event, organized by socialist women who demanded the vote and better working conditions.”

Hint: Start with "But at first" and change "demanded the vote" to "wanted the right to vote".

2. “Historians found no evidence of that march, and the story appears to have first been printed in a French newspaper in 1955.”

Hint: Start with "There is no proof" and use "seems".

3. “Perhaps the best answer is to keep both faces of the day: gratitude and pressure for change.”

Hint: Start with "Maybe we should" and use "thank" and "push".

Summary

Summarize the passage in about 50 words.



Debate & Opinion Essay

Prepare for a debate. Then write your opinion (100–150 words).

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Motion: International Women's Day should be a day of protest, not a day of flowers.

FOR 賛成

- The day was born as a political event for the vote and better working conditions, so protest is its true purpose.
- Women still hold only 64 percent of men's legal rights, so the day should push for change, not just compliments.
- Flowers and chocolates can make people feel the problem is solved when it is not, especially in Japan, which ranked 118th.

Add your own reason:

AGAINST 反対

- Saying thank you to women in our lives is also important, and flowers help many people notice the day.
- A friendly day with flowers can reach people who would never join a march, and it can start a conversation.
- The writer suggests keeping both faces, so we do not have to choose only one.

Add your own reason:

Opinion	<i>I believe / I think that ...</i>
Reason 1	<i>First, ... For example, ...</i>
Reason 2	<i>Second, ... In fact, ...</i>
Counter	<i>Some people say ... However, ...</i>
Conclusion	<i>In conclusion, ...</i>