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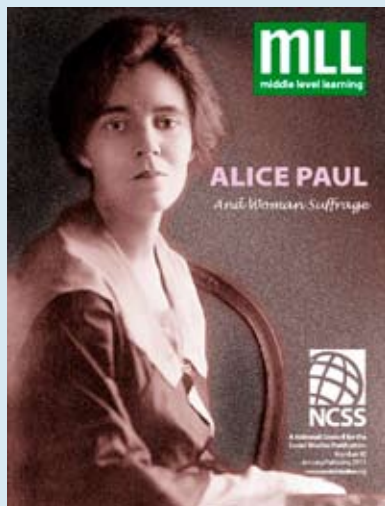
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ON THE COVER: Alice Paul, 1918.
(Harris & Ewing/Library of Congress)

Middle Level Learning

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Raise Up Your Cloth! The Woman Suffrage Movement's Second Generation

Catherine M. Carter

The story of how women won the right to vote in the United States is a tale of adversity, courage, patience, and hope. It involves many women—and a few men—who waged a nonviolent struggle against not only the government, but against the opinion, held by a majority of Americans, that women had no business in the democratic system. Among the early, key activists in the woman suffrage movement were Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia Mott. These leaders had all passed away by 1906—fourteen years before passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. That final task fell to a generation of young women who had not yet been born when the first Women's Rights Convention took place one fateful summer in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. However, this second generation rose to the challenge by building on the hard work of their elders, which included using tactics of nonviolent struggle such as persuasion, protest, and noncooperation.

A Controversial March

Both Alice Paul and Lucy Burns were hired by the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) in late 1912, and within months had organized a massive national suffrage parade. They arranged it to coincide with President Wilson's inauguration, thus drawing attention from the media, out-of-towners, and local residents of the nation's capital. More than 5,000 marchers participated, but spectators did not like what they saw. The crowd harassed the marchers by shouting insults and obscenities while pinching and spitting on the passing women. They yelled threats, tore clothing off parade participants, and attempted to climb aboard passing floats. Police officers stood idly by, smiling and laughing as the event teetered on the brink of a riot.

Too Militant?

Although the newspaper coverage exceeded everyone's expectations, the president of the NAWSA was fearful that Paul's militant tactics would antagonize Congress. Refusing to acquiesce to the organization's request to change her approach, Alice Paul broke away from the NAWSA and later founded the National Woman's Party (NWP).

Clearly not afraid to push boundaries, Paul and her suffragists unveiled their battle plan on January 10, 1917, when they began picketing the White House. This form of protest was unheard of in 1917. At first, no one knew quite how to respond. The picketers stood—while holding posters, banners, and flags—nearly every day for the remainder of the year. Eventually, as many as 2,000 women participated.

When the United States entered World War I, many citizens considered it unpatriotic for the suffragists to continue picketing a wartime president. The suffragists defended their position by questioning how President Wilson sought to “make the world safe for democracy” when the United States denied such rights to its own citizens. When Alice Paul and fellow suffragists refused to desist, law enforcement officers arrested them for blocking traffic, a crime of which no picketer was actually guilty.

Resistance in Prison

During their stay at the Occoquan Workhouse, Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, and other jailed suffragists were brutalized by guards; they were grabbed, dragged, beaten, kicked, and choked. One particularly violent night was dubbed the “Night of Terror” and led to the initiation of a hunger strike to protest the abusive treatment. Although all the women were eventually released and the corresponding charges were dropped, standing up for their rights came at a steep price.

The battle waged on. Suffragists continued to be arrested on flimsy charges, and support for a constitutional amendment in the U.S. Senate wavered. In response to public outcry about the prison abuse, President Wilson finally reversed his position on the issue and announced his support for a woman suffrage amendment. In 1919, both the House and Senate passed the 19th Amendment, and the battle for state ratification commenced.

