## Part 1: Identifying and Describing

1. Write the topic of comparison at the top of the chart, and then add the cases you’re comparing and their associated time periods.
2. Respond to the questions in the Part 1 chart for each case you’re comparing. Use the resources provided for this comparison.
3. After responding to the questions for each case, identify and describe the similarities and differences between these cases.

## Part 2: Analyzing

1. If you were going to write two essays about the similarities and/or differences you’ve identified for this topic, what are two thesis statements you might use? Write one thesis statement about similarities and one about differences in spaces provided.
2. If required, use your thesis statements to craft a response to the comparison prompt for this activity.

## Topic of Comparison

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| Women in medieval western Europe and Song Dynasty China |

## Part 1: Identifying and Describing

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| Cases You’re Comparing | Medieval women | Song Dynasty women |
| Time Period | c. 1000–1350 CE | 960–1279 CE |
| Location | Western Europe | China (east Asia) |

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| **P&D**How did women of different classes contribute to theeconomic wellbeing of their families and society? | Elite women were expected to oversee the household, including family members and servants. These women also purchased goods for the household, including luxury goods that came from regions far away. Women of the middle and lower classes usually worked, often in the business owned or operated by their husbandsor fathers. These women were farmers, managers of apprentices, and servants, along with many other jobs. Womenof these classes were also expected to take care of their households (cleaning, cooking, taking care of children). Upper- and middle-class “Jewish women often took on much of the work of running businesses … And … became financially literate and made lots of business decisions. ”(4) | **Similarities** | Elite women ran the household including family members and servants. Some elite women were also responsible for the education of their daughters. Women of the middle and lower classes usually worked outside of the home, often in the business owned or operated by their husbands or fathers. These women worked alongside men on farms and as merchants, midwives, nuns, innkeepers, silk workers, and servants, along with many other jobs. Women of these classes were also expected to take care of their households (cleaning, cooking, taking care of children). |
| Elite women oversaw the household (family and servants). Women of the middle and lower classes generally worked outside the home or in the family business but were also expected to take care of the children and household. |
| **Differences** |
| Women of the merchant class in Song Dynasty China seemed to have more work opportunities than European women. Jewish women in Europe whose families owned businesses also had more responsibilities and made business decisions. |
| **Community**How were women’s status and roles in their communities defined or limited by laws? | “In medieval Europe, laws and cultural practices generally considered women to be the property of their nearest male relative. Their actual social status depended on the status of their father or their husband.” (2) European women generally could not own or inherit property. Members of the Jewish community were legally forbidden to own large farms and estates in many Christian kingdoms. Jewish women’s legal status improved after 1000 CE with the banning of polygyny and restrictions on husbands initiating divorce against the will of their wives. | **Similarities** | “Women in China were legally the property of their nearest male relative, and women’s social status was linked to their father or their husband.” (2) Song women could inherit property from their father but usually only if she had no brothers or sons. Concubines were legal for elite men, and wives were expected to treat them with respect. Foot binding was a legal custom, generally for the wealthy, and restricted a woman’s movement. |
| Women in both regions were considered to be the property of their male relatives. Before 1000 CE, Jewish and Song Dynasty women were often forced to contend with their husbands’ other wives or concubines. |
| **Differences** |
| European women generally could not own or inherit property while women in Song Dynasty could if they did not have brothers or sons. |
| **Belief systems**How did belief systems impact women’s lives in these regions? | Most women in medieval western Europe were Christian (Catholic) and their roles were based on the Bible and teachings of the Church. Similarly, Jewish women were also bound by biblical teachings (from the Torah). Women were portrayed as inferior to men, often using biblical references as evidence to support this claim. | **Similarities** | Philosophies such as Yin and Yang from the I Ching as well as Confucian beliefs stated that women were different from men and inferior to men in all types of relationships (family, marriage, ruler). Neo-Confucianism stressed respectability and social status, with many elite families binding the feet of their daughters in order to show their wealth. |
| In both regions, women were considered inferior to men. Belief systems influenced women’s status in the home and in the public sphere. Women who became nuns and lived in convents generally had more rights, access to education, and power over their lives. |
| **Differences** |
| Women in Song Dynasty China were influenced primarily by Confucian and Buddhist philosophies while women’s lives in Europe were influenced mainly by Christianity or Judaism. |

## Part 2: Analyzing

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| Thesis Statement 1: Similarities | The experiences of women in Song China and medieval Europe were similar in that these women had few legal rights and had social roles defined by religious and philosophical beliefs that considered men to be superior. |
| Thesis Statement 2: Differences | The experiences of women in Song China and medieval Europe were different in that Song women could inherit property and enter nunneries with fewer socioeconomic restrictions. |
| Response |  |

## Comparison: Feedback Form

**Directions:** Check the criteria met for each category and leave notes specifying what was done well and what can be improved. Grayed-out areas will not be evaluated as part of this activity.

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| **Similarities** | [ ]  No similarities between historical events, developments, regions, eras, or any other important area were identified. | [ ]  Similarities between historical events, developments, regions, eras, or any other important area were identified. | [ ]  Similarities between historical events, developments, regions, eras, or any other important area were described. | [ ]  A brief analysis of the reasons for the similarities was provided. | [ ]  An extended analysis of the reasons for the similarities was provided. |
| **Notes** |

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| **Differences** | [ ]  No differences between historical events, developments, regions, eras, or any other important area were identified. | [ ]  Differences between historical events, developments, regions, eras, or any other important area were identified. | [ ]  Differences between historical events, developments, regions, eras, or any other important area were described. | [ ]  A brief analysis of the reasons for the differences was provided. | [ ]  An extended analysis of the reasons for the differences was provided. |
| **Notes** |

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| **Historical Significance** | [ ]  No explanation of historical significance provided. | [ ]  Attempts but does not fully explain how the causes and/or effects are historically significant in terms of amount, depth and/or endurance.\* | [ ]  Fully explains how the causes and/or effects are historically significant in terms of amount, depth and/or endurance.\* |
| **Notes** |

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| **Historical accuracy** | [ ]  Incorrectly refers to historical content and may include misconceptions of that content.[ ]  There are many minor errors or a major error in applying historical content.[ ]  Uses many unsupported opinions. | [ ]  Avoids explicit misconceptions of the content.[ ]  May make an occasional minor error in applying historical content.[ ]  Uses some unsupported opinions. | [ ]  Avoids misconceptions.[ ]  There are no errors in applying historical content.[ ]  Avoids using unsupported opinions. |
| **Notes** |

\* **Amount**: How many people’s lives were affected by the cause/effect? **Depth**: Were people living in the time period being studied deeply affected by the cause/effect? **Endurance**: Were the changes people experienced as a result of this cause/effect long-lasting and/or recurring?