

True or False?

1. A wife was officially one of her husband's possessions.	
2. An ideal Victorian woman had to be independent and powerful.	
3. Women could vote in local elections.	
4. Women did not have to live with their husbands if they did not want to.	
5. Women could not serve on a jury.	
6. Women were paid the same as men if they worked the same job.	
7. A woman could not sue anyone. Her husband had to sue on her behalf.	
8. A woman could not divorce her husband even if she discovered that she had married a close relative without realising.	
9. If a woman divorced she could not keep her children or any of her possessions.	
10. A man had the right to imprison and rape his wife.	

Answers

1. A wife was officially one of her husband's possessions.	<b>True</b> (until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882.)
2. An ideal Victorian woman had to be independent and powerful.	<b>False</b> (Queen Victoria herself said: 'let women be what God intended, a helpmate for man, but with totally different duties and vocations'.)
3. Women could vote in local elections.	<b>True</b> (after the 1869 Municipal Franchise Act.)
4. Women did not have to live with their husbands if they did not want to.	<b>False</b> (until the law was changed in 1891.)
5. Women could not serve on a jury.	<b>True</b> (in fact until 1974 the property clauses meant that married women were significantly under-represented.)
6. Women were paid the same as men if they worked the same job.	<b>False</b> (the principle of equal pay became law in 1970 and was reinforced in the Equality Act of 2010 but this is still a hot topic today!)
7. A woman could not sue anyone. Her husband had to sue on her behalf.	<b>True</b> (until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882.)
8. A woman could not divorce her husband even if she discovered that she had married a close relative without realising.	<b>False</b> (it one of the few reasons she could.)
9. If a woman divorced she could not keep her children or any of her possessions.	<b>True</b> (after 1839 children under the age of seven could stay with the wife if deemed 'innocent' in the divorce. The age was raised to 16 in 1873.)
10. A man had the right to imprison and rape his wife.	<b>True</b> (until 1891 when his right to imprison her was denied. It was not until 1991 that he was denied the right to rape her.)

For more information about women and the law in Victorian England see <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~bp10/pvm/en3040/women.shtml>