

Study Questions for *We Should all Be Feminists*, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

1. The essay begins with a very negative stereotyping of feminists.

Feminists are:

- As bad to be as it is to be a terrorist
- Unhappy
- Un-African
- Man hating
- Don't wear make-up or high heels

There is a pervasive view that there is always some truth in stereotypes; that stereotypes have to come from observations at least in part. What do you think? Is that true? Do you think there is some truth in the above stereotype?

2. It could be argued that Adichie is fighting to end negative stereotypes as applied to women who want to be treated equally. There is a stereotype about fighting and females. It is viewed as “unfeminine” to fight. Do you think this stereotype has caused feminists to be marginalized?

3. Adichie feels that, “If we do or see (or hear) something over and over, it becomes normal.”

Let's assume this observation of Adichie's is correct. Let's also assume that this is part of how stereotypes come about, not just in terms of feminism, but in terms of all negative stereotypes. How can we change stereotypes?

4. Men are stronger than women. Do you agree with Adiche that this led to the stereotype that men are more fit to rule? Do you think there were other factors, or was that the primary one?
5. “The person more qualified to lead in *not* the physically stronger person. It is the more intelligent, the more knowledgeable, the more creative, more innovative. And there are no hormones for those attributes.”

Can you think of any traits that should be added to this list? Do you think strength should be on the list, even if it is not the sole criteria? (As an aside, do you know what hormone she is referencing?)

6. “Gender as it functions today is a grave injustice.” What does Adichie mean by this statement? Do you agree or disagree with her?
7. Adichie thinks American women do not want to seem aggressive, that they are more invested in being “liked.” Do you think it is more difficult to be “liked” if you insist on equal treatment?

8. Adichie also thinks this does a disservice to men. She thinks we stifle the humanity of boys by teaching them to be afraid of fear, weakness, and vulnerability. In other words we teach men to mask their true selves. She thinks this weakens a man's ego. There are some who agree with her. There are others who blame men because women are not treated equally. This is an interesting point to consider and discuss. If men are in power, isn't it their fault if women are not treated equally? And yet, aren't men conditioned to believe this is the way it should be, because it is what they have experienced their entire life?
9. Adichie poses several questions toward the end of the essay. Let's discuss answers to them. The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are. Imagine how much happier we would be, how much freer to be our true individual selves, if we didn't have the weight of gender expectations. What if, in raising children, we focus on ability instead of gender? What if we focus on interest instead of gender?
10. Here is Adiche's definition of what it means to be a feminist, "My own definition is a feminist is a man or a woman who says, yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better. All of us, women and men, must do better."

How would you define what it means to be a feminist?

Before Adiche published the essay she talked about this in a Ted Talk. Here is the link to that talk, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_we_should_all_be_feminists.