

Women, Music, Culture: An Introduction 3/e

Sample Essay for Chapter 1

Often, the musical work of women is not widely known due to the omission of narratives from written historical materials. Discuss this phenomenon by referencing at least two of the guided listening experiences from the chapter.

STOP and write your essay before scrolling down.

Often, the musical **work of women** is not widely known due to the **omission of narratives** from **written historical materials**. Discuss this phenomenon by referencing at least two of the **guided listening experiences** from the chapter.

In Western culture, the **written word** is used to chronicle events and beliefs that are considered of most importance to historians of the time. Narratives are handed down from generation to generation, establishing a set of beliefs that often are considered completely factual. The work of women in music, although significant, was not considered “worthy” by many historians, and thus **narratives** about women in music were left untold. This led to widespread notions that women were lesser participants in music creation and performance.

This phenomenon holds true across many musical genres, from Western European art music to jazz. The work of Florence B Price serves as a good **example**. As an African-American woman, Price faced discrimination as a composer of European art music. It is clear that Price had ample experience and talent; she studied composition at an American university, and was as a winner of composition prizes. Still, she found it difficult to get her work performed and widely distributed. She fiercely fought to

promote her music, writing letters to people who served as gatekeepers into the art music world, including the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Along with facing perceptions about women as composers, Price additionally was subject to stereotypes that suggested that Black musicians were natural experts in blues, jazz, and gospel, but did not belong in the European art music scene. Even today, her work is underperformed.

In the jazz world, too, many narratives about women in music have been left untold. In their day, the International Sweethearts of Rhythm ensemble performed extensively in America and even in Europe, yet their story was absent from widely distributed jazz materials. Although the work of this ensemble was chronicled extensively in the Black press, these narratives were not widely distributed beyond the Black community. Even now, there are very few available recordings of the group... (continue with details, summarize the essay.)

Note: Other examples would work well for this essay. You may have addressed the suppression of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel's work, or the challenges faced by Pauline Oliveros as a composer of experimental/instrumental music.