

# Visual Literacy Activity: Snapshots of Suffrage

**Activity Overview:** You can read a book, but did you know you can read a photo as well? Photographs are a great way to see a snapshot of the past. This visual literacy activity addresses how to look beyond the surface of an image and become detectives searching for clues to better understand a historic photo. The State Historical Society of Iowa not only cares for thousands of historic objects, but also is home to many photographs from Iowa's past.

**Recommended Grade Levels:** 4th, 5th Grade

**Estimated Activity Length:** 15-30 minutes

**Iowa Core Social Studies and Visual Literacy Standards**

*4th Grade: SS.4.9., SS.4.10., SS.4.21., SS.4.22., VA:Re.7.2.4a, VA:Re8.1.4a, VA:Cn11.1.4a*

*5th Grade: SS.5.8., SS.5.9., SS.5.23., SS.5.26., VA:Re.7.1.5a, VA:Re.7.2.5a, VA:Re8.1.5a, VA:Cn11.1.5a*

## Connection to Iowa History

Seeds of the women's suffrage movement had already taken root in the state by 1870 when the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association was founded. However, while an amendment to the state's constitution was considered by legislators in every session from that year forward, it was not until April 1919 that the Iowa General Assembly passed a bill granting women the right to vote in presidential elections. Several months later, on July 2nd, Iowa became the 10th state to ratify the federal 19th Amendment, committing to equal suffrage for women a little over a year ahead of the amendment's full ratification in August 1920. Iowans such as Carrie Lane Chapman Catt, Mary Jane Coggeshall and Amelia Bloomer became nationally-recognized figures and were joined by other activists working at the state level to achieve the goal.



## How to Understand Historic Photography ([Visual Literacy](#))

Photographs only capture a moment in time. Viewers of historical photos don't know what happened before or after a photo was taken, and it is important to recognize that viewers only see a segment of time. To more fully understand a historic time period portrayed in photos, look at newspapers or other research materials and compare historic photos from different sources for the same time period.

## State Historical Society of Iowa Digital Images

The State Historical Society of Iowa cares for thousands of historic objects, but is also home to many photographs from Iowa's past. The [State Historical Society's Flickr account](#) currently has 30 albums of historic images from Iowa's past. There also are hundreds of images available to view in the museum's [Primary Source Sets](#).

## Instructions

- 1 Begin this activity by showing "[Women's Suffrage Photograph #1](#)" without context to your young historian.
- 2 Quickly and quietly look the image over, and then use the worksheet to record first impressions in the "First Look" section for this image.
- 3 Next, take a few minutes to more closely examine the image. Continue to answer the questions while looking at the image in the "Looking Closer for Clues" section. It is helpful to have the image available while looking for clues.

*Instructions continued on the next page*

## Materials

- [Women's suffrage photograph #1](#)
- [Women's suffrage photograph #2](#)
- [Snapshots of Suffrage worksheet](#)

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## Instructions continued

- 4 In the “Final Thoughts” section of the worksheet, write what you think the image depicts. Also, list what else you would like to know about the image.
- 5 Repeat the same steps, 1-4, for [“Women’s Suffrage Photograph #2.”](#)
- 6 **More Background Information about the Women’s Suffrage Photographs**  
**Disclaimer: Use this information for reflection after completing the analysis worksheet.**
  - **Photograph #1:** This photograph shows a parade held on October 29, 1908 during a convention of the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association held at Boone, Iowa. Marchers are passing the Methodist Episcopal Church located at 703 Arden Street. One banner reads: “Taxation without representation is tyranny--as true now as in 1776.” Photographer: Almon E. Moxley, Boone, Iowa.
  - **Photograph #2:** This photograph shows attendees at what is identified as a “national convention” of women’s suffrage advocates. They are dressed for a pageant with some carrying signs identifying their state.

## Women's Suffrage Photograph #1



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 29 October 1908



# Women's Suffrage Photograph #2



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, ca. 1915

# Snapshots of Suffrage Worksheet

## First Look

Quickly write down what you see, think and wonder about these photos.

	What do you see?	What do you think?	What do you wonder?
Photo #1			
Photo #2			

## Looking Closer for Clues

Take your time examining the photos. Write down what you discover below based on the following questions.

### The Location

- Where do you think this photo was taken? What clues make you think that?

Photo #1	Photo #2

### The People

- Are the people young or old? How can you tell?

Photo #1	Photo #2

### The Clothing

- Describe their clothing. Does their clothing look like your clothing? Why or why not?

Photo #1	Photo #2

## Looking Closer for Clues

### The Time

- Based on the clothing and objects in the space, what year or era do you think this photo was taken?

Photo #1	Photo #2

## Final Thoughts

- Based on your observations of the photo, what do you think the photo is showing? Who are the people and why was the photo taken?
- What would you like to know more about the image?

Photo #1	Photo #2

