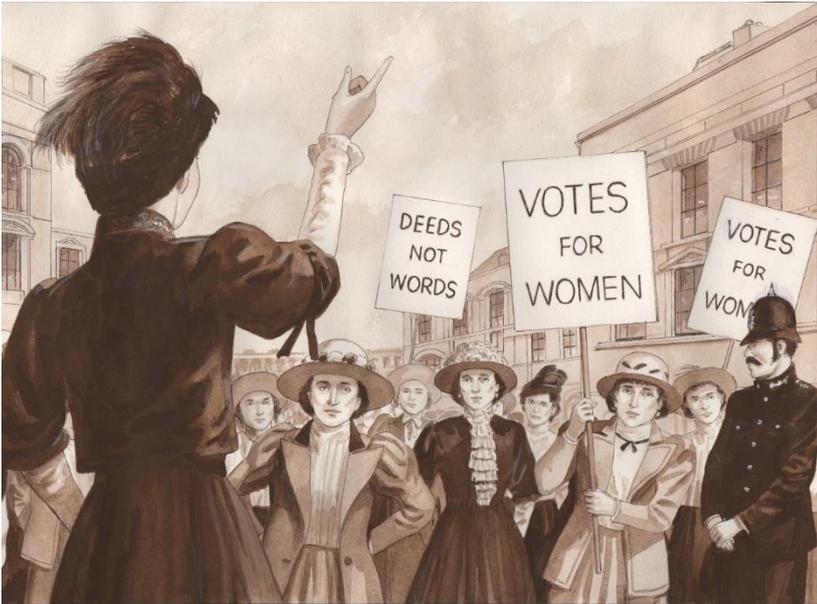


Votes for Women

Activity pack



What's in the pack?

Used alongside the Stories from Parliament videos 'Votes for Women', this pack contains ideas and activities to develop your students understanding of the suffrage movement.

Includes:

- Debating activity
- Letter writing exercise
- Research activity

How did the Suffragettes get their voices heard?

After watching the videos, initiate a debate around the methods the Suffragettes used to get their voices heard. Encourage the class to think about the types of protests and actions they undertook, and why they believed they were necessary.

Questions for 7 - 11 year olds

- What methods do you think were most effective in the Suffragette campaign?
- Do you think the Suffragettes would have had more success if they had used less extreme measures?
- What methods do you think the Suffragettes would have used if they had been active today?

Questions for 11 - 14 year olds

- Were the Suffragettes right to have paused their campaign during the First World War, what might have happened if they hadn't?
- Does having no means of fair representation justify the Suffragettes breaking the law?
- Is it justifiable to break the law as part of a political campaign?



Letter writing exercise

Ask students to write a letter from an imprisoned Suffragette to their sibling, explaining why they are willing to go to prison for their cause.

The letter should convey their personal feelings and justify their views about the wider Suffragette movement. It should include clear arguments in favour of what they are doing, and the results they hope to achieve.

Extend the task by asking students to write letters to:

- the Prison Governor explaining their decision to face jail for their cause,
- the Police Commander to plead their case, or
- the Prime Minister in order to campaign for a policy change

Make sure that the style of each letter is adapted for the intended recipient.

Democracy today

Read or replay the following section from the end of the Votes for Women Part Two:

Constance: *I hope for this at least: that anyone in future times who has the right to vote will use it and will remember the struggles of the Suffragettes. Deeds, not words! Deeds, not words!*

Ask the class if they think Constance would be pleased with the development of democracy in the United Kingdom if she were alive today? Would she see a society where there is equality between men and women?

Ask the students to research local or national election voter turnout numbers. They can then contrast the relatively low numbers with the statement Constance made.

Do they think people today take voting for granted?

Do they have suggestions for how to engage people more in the democratic process?

Fact file

Up until the middle of the 1800s, less than 10% of the population could vote in elections in the UK- and they were all men!

Emmeline Pankhurst set up the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1903; the Daily Mail newspaper coined the term 'Suffragettes'. From 1908, the WSPU adopted the colour scheme of purple, white and green: purple symbolised dignity, white meant purity, and green stood for hope.

In 1918, after a long campaign by women (and some men) from all over the county and from all backgrounds, around 8.4 million women in the UK gained the vote.

Key Dates

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- 1866** The first mass petition calling for votes for women.
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- 1912** The Suffragettes began to use militant tactics, partly in protest at Mr Asquith breaking his promise by not signing a bill to give women the vote, arguably due to fears that they would use their votes against his party!
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- 1914** Militant tactics stopped due to the First World War, however during the war women begin to take on a wider range of roles in society, convincing many people that they deserved greater equality and suffrage.
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- 1918** The government created a law enabling women over 30 to vote, this dropped to 21 in 1928, and 18 in 1969.
Constance Markievicz became the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons. She did not take her seat for political reasons.
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- 1919** Nancy Astor became the first woman to take a seat in the House of Commons.
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- 1928** Women gain the vote on equal terms as men.
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- 1979** The UK got its first female Prime Minister.

Key people

Constance Lytton

Born into a privileged family but rebelled against the conventions of her class and campaigned for better treatment of women, particularly in prison.

Jane Wharton

To make sure she was treated like other Suffragettes, she once carved a V for 'votes' into her chest whilst in prison. She was constantly active in the campaigns against the government, even after becoming very ill.

Emmeline Pankhurst

The leader of the Suffragette movement in the UK. Her campaigns used more extreme methods.

Emily Wilding Davison

Imprisoned nine times, and force fed on forty-nine occasions. She once spent the night hidden in Parliament to claim it was her address on the census. She was killed at the 1913 Epsom Derby horse race, when she stepped out in front of the King's horse, to highlight the Suffragette cause.

Herbert Asquith

Prime Minister from 1908-1916, and was an opponent of giving women the right to vote.