HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Abigail Adams was one of the first to recognize the need for women’s suffrage in the United States. In 1776, when her husband, John, was helping draft the Declaration of Independence, she asked him and his peers to “remember the ladies.” Despite this, women would not gain suffrage until the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

The first convention dedicated to women’s rights occurred in 1848 in Seneca Falls, NY; here, many attendees signed the “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions,” which drew inspiration from the Declaration of Independence. After this meeting, suffragettes began meeting regularly for their cause. The Civil War required that the movement cease temporarily while “war work” took priority. After the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment equated citizenship and enfranchisement with being a male while the Fifteenth Amendment enfranchised black men.

In 1878, the Woman Suffrage Amendment was first introduced to Congress. The wording of the amendment remained the same until both houses passed it in 1919. In the intermediate years, suffragettes worked to gain enfranchisement on a state-by-state basis. By 1913, only nine western states enfranchised women voters and the movement needed to be reenergized. The National American Woman Suffrage Association’s (NAWSA) Congressional Committee, headed by Alice Paul, used President Woodrow Wilson’s 1913 inauguration to draw national attention to women’s suffrage with a march on Washington, D.C.

Over the next seven years, the NAWSA, the National Women’s Party (NWP), and state and local organizations worked on all fronts to achieve suffrage. At the same time, anti-suffragist organizations worked to prevent enfranchisement. The tactics of NAWSA, starting in 1916, were two-pronged: Carrie Chapman Catt’s “Winning Plan” coordinated work at the state level with lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C. for a federal amendment. NWP’s focus was on a federal amendment. They drew heavy criticism for their militant lobbying, particularly when they picketed during wartime.

The Nineteenth Amendment passed both houses of Congress in June 1919 and was ratified by the 36th state (Tennessee) on August 26, 1920. Women nationwide voted in their first election the following fall.

Collections to examine:
- Votes for Women: Selections from the National American Woman Suffrage Association
- By Popular Demand: “Votes for Women” Suffrage Pictures, 1850-1920
- Women of Protest: Photographs from the Records of the National Woman’s Party (with Collection Connections)
- Miller NAWSA Suffrage Scrapbooks, 1897-1911 (with Collection Connections)

More useful links:
- Themed Resources from the Library’s Teachers Page: Women’s History (including lesson plans and a primary source set)
- TPS-MTSU Women’s Suffrage Links Guide
- TPS-MTSU Lesson Plans: A More Perfect Union: Women’s Suffrage and the Constitution and Civil Disobedience and the National Woman’s Party
- TPS-MTSU Newsletter: Women’s Suffrage
- TPS-MTSU Primary Source Set: Women’s Suffrage in Tennessee
- “Women’s Suffrage Movement” from the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture
SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Students can create a timeline documenting and organizing the major events in the fight for women’s suffrage in the U.S. Teachers can also split students into groups and have each group examine the primary sources in one of the themes designated in this primary source set. Students can do online or library research to investigate the context for the sources.

Teachers can also pose document-based questions, using these primary sources as documents. For instance, students can examine the split between the NWP and the NAWSA in 1916. Why did each organization’s leaders stand behind their methods? Which was most effective? Why?

For a multiple perspectives activity, students can examine the argument posed by anti-suffragists that enfranchised women would not do housework. How did both sides make this argument? What kinds of images were used? Teachers can use Venn diagrams for two or three sources.

Students can also ask questions about what is missing from women’s suffrage primary sources. Why are there not as many sources related to the struggle of African American women? How did this gap occur?

First Fifty Years

[Lucy Stone, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing right], [1840-1860]

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, seated, and Susan B. Anthony, standing, three-quarter length portrait, [1880-1902]

“Susan B. Anthony's Fine, A Woman's Indignation Meeting in Apollo Hall,” [June 21, 1873].

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TEXTS

- “First Convention Ever Called to Discuss the Civil and Political Rights of Women, Seneca Falls, New York, July 19, 20, 1848.”
- “Proceedings of the first anniversary of the American equal rights association, held at the Church of the Puritans, New York, May 9 and 10, 1867. Phonographic report by H.M. Parkhurst.” [1867]
- An Account of the Proceedings on the Trial of Susan B. Anthony, on the Charge of Illegal Voting, at the Presidential Election in Nov. 1872, [1874]
- The Progress of Colored Women, [1898]
Anti-Suffragists

“Women’s Votes. An Attack on the Programme of the Congressional Union.” [June 12, 1916]

“Mississippi Rejects Suffrage Amendment, Opposed to Negro Women Voting.” [February 7, 1920]

