

Directions:

1. Demonstrate evidence of close reading.
2. Highlight your confusion.
3. Answer the three questions at the bottom of the page.
4. Write a 1+ page reflection in your WN.

The Leadership Lid

One of the greatest natural resources in America is going underused. And she may be sitting right at the next desk.

Years ago someone referred to me as a show pony, trotted out to prove a point. It was at some conference, on one of those professional panels: John, Jonathan, Joe, James and me. No question, I was there to instantly, visually, send a message that women were surging, in journalism, in opinion writing and in the public discourse of the country.

None of which was true.

It's the same deal with [Sarah Palin](#). After she was chosen for the second spot on the [McCain](#) ticket, there was much talk about how she was there to connect with social conservatives. But she was there for a broader reason as well, to instantly, visually, send a message that women are a significant part of the leadership of the Republican Party and that female voices are influential in national politics.

None of which was true, either.

For many years, Americans have been living a lovely lie. Most are open to the idea of women leading, in all areas, in all professions. And because of that, most of them think all arenas are open to female leaders. With many more women entering professional fields at the bottom, there is a charmingly naive belief that we have been rising surely and steadily to the top.

But look at the graph of women in top positions in an upcoming report from [The White House Project's](#) Corporate Council, and you can instantly see that this is not true. The organization aims to advance women's leadership, and it decided to look at how we've done in recent years. The bottom line is dispiriting: there is a leadership lid, and it's set at roughly 20 percent. Much lower in the military and the Fortune 500; higher in nonprofits, where, not coincidentally, the salaries are low.

Women are half the population and, on average, only 20 percent of the nation's leaders, in business, in journalism, in politics. In many cases they have been becalmed at this level for years while other countries moved ahead. Based on the number of women in the House, we've dropped down the world's ladder of female political representation to the 69th spot, behind such luminaries as Iraq and North Korea. At big law firms, one study showed women were a measly 12 percent of the partners in 1993. Today, that number is up to a whopping 18 percent. Oh, how they must trot those few partners out

to prove the fallacy that women are well represented in leadership of the law. Hearts and minds have been won, but bodies in the boardroom have not followed.

In an article in the Harvard Business Review, two researchers, Alice Eagly and Linda Carli, described what they called a "labyrinth of leadership" that was "full of twists and turns" for women. Undoubtedly some of that has to do with the disproportionate, often sole responsibility that women—waitresses and judges, opinion columnists and housecleaners—shoulder for their home and family lives. But it's more than that. When the Pew Research Center asked about the signal traits for leadership, including integrity and intelligence, survey respondents ranked women superior to men in almost every way. Yet when the same people were asked about leadership in general, the majority said that women and men are equally qualified to lead. Men are judged by a male standard of control and strength; female leaders are judged by that standard and also by a separate stereotypically female standard that assesses everything from bringing people together to projecting approachability.

It is almost humorous watching the Republican leadership discover this two-tiered vetting in Governor Palin's case; now that the folksiness factor is a known property, voters have moved on to judging her record, her positions and her ability to articulate both intelligently and clearly. Many women voters will also judge her by another sex-specific standard, and that is whether she has cleared a path through the thicket of obstacles for other women. The governor has not distinguished herself in that way, personally or legislatively. Sadly, one of her most conspicuous contributions at the moment is to illustrate how the dearth of female leaders results in certain women being moved too far, too fast, to fill a vacuum for the convenience of men. We 20 percenters are familiar with that phenomenon, and with the fall that sometimes follows. If McCain loses, there's no question that Palin will be assigned lots of blame. If he wins, there's no question she'll be assigned little to do. She's there to make a spurious point, not policy.

What if we had an oil shortage but were using only 20 percent of the oil at our disposal? Wouldn't that seem stupid and shortsighted? "Focusing on bringing women into leadership in this critical time is not a distraction from solving our problems, it *is* solving our problems," says Marie Wilson, who runs The White House Project. The other day I heard a woman with a proven track record as a leader in the financial industry say that she would never again work on Wall Street because it was lousy with misogyny. The great banks and brokerage houses were crumbling around the ears of their male executives; the market was tumbling and Americans were peering, panicked, into their wallets and their portfolios. And I had to wonder: if women made up half the leadership of that industry, half the members of Congress, half the overseers in government agencies, might it have ended differently? If women led in proportion to their numbers, would things be better? After all, at the moment it seems they can be hardly be worse.

Source: Anna Quindlen, Newsweek

1. What is the author's purpose?
2. Who is the intended audience?
3. List three strategies the writer uses to try to achieve her purpose: