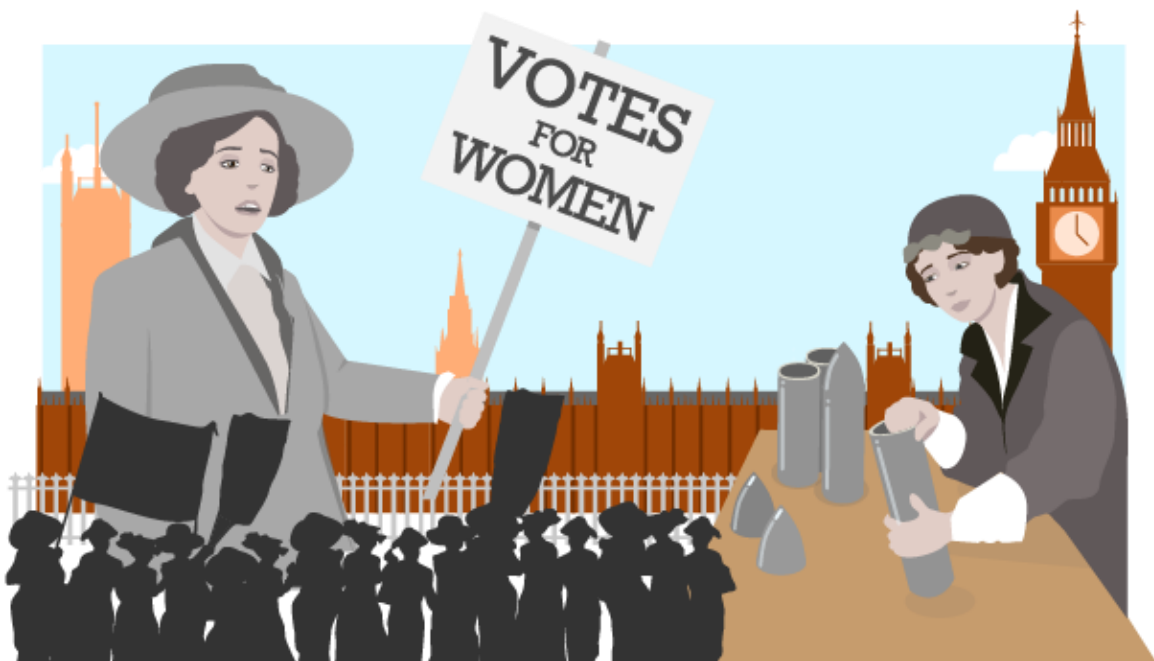


March 2020

# Year 9/10 Independent Learning Booklet

## The Campaign for Women's Suffrage



Name:

History Teacher:

March 2020

**Task: work through the tasks in this booklet to learn about how women gained the right to vote in 1918. This booklet will cover the tactics of women, the response of the government and them eventually gaining the vote.**

### **Life for women at the start of the 19th century**

Women and men were not equal in the 19th century. Women were seen as 'the weaker sex'. This particularly affected middle-class women because they had no reason to leave the home or go to work. The middle classes took the role of women very seriously because they did not have to worry about things like poverty. The ideal woman was to be 'the angel in the house' and support her husband.

### **Rights for married women**

At the beginning of the century, women had very few rights of their own, particularly once they were married. Upon marriage, women became the property of their husband. A remnant of this can still be seen today with married women taking their husband's surname. It was never the other way round. Whilst divorce was very unfashionable in general, it was possible for men to divorce their wives for a variety of reasons, like them failing to look after their needs properly or committing **adultery (having an affair)**. It wasn't until half way through the century (1857) that women could divorce an abusive husband.

### **Working women**

There was a view that women should not work. However, in industries such as textiles whole branches of an industry were reliant upon the labour of women. Even after 1842, women were still involved in coal mining, but only above ground. In agriculture and domestic service women were an essential part of the workforce. A few middle-class women worked before they got married. However, once married, whatever they had earned became the property of their husband, just like them.

Politics and government were matters for men. Women supposedly did not have the brain capacity to understand such things and so they were entirely excluded from the process. Women could not vote, no matter who they were and there were certainly no women in Parliament.

**Task: Complete the table below to show how life was different for men and women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:**

Life for men in 19 <sup>th</sup> century	Life for women in 19 <sup>th</sup> century

**Task: Explain why women didn't have the right to vote in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?**

### **Suffragettes: The early year 1903-1906**

In 1897, several local women's suffrage groups (suffrage means the right to vote) came together to form the National Union of Women's suffrage societies (NUWSS). These suffragists, led by Millicent Fawcett, believed in peaceful protest and was prepared to work with politicians (men, of course) to achieve their goals. They wrote letters to newspapers and MPs, produced leaflets, got signatures on petitions and held peaceful demonstrations to persuade MPs to support them.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite their best efforts, women were still unable to vote in parliamentary elections. Many suffragists became increasingly impatient with these unsuccessful peaceful methods of protest. In 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel and Sylvia set up the Women's social and political union (WSPU). Its motto 'deeds not words'. Its members soon became known as the 'suffragettes' – a nickname given to them by the Daily Mail – to avoid any confusion with the older and more peaceful NUWSS.