Ratification by the States

On August 18, 1920, the vote came down to Harry Burn, the youngest member of the Tennessee State Assembly. Burn intended to vote “no,” but changed his vote to “yes” at the last minute after receiving a telegram from his mother. On August 26, Secretary of State Colby certified the ratification, and women won the right to vote after a 72-year-long struggle. 🗳️

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Teacher Background

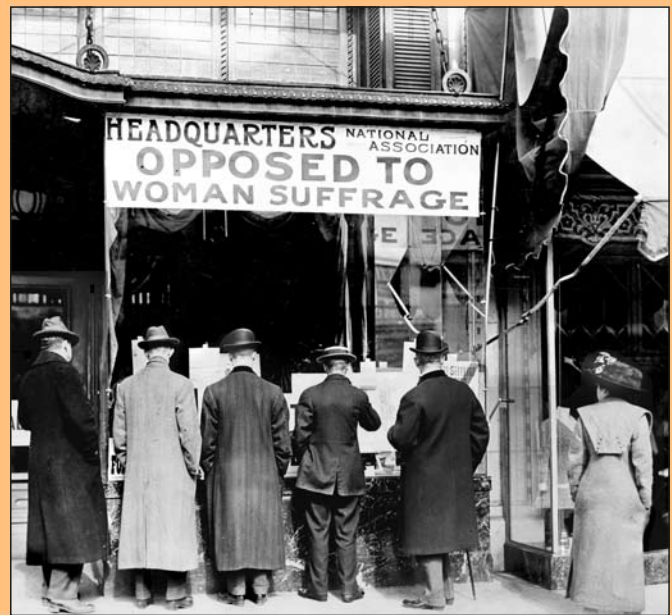
Carol, Rebecca, Kristina Myers, and Janet Lindman. “Alice Paul: Feminist, Suffragist and Political Strategist.” *Alice Paul Institute*. alicepaul.org/alicepaul.htm.

One Woman, One Vote. Produced by Ruth Pollak. 106 minutes. PBS Home Video, 1995. 1 DVD.

Sharp, Gene. *The Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1979), Albert Einstein Institution www.aeinstein.org.

Stanford History Education Group, “*The Gilded Age: Woman Suffrage Lesson Plan*,” sheg.stanford.edu.

Smithsonian Institution, “*Alice Paul and the Women’s Suffrage Movement*” historywired.si.edu/detail.cfm?ID=492



Men looking in the window of the National Anti-Suffrage Association headquarters. (CA, 1911)



Inez Boissevain, wearing white cape, seated on white horse at a suffrage parade in Washington, D. C. (March 13, 1913).



Women suffragists picketing in front of the White house. (February 1917)

Lesson Plan: Bringing a Timeline to Life

Middle Level Learning 40, p. M4
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Length of Lesson

Three 30-minute sessions

Materials

Handouts 1–3

DVD and player: *One Woman, One Vote*. Produced by Ruth Pollak. 106 minutes. PBS Home Video, 1995. (Use of this video is optional, but recommended)

Lesson Rationale

Studying the history of suffrage fosters an appreciation for right and responsibility to vote, and the power of that civic act. Moreover, it helps students develop a more complete understanding of the dedication necessary to achieve social and political change.

These activities help students develop a sense of time and change over decades. Students first learn about one person and one point on a timeline; then the teacher challenges them to explore (and reconstruct in their own words) a larger historical narrative that reaches over several generations.

Standards and Learning Expectations

⌚ TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE

“Learners will be able to evaluate the impact of the values, beliefs, and institutions of people in the past on important historical decisions and developments of their times.” (p. 98).

⚖️ POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE

“Learners will be able to examine persistent issues involving the rights of individuals and groups in relation to the general welfare.” (p. 110)

🗳️ CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

“Learners will be able to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of various forms of civic action influencing public policy decisions that address the realization of civic ideals.” (p. 122).

Source: National Council for the Social Studies. *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 2010).

Procedure

Discuss a Problem: Set the tone for the first session by leading a short discussion about how students would feel if they were denied certain rights. Such rights would include riding a bike, playing sports, speaking in public and—looking forward in their lives—going to college and choosing a profession. Further, state that among the reasons for withholding these rights are that “students’ brains are simply not large enough” and “your bodies will always be too frail.” These were indeed among the activities discouraged (and arguments offered) in the 19th century by

opponents to woman suffrage and women’s rights.

Pose the notion that other students in a neighboring school enjoy these rights because they are a “different kind of people.” Questions could include: “How would this make you feel?” “Can you explain the reasoning behind such an opinion?” “Describe the concept of fairness in terms of your lack of rights and those held by students in a neighboring school. What actions would you be willing to take to assert your rights?”