TEXTS

- Copy of preamble and protest ... Brooklyn Auxiliary, New York State association opposed to the extension of suffrage to women. [1894]
- The Remonstrance [January 1909]
- Are women people? A book of rhymes for suffrage times, by Alice Duer Miller [1915]
- Woman’s Suffrage by Constitutional Amendment. [1916]

“For Some Odd Reason The Wholesale Liquor Dealer’s Association Doesn’t Happen to Like the Idea of Female Suffrage.” How it Feels to be the Husband of a Suffragette, by Him. [1915]
State-by-State Efforts

Woman suffrage headquarters in Upper Euclid Avenue, Cleveland... [1912]

Margaret Whittemore campaigning in Oregon in white on platform. [1914] [detail]

“Part of the Vast Billboard Campaign of the Woman's Party. Putting up billboard in Denver--1916.” [1916].

Woman suffrage in Wyoming Territory. -- Scene at the polls in Cheyenne. [November 24, 1888]

Constitution of the American Woman Suffrage Association and the History of its Formation.... [1881]
The Times Dispatch, Richmond, VA. [newspaper] [March 2, 1913]

Distributing hand bills advertising Inaugural Suffrage Parade and inviting everyone to participate... [January 1913]

Official program - Woman suffrage procession, Washington, D.C. March 3, 1913. [1913]. To view the whole program, click here.

Suffrage march line--How thousands of women parade today at Capitol. [1913 March 4]

Suffragettes - March to Wash. D.C. [1913]

Woman suffrage parade, Wash., D.C. [1913]
Lincoln's birthday. On the banners during Congressional debate on whether we should enter the war. [February 12, 1917]

Sailors attacking pickets, 1917, while policemen look casually on. [1917] [detail]

Police arresting party demonstrators outside Senate Office Building, Oct. 1918.

Party watchfires burn outside White House, Jan. 1919.

Vida Milholland [in jail cell] [ca. July 4, 1917]

Lucy Branham in Occoquan prison dress. [1919]

“Marching seven times around the walls of Jericho” Mar. 4, 1917.

Evening Public Ledger, Philadelphia, PA, [newspaper]. [October 22, 1917]
Victory

[National Woman's Party activists watch Alice Paul sew a star onto the NWP Ratification Flag, representing another state's ratification of the 19th Amendment]. [ca. 1919-1920].

Republican [National] Convention, [Chicago, Illinois], 1920. [June 8-12, 1920]

“Mrs. Warburton Votes Her Choice,” Evening Public Ledger, [November 02, 1920]

[Image 36x47 to 576x756]

When Tennessee the 36th state ratified, Aug 18, 1920, Alice Paul, National Chairman of the Woman's Party, unfurled the ratification banner from Suffrage headquarters. [August 18, 1920]

Alice Paul, Elizabeth Kalb, mailing invitations to conference to decide if [National Woman's] party will continue [January-February? 1921]

“Even Baby Goes to the Polls,” Evening Public Ledger, [November 02, 1920]

Speaker Gillette, Jane Addams and Sarah Bard Field ... standing in Front of the Memorial Statue, which represents Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott. [February 15, 1921]

Left to right: Adelaide Johnston, sculptor, Mrs. Lawrence [Dora] Lewis, Phila., Jane Addams. At time statue was placed in capitol. [February 15, 1921]
Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations (Chicago Manual of Style) is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students.


Anthony, Susan B. An Account of the Proceedings on the Trial of Susan B. Anthony, on the Charge of Illegal Voting, at the Presidential Election in Nov. 1872, and on the Trial of Beverly W. Jones, Edwin T. Marsh and William B. Hall, the Inspectors of Election by Whom Her Vote was Received. Rochester, NY: Daily Democrat and Chronicle Book Print, 1874. From the Library of Congress: Votes for Women: Selections from the National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, 1848-1921. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/nawbib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(rbnawsa+n2152)).


“Copy of preamble and protest … Brooklyn Auxiliary, New York State association opposed to the extension of suffrage to women. [1894].” New York, 1894. From the Library of Congress: An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpec+1300130a)).


Woman suffrage headquarters in Upper Euclid Avenue, Cleveland—A. (at extreme right) is Miss Belle Sherwin, President, National League of Women Voters; B. is Judge Florence E. Allen (holding the flag); C. is Mrs. Malcolm McBride. Photograph. 1912. From the Library of Congress: Miscellaneous Items in High Demand. http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97500065/.


Buck, G. V. “Woman suffrage parade, Wash., D.C.” Photograph. 1913. From the Library of Congress: Miscellaneous Items in High Demand. [Link](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2013648100/).