One of the most important aspects of the WSPU leadership was to organise events that got them publicity for their cause. Their actions – whether it was disrupting political meetings, chaining themselves to railings or destroying property – put their campaign on the front pages of the newspapers.

**Task: Answer the questions below**

- 1. What was the aim of the NUWSS? What sort of tactics did they use?**
- 2. How were the WSPU different to women's suffrage organisations before them?**
- 3. Why was the WSPU founded?**
- 4. What do you think the 'deeds not words' motto meant?**
- 5. What did the WSPU do to try to get attention?**

**Task: Study source B – What can you learn from this source about the WSPU and their tactics:**

*I can learn....*

*Details in the source that tell me this ....*

Source B: An extract from Emmeline Pankhurst, My own story, 1914. Here she is describing the aims of the WSPU

"To secure for women the Parliamentary vote as it is or may be granted to men. To limit our membership to women and to be satisfied with nothing but action on our question. 'Deeds not words' was to be our motto. Our members are absolutely single-minded; they concentrate all forces on one object, political equality with men. No member of the WSPU divides her attention between suffrage and other social reforms."

### Suffragettes: Developments, 1906-08

In 1908 liberal Asquith told suffrage groups to prove there was popular support for the idea.

Both the NUWSS and WSPU set out to gain popular support with publicity events and to demonstrate this support to the government:

- Thousands of leaflets were given out: the WSPU even dropped them from airships. There was also a suffragette newspaper, called Votes for Women, which suffragettes sold in the street
- Women stage publicity stunts to raise public awareness and advertise meetings
- Both the WSPU and NUWSS held large demonstrations in London, with supports coming from all over the country. In 1907 the NUWSS attracted over 3000 women to march in London. The WSPU march to Hyde park in June 1908 had over 300,000 protestors, with brass bands playing suffragette songs.

**Task: If you had supported votes for women in 1906, would you have supported the NUWSS or the WSPU? Explain why:**


**Source A:** Members of the WSPU demonstrating on a boat on the River Thames, opposite the House of Commons. Note the banner advertising their planned demonstration for June 1908.



**Source B:** The great 'Votes for Women' demonstration held in Hyde Park on 21 June 1908, organised by the suffragettes. Marchers came from all over Britain.



**Source C:** A member of the WSPU who had chained herself to railings outside the House of Commons. This tactic meant that the police found it difficult to remove them, so the women had more time to make their protests heard and seen.



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**Task: Study source A, B and C then complete the table below to explain how you think each group might have reacted to each of these tactics.**

Group	Source A	Source B	Source C
The public			
The media			
The government			

**Suffragettes: government attempts to deal with the protest**



**Describe what you can see in this poster?**

**What can it tell us about how the police and government treated suffragettes?**

**Why do you think they might be doing this?**

**This poster is made by the suffragettes – Why do you think they made this poster?**

**Do you think this poster is reliable for an enquiry into actions taken by the government against the suffragettes? Why?**

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WSPU militants started a new tactics of breaking windows and refusing to pay fines so they could be sent to prison. The government refused to treat them as political prisoners and instead, they were treated as ordinary criminals. This included not being allowed to speak and having to empty their chamber pots (where they went to the toilet during the night) each morning. The government wanted to frighten and humiliate suffragettes, so they would not use this tactic. They did not want to encourage other groups looking for reforms to try the same tactics or to recognise the suffragette tactics as political protest.



When the government refused to treat them as political prisoners, some suffragettes went on hunger strike – this meant they refused to eat. This put a lot of pressure on the government, if a woman starved herself to death in prison for a political cause it would have created a lot of publicity and made the government look bad.

It would also have made the woman into a martyr – Someone who dies for what they believe in – this would have made them a hero and meant the suffragette cause

would get even more support.

In order to prevent deaths, the government ordered the women on hunger strike to be force fed. This meant putting tubes down their throat and pouring down a watery liquid into the stomach. This was very painful, and women resisted so they often had to be held down by several nurses and prison officers. Often the women would vomit as the tube was removed, or the liquid would go into the lungs instead of the stomach causing serious health problems.

