

Unit Template

Sources on Women's Suffrage

1. Cartoons for and against women's suffrage

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/timeline/progress/suffrage/cartoon.html>

First cartoon:

This political cartoon is of unknown origin, but addresses a woman's right to vote. Do you think it was designed to promote the cause of women's suffrage, or not? What messages about women does the cartoon contain? What would you infer about the cartoonist's attitudes about women's suffrage?

Second:

Photo and cartoon:

The women arguing for suffrage were taking to the streets by 1912, trying to convince other Americans that their cause had merit and support.

By the 1910s, as historians Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick argue in *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, suffragists were using new types of argument as well as new ways of making the argument. For decades, the women and men working for woman suffrage had relied upon more traditional and philosophical arguments, ones based on ideas of liberty, democracy, and fairness. By the 1910s, the emphasis had shifted to more pragmatic arguments, ones based on what women could do to help the country and its residents deal with the problems of mass society and industrial life.

Looking at the following image, what can you determine about the main points the advocates stressed? What symbols and myths do they suggest? How do these images challenge the existing beliefs about women's roles and abilities? How do they conform? Think also about which women these pictures present. Do you see women from all racial and social classes? If so, is that expected? If not, can you think of possible reasons all groups are not represented?

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Woman Devotes Her Time to Gossip and Clothes Because She Has Nothing Else to Talk About. Give Her Broader Interests and She Will Cease to Be Vain and Frivolous.



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A SUFFRAGE STREET MEETING.



3-19: Laura Foster, "The Steam Roller."

2. Women arguing against suffrage:

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A common argument among those opposed to suffrage was that men and women are fundamentally different and that society suffers when either sex tries to perform the duties of the other. Most arguments for suffrage did not contradict the belief in essential sex-based differences; in fact, many suffragists based their case on their belief that society needed the unique interests and abilities of women. Antisuffragists, in contrast, often depicted suffragists as women wanting to be men and questioned the manliness of the men who supported suffrage.

Note the posture and expression of the man in the cartoon. The dog says, "Humph! He's zero in masculinity." Meanwhile the woman, empowered by the right to vote for the trustees of the state university, tells the man what to do.

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INCIDENT OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE.
WHILE IN THE BOOTH SHE REMEMBERED SHE HAD LEFT A CAKE IN THE OVEN.

Besides arguing that most women did not want to vote and that women were fundamentally different than men and should not involve themselves in “men’s work,” antisuffragists focused their efforts on describing what a world with women voting would look like. Appealing to a conservative, usually white and Christian audience, many antisuffragists highlighted the alleged connections between suffragists and other groups that “threatened” the world as the antis and their audience knew it.

These descriptions included, of course, descriptions of how family life and relationships would change once women got involved in electoral politics.

But the antisuffragists also saw wider, and perhaps even greater, threats to the Christian and capitalist world they cherished.

3. Read the article below from the *New York Times*, April 29, 1917 about Carrie Chapman Catt’s leadership at <http://womhist.binghamton.edu/lobby/doc1.htm>

Suffragists’ Machine - Perfected in All States- Under Mrs. Catt’s Rule
Votes for Women Campaign Is Now Run with All the Method of Experienced Men Politicians

When the suffragists, at a mass meeting in Washington recently, offered to the Government the services of 2,000,000 women, the total number of members of their national organization, in case of war, Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, their President said:

“We offer services which we can guarantee to perform, because the National American Woman Suffrage Association has the most efficient country organization of any association of women in the United States.”

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Women have been supposed to lack the mental qualities required to make good organizers. Whether this is true or not, they have, within the last decade, formed many organizations throughout the country, composed of women brought together by all manner of interests. Mrs. Catt claims that, of these, the National American Woman Suffrage Association stands at the head.

The great political body which the National American Woman Suffrage Association has become has a thorough organization in the State, the Congressional, city, Assembly district, and election district organizations, each working in co-operation with the others, seeking to obtain further co-operation all along the lines from politicians and public officials. Suffrage workers appeal to the President, to Congress, to the Governors, to the different States, Legislatures, Assembly district leaders, and election district captains, and, in addition to all this, other members of the suffrage organization make their appeals, by house-to-house canvass.

...

The beginning of the organization of the suffragists along the lines of political parties was in 1909. It was the idea of Mrs. Catt, who is recognized as a woman of great breadth of vision and of exceptional executive ability. Mrs. Catt is the President for the second time of the National Suffrage Association. She is also the founder and President of the International American Woman Suffrage Alliance, which is organized in twenty-six countries. Mrs. Catt was about to make a round the world tour to extend this international work when feeling that it was essential to have a thorough working organization among suffragists of this country, she suggested adopting the system which had been found successful by male politicians. She felt that, if politicians and voters were to be influenced, they must be addressed by women of their respective districts.