

Think Like a Suffragist...

Recommended Grade Levels: 4th, 5th Grade

Estimated Activity Length: 20-30 minutes

Iowa Core Social Studies Standards

4th Grade: SS.4.4., SS.4.8., SS.4.9., SS.4.10., SS.4.20., SS.4.24.

5th Grade: SS.5.1., SS.5.2., SS.5.4., SS.5.21., SS.5.22., SS.5.24., SS.5.25., SS.5.26.

Activity Overview

This activity encourages students to explore and think about the different arguments surrounding suffrage in the United States. Students will work independently to identify the arguments and talking points of specific groups within the suffrage movement. After they explore and examine each profile, students will discuss their findings.

Instructions

- 1 Use the worksheet.** Students will use the [activity worksheets](#) to learn more about each profile and answer the worksheet's questions.
- 2 Discuss.** As a large group, discuss your answers to the questions. Optionally, students can form small groups. In each small group, students will discuss the views of each profile. The groups can use the ["Questions for Further Thinking" worksheet](#) to help them compare the different profiles.
- 3 Further research.** Students can research and learn more about the women's suffrage movement using the State Historical Society of Iowa's [Primary Source Sets](#).

Think Like a Suffragist...

Profile #1: Constitutional Amendment Supporter

You are a National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) leader or participating member. The state in which you reside has already passed presidential suffrage. Your goal is to bypass state legislatures and amend the U.S. Constitution to allow all women the right to vote in every state.

Background Information

Beginning at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, the Declaration of Sentiments states that “all men and women are created equal.” Those supporting a constitutional amendment believed the federal government had to grant women the right to vote. They believed that all women in the United States should be granted equal suffrage, and it should not be based on which state they resided. Prior to the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, states would grant different levels of suffrage to female citizens.

Questions

Why should the federal government grant women the right to vote when states could grant that power?

Why would it be important to amend the U.S. Constitution ensuring women’s suffrage?

What would be the challenges in amending the U.S. Constitution?

Name _____

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Profile #2: Moral Persuasion

You are a single female or a widow that supports suffrage. Since only men are allowed to vote, you do not have a voice in politics.

Background Information

In the 1800s, many Americans believed society was separated into two spheres in which men and women interacted. The public sphere was considered outside of the home and the private sphere included things occurring within the home. Many thought that men belonged in the public sphere due to working and involvement with politics, while women should remain in the private sphere which included raising families and housework.

Ultimately, the argument made was that women can influence the men in their lives to vote the right way without themselves being "tainted" by the corruptness of voting and involving themselves with politics. However, not all people stayed within these spheres, and many women wanted the right to vote.

Questions

What are the issues of the "sphere" arguments? What limitations would this argument have for certain groups of people?

How would you convince someone believing in "spheres" that everyone has a right to vote? Think about the roles women and men have within everyday life.

What would be the issues with having to convince someone of voting in your best interest?

Name _____

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Profile #3: Anti-Suffragist

You are a leader of an Iowan anti-suffragist organization like the Iowa Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage.

Background Information

Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, anti-suffragists groups began to form across the United States. These groups believed women should not have the right to vote based on biological and moral arguments – arguing that women could better serve their country without having the vote. Even in Iowa, 35 women formed the Iowa Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage in 1898. Overall, most anti-suffrage leaders were middle- to upper-class white women and men.

Questions

Many of the anti-suffrage groups were led by wealthy, white women. Why do you think these women would support anti-suffrage?

The argument against suffrage was that women should not be involved in politics. Since many of the anti-suffrage groups were led by women, how could they promote their cause without actively working in politics?

During the time period when anti-suffrage organizations were formed, many women were obtaining jobs outside of the home. How would women entering the workforce impact the argument for anti-suffragists?

Questions for Further Thinking

Questions	Constitutional Amendment Supporter	Moral Persuasion	Anti-Suffragist
Describe each profile. What are their views on suffrage?			
What are the main differences between each of the profile's goals and arguments?			
Are any of the arguments similar? If so, how?			
Did any of these profiles have the right answer? If so, why? If not, why not?			