MYTHES ET HEROS
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Introduction

Mythes = croyances populaires sur lesquelles se basent souvent idéaux & valeurs d’une société.
Ces histoires = souvent incarnées par un héro (admiré pour son courage et sa dévotion.)

Plusieurs thèmes peuvent illustrer cette notion.

Héro de guerre : films sur la guerre du Vietnam (ex : Rambo) = tournant dans la représentation du soldat (soldat héroïque, soldat déchu)

Rêve américain : comment l’identité américaine s’est bâtie selon l’"American Dream" (avec ses célèbres figures telles que Rockefeller.) Ce rêve = mythe ou réalité ?

Droits des femmes : comment la situation de la femme anglaise a évolué au XXe siècle.
Ce qui est intéressant ici = dans le fait que les héros étudiés dans ce thème = ceux qui ont combattu le mythe, celui de l’infériorité féminine.

Ces icônes ont ainsi bouleversé de nombreux fondements sociaux.

→ femme < l’homme = régissait la société anglaise
→ début XXe siècle : Suffragettes mettent tout en œuvre pour dé-construire ce mythe
→ vivre dans monde plus égalitaire.
In the 19th century, it was commonly agreed that women were inferior to men and thus unable to take important decisions.

By the end of the century, in the United Kingdom, a movement was funded in reaction to this popular belief: the Suffragettes were women who wanted to fight for their rights: their goal was that women would be given a better education and would be granted the right to vote.

They started to take peaceful actions but it didn’t work, no one listened to them.

That’s the reason why, in 1903, a suffragette, Emmeline Pankhurst, and her two daughters decided to go one step further, even if it implied bypassing the law.

Their motto was “deeds, not words!” They broke shop windows, wrote on the walls, chained themselves in front of the Parliament... A lot of women were assaulted and arrested. Some went on hunger strikes but they were force fed.

The first martyr of this movement was Emily Davidson. She ran in front of the King’s horse on Derby Day in June 1913.

This shocking event marked a turning point in the struggle so far as mentalities started to evolve, added to the fact that during the First World War, women had to do men’s jobs. In 1918, women over 30 were granted the right to vote. Ten years later (in 1928), women over 21 could vote.

The Suffragettes’ movement sets a good example of how iconic figures, i.e. heroes, such as Emily Davidson were willing to sacrifice their lives to prove their demands were not foolish. It also shows how deeply-rooted some myths or beliefs are, which makes them even more difficult to debunk.
An extract from the film Made in Dagenham (2010) draws our attention to the fact that women were still officially discriminated against in Great Britain in the second half of the 20th century. This extract takes place in a Ford car factory in London and stages underpaid women who demand equal pay to men. To be heard, they have decided to go on strike. Their spokeswoman, Rita, tries to convince the Secretary of State for Employment, Mrs Castle, to guarantee an Equal Pay Act. Mrs Castle negotiates and suggests 75% of the man’s wages under the condition that the women go back to work. The fact that women were less paid than men for an equivalent job relied on the idea that when it was done by a woman, a task was less valuable. Once more, it took much determination to make mentalities evolve and to obtain official and legal recognition.

Discrimination against women was also significant at home in so far as women could not have a bank account on their own and in the case of divorce, they lost everything. Still, in 1968, several laws were passed, such as the Equal Pay Act or the Matrimonial Property Act, and entailed a deep change in the way women were viewed in the British society. These various laws aimed at reducing inequalities between men and women both in the public/professional and in the private sphere.

To conclude, we saw, through the examples of the Suffragettes and of industry workers, that women suffered from preconceived ideas and thanks to their will, some of them gradually made mentalities evolve to be given the chance to live in a more egalitarian society. These women may be considered as heroes even though they were often despised at their times.
• Suffragettes → mouvement du début du XXe siècle, ayant lutté notamment pour obtenir le droit de vote des femmes

- To be granted the right to vote
- Se voir accorder le droit de vote

- Equality
- Égalité

- To be on an equal footing
- Être sur un pied d'égalité

- To be discriminated against / to be prejudiced against
- Être victime de discrimination / avoir des préjugés

- To struggle / to fight (for or against)
- Se battre (pour ou contre)

- To stand one’s ground
- Camper sur ses positions

- To defend a cause
- Défendre une cause

- To march / to demonstrate
- Manifester

- To debunk a myth
- Casser un mythe