Analyzing a Case

The setting is a 10th grade US History class in a high school district that draws from both a suburb of Atlanta and the rural area between Atlanta and Athens.

Following a discussion about Eleanor Roosevelt and her roles as a first lady and a social activist, the teacher asked students to respond in their journals to the following question: To what extent are women involved in politics? The teacher facilitated a brief discussion about the students’ ideas about women’s participation in politics, and then shared some statistics on gender inequality in the workplace and in American politics. The teacher then asked students to think about the experiences of Sarah Palin and Hilary Clinton in the 2008 election and how their candidacies were shaped by their gender. After a brief discussion, students were asked to write down their thoughts in their journals.

The teacher then gave the directions for a silent discussion. Quotes taken from news stories about the media attention paid to Clinton and Palin during the 2008 election were pasted on different poster boards spread around the room. Instead of talking about the quotes, students were instructed to write their responses/reactions/thoughts about the quote on the poster board.

One of the quotes from a news article read: "One commentator whined that every time Clinton opened her mouth, all any man could think of was his wife telling him to take out the garbage."

These are examples of students’ written responses to this quote:

That's wrong.
Dang, that's messed up.
Most folks don't take women seriously.
I disagree with that because that is extremely rude. Maybe its his opinion but he needs to keep it to himself.
Women do house chores.
LOL. Two thumbs up for the reporter. I didn't like her.
That's probably true because trash is all that comes out of Clinton's mouth.
Well, Hilary is not a good president. She can't even keep a man. How she going to keep a nation together? So I kind of agree.
Just a joke. Let it go.
Funny but just a joke.
I don't think the same would be said about a male politician. Gender roles?

Response: Drawing on coursework in and outside the College of Education, write a discussion of this case (in 1000-1250 words). Include the following:

(1) An analysis of what you think might be happening in this classroom exchange of ideas

(2) Reasons supporting that analysis

(3) Questions or issues the case might raise for the teacher in planning subsequent lessons