View a Film Clip: Show Chapter 15, “Patriots & Prisoners,” (approximately 14 minutes) on the DVD *One Woman, One Vote*. The video segment depicts the militant tactics of Alice Paul and other NWP protesters and their treatment in prison following their arrests for “obstructing traffic.” Then ask, “Did anyone know what women did to win the right to vote in this country before seeing this film? Had anyone ever heard of Alice Paul before today?”

Read Aloud: To begin the second lesson, ask a student to read aloud **HANDOUT A**, “Alice Paul’s Nonviolent Protests,” after which the teacher can point out (in the fifth and sixth paragraphs) references to the earlier history of the struggle for woman suffrage. Did these earlier efforts prepare the way for Paul’s protests?

Examine a Timeline: The class can then read and discuss **HANDOUT B**, “A Brief Timeline of the Woman Suffrage Movement.”¹ Emphasize the length of this battle – 72 years (even longer if we begin with Abigail Adams’s letter to her husband John in 1776). Could students imagine dedicating their lives to a goal they might never see accomplished, as did Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony?

Research and Write: Break up the class into groups of two or three students and bring their attention to **HANDOUT C**, “Event Report Form.” Assign each group to research one item on the timeline using one or two of the websites and books provided on Handout B.

Report the Findings: In the final session, each group gives a short presentation of its findings to the class. Sequence the presentations so that they fall in chronological order. Students should draw upon each section of their Event Report Forms during their presentations.

Celebrate Success: Display the completed event forms in the classroom in chronological order, or photocopy them and have each student assemble a booklet to take home. The timeline can serve as the first page of the booklet, which could be titled “The Story of the Woman Suffrage Movement—as researched and written by our class.” 

Notes

1. Teachers may wish to add other points to this brief timeline with the use of a Library of Congress resource, memory.loc.gov/ammem/naw/nawsttime.html, but be aware that this webpage includes this item: “1859—The successful vulcanization of rubber provides women with reliable condoms for the first time.”

Alice Paul's Nonviolent Protests

Courtesy of WGBH Educational Foundation, pbskids.org/wayback/civilrights/features_suffrage.html

Throughout the winter of 1917, Alice Paul and her followers in the National Woman's Party picketed the White House. They stood silently at the gates, holding signs that said "Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?" The picketers were suffragists. They wanted President Woodrow Wilson to support a Constitutional amendment giving all American women suffrage, or the right to vote.

At first, the suffragists were politely ignored. But on April 6, 1917, the United States entered World War I. The suffragists' signs became more pointed. They taunted Wilson, accusing him of being a hypocrite. How could he send American men to die in a war for democracy when he denied voting rights to women at home? The suffragists became an embarrassment to President Wilson. It was decided the picketing in front of the White House must stop.

Spectators assaulted the picketers, both verbally and physically. Police did nothing to protect the women. Soon, the police began arresting the suffragists on charges of obstructing traffic. At first, the charges were dropped. Next, the women were sentenced to jail terms of just a few days. But the suffragists kept picketing, and their prison sentences grew. Finally, in an effort to break the spirit of the picketers, the police arrested Alice Paul. She was tried and sentenced to seven months in prison.



In response to a hunger strike, prison doctors put Alice Paul in a psychiatric ward. They threatened to transfer her to an insane asylum. Still, she refused to eat. Afraid that she might die, doctors force fed her. Three times a day for three weeks, they forced a tube down her throat and poured liquids into her stomach. Despite the pain and illness the force-feeding caused, Paul refused to end the hunger strike—or her fight for the vote.

By the time Alice Paul was sent to prison, the fight for woman suffrage had been going on for almost 70 years. It had started in 1848

in Seneca Falls, New York, at a small Women's Rights Convention. These early feminists wanted the same opportunities as men. They wanted the chance to attend college, to become doctors and lawyers, and to own their own land. If they could win the right to vote, they could use their votes to open the doors of the world to women.

For the next 50 years, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony led the women's rights movement. Thanks to their efforts, the woman suffrage amendment was presented to Congress for the first time in 1878. But some congressmen refused to allow a vote on the issue. The amendment was reintroduced every year for 40 years.