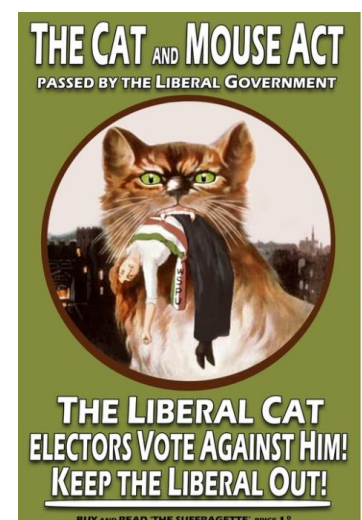
**Why did the government force feed suffragettes in prison?**

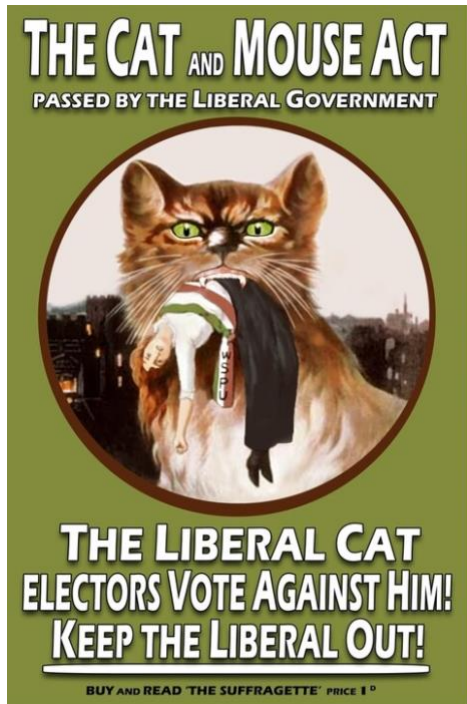
**How did they do this?**

**What were the negative impacts of force-feeding?**

In 1913, the government passed the so-called ‘cat and mouse’ act, which allowed the government to release a hunger-striker before they became seriously ill, and then re-arrest them once they had regained their strength, in order to complete their sentence. This showed the government using its power to make laws to stop the suffragettes getting more publicity.

**How do you think the Suffragettes would feel about the ‘cat and mouse’ act? Explain why:**





This poster is made by the suffragettes to ...

This poster is useful for an enquiry into methods used by the suffragettes to get support as .....

This poster is not so useful for an investigation into government actions against the suffragettes as .....

### An account of Epsom Derby on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1913

The weather on Wednesday 4 June 1913 was forecast to be sultry with thunderstorms. That morning Emily left Alice Green's home at 133 Clapham Road, Lambeth, and walked to Oval to catch a tram to Victoria station, where she bought a return ticket for Epsom Downs. pinned a purple, white and green flag inside her jacket and took her latch key, a small leather purse containing three shillings and eight pence and three farthings, eight halfpenny stamps and a notebook. Another suffragette flag was tucked up her sleeve.

Emily squeezed close to the rails. The King's horse, Anmer, made a good start. At seven furlongs the field took the left turn downhill for five furlongs and this is where Anmer fell away to the group at the back. The leading horses pounded towards the spot where Emily was waiting. Everyone was screaming the names of *their* horses for that brief moment, and jumping up and urging them on. The trailing bunch, including Anmer, approached. Emily fiddled with the sleeve of her jacket, bobbed under the white railings, and made history.

Clutching her folded scarf of purple, white and green, Davison dashed out to make her protest at the lack of progress on women's suffrage in general, and the treatment of Mrs Pankhurst in particular. By targeting Anmer, she was reminding King George V of his government's injustice to women. Emily stood with her arms above her head, and then stepped in front of the jockey, Bertie Jones and tried to grab the horse's bridle. She was knocked over screaming.

'The horse struck the woman with its chest, knocking her down among the flying hoofs ... and she was desperately injured ... Blood rushed from her mouth and nose. Anmer turned a complete somersault and fell upon his jockey who was seriously injured,' the *Daily Mirror* reported.

Oblivious to what was happening the spectators who stood to the left of Emily turned to follow the race, but those to the right of her were puzzled by what was happening in front of their eyes. There was chaos: the jockeys behind Jones cursed and struggled to pull away from the woman who had invaded the track. Anmer cantered off with a few cuts to his face and body, apparently none the worse for his fall.

On 8 June, Emily died from her injuries, surrounded by an honour guard of Suffragettes in a room hung with green, white and purple bunting.





**Women getting the vote**

In 1918, the Representation of the People Act gave the vote to all men over the age of 21 and women over the age of 30 who were householders or married to a householder. In 1928, women over the age of 21 were given the same voting rights as men.



Historians suggest the following reasons for this:

- During the war, the NUWSS continued to write to Members of Parliament (MP), asking for votes for women.
- During the war, women worked as coal miners and road-layers. They worked in munitions factories. They served in France as nurses. Many MPs said that they had shown themselves equal to men and were 'worthy' of the vote.
- Millions of working-class men – including soldiers fighting in France – still did not have the vote. The government wanted to give them the vote, but they could not give men the vote and not women.
- In 1918, many of the 'old guard' MPs who had opposed votes for women had been replaced by younger men who supported it

**Task: What role did WWI play in Women gaining the right vote? Do you think it was more less important than the actions taken by suffragettes and suffragists?**


**Consequences and significance of women getting the vote**

- The **Suffragettes'** campaign might have won women the vote. Some historians believe that the real reason that the men in Parliament gave women the vote was because they were scared that the Suffragettes would restart their campaign of violent protest. MPs just used what women had done in the war as an excuse to do so. Saying that they were rewarding women for their effort in the war made politicians look good and fair, rewarding women for their work and gave women what they wanted.



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