By the time Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party began their suffrage campaign, the old leaders of the women's movement had died. But support for the suffrage amendment had grown. Women were already voting in 12 western states, as permitted by state law. And in 1916, Jeannette Rankin of Montana became the first woman elected to Congress. Yet Congress was no closer to passing the suffrage amendment than before.

Paul was a veteran of suffrage protests. She had served a prison term in Britain for supporting women's right to the vote. She and other younger leaders like Harriet Stanton Blatch thought one last push was needed to get the attention of the President and the Congress. They organized giant suffrage parades in New York and Washington. Thousands of suffragists in long white dresses marched. There were floats, women on horseback, and banners flying. A number of men joined in. But the parades did not change the minds of President Wilson or Congress. So the picketing began at the White House.

After five weeks in prison, Alice Paul was set free. The attempts to stop the picketers had backfired. Newspapers carried stories about the jail terms and forced feedings of the suffragists. The stories angered many Americans and created more support than ever for the suffrage amendment.

Finally, on January 9, 1918, President Wilson announced his support for suffrage. The next day, the House of Representatives narrowly passed the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, which would give suffrage to all women citizens. On June 4, 1919, the Senate passed the Amendment by one vote. And a little more than a year later, on August 26, 1920, Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the amendment. That made it officially the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. 🗳️

A Brief Timeline of the Woman Suffrage Movement

- 1776** Abigail Adams writes to her husband, John, who is attending the Continental Congress: "Don't put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands." Abigail wanted women to have a part in the country's new government. John Adams thought his wife's opinion was humorous.
- 1844** Margaret Fuller publishes her book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, which calls for women's equality with men in family life, society, and government.
- 1848** Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organize the first women's rights convention in the United States, held in Seneca Falls, New York. Frederick Douglass argues in favor of a resolution stating that it is the duty of women to secure for themselves the right to vote. It passes.
- 1851** Former slave Sojourner Truth delivers her "Ain't I a Woman?" speech before a live audience at a women's rights convention in Akron, Ohio.
- 1872** Susan B. Anthony is arrested and brought to trial in New York for attempting to vote in the presidential election. At the same time, Sojourner Truth appears at a polling booth in Michigan demanding a ballot, but is turned away.

1878 A woman suffrage amendment is first introduced in the U.S. Congress, but does not pass.

1910 Alice Paul meets Lucy Burns in a London police station after both women are arrested.

1913 Alice Paul and Lucy Burns stage the first women's suffrage parade in Washington, D.C.

1917 Suffragists begin picketing the White House in Washington, D.C. (January)

1917 Jailed suffragists endure the "Night of Terror" in the Occoquan Workhouse. (November 14)

1920 Following ratification by the necessary 36 states, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is adopted: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."



Lucy Burns of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (CUWS) in jail. (1913)

Websites for Student Research

Alice Paul's Fight for Suffrage
pbskids.org/wayback/civilrights/features_suffrage.html
alicepaul.org/alicebiokids.htm

Biography of Susan B. Anthony
www.susanbanthonyhouse.org/her-story/biography.php#camp

The Seneca Falls Convention
www.npg.si.edu/col/seneca/senfalls1.htm
www.nps.gov/wori/index.htm

Women's Rights: History, Places, Culture
www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/index.htm

Suffrage Pictures, 1850–1920
memory.loc.gov/ammem/vfwhhtml/vfwhome.html

Books for Student Research

Adams, Katherine H., and Michael L. Keene. *Alice Paul and the American Suffrage Campaign*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

Bausum, Ann. *With Courage and Cloth: Winning the Fight for a Woman's Right to Vote*. Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2004.

Cheney, Lynne. *A is for Abigail: An Almanac of Amazing Women*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003.

Kamma, Anne. *If You Lived When Women Won Their Rights*. New York: Scholastic, 2006.

Ruth, Janice E., and Evelyn Sinclair. *Women Who Dare: Women of the Suffrage Movement*. San Francisco: Pomegranate Communications, 2006.

Event Report Form: The Woman Suffrage Movement

Name of Event _____

Date(s) of Event _____ Location of Event _____

Key Participants _____

Description of the event (What was the issue? How was the conflict resolved? What was the immediate outcome?)

Significance of the event to the larger movement for passage of the 19th Amendment

Sources of information for this report

(You may use additional paper if necessary)