

Background on Woman Suffrage Lesson Plan

Central Historical Questions:

Why did people oppose woman suffrage? Did anti-suffragists think men were superior to women?

Materials:

- Background on Woman Suffrage Powerpoint
- Copies of “Declaration of Sentiments”

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduction: Show Powerpoint slides: There are 15 slides and most are self-explanatory. Below are notes on the slides that require explanation:

Slide 1: Project this slide at start of class. Give students 5 minutes to answer questions.

- They should guess that the photo was taken in 1917 or 1918.
- Try to push them to use their imagination. How might people have responded to this sort of protest, given everything they’ve learned about WWI?

Slide 2: Point out that the story of suffrage started long before WWI.

- Point out the different vocabulary words:
suffrage=enfranchisement=franchise

Slide 3: After reading the slide, hand out Declaration of Sentiments. Have students read quietly.

Discussion questions:

- Why did the women at Seneca Falls choose to copy the Declaration of Independence?
- What were 3 things they complained about?
- Are you surprised by any of the grievances?
- Do any of the grievances seem like they’re still true today?

Slides 4-6: Read through. Discussion question:

- Do students agree with Frederick Douglass or Sojourner Truth?

Slide 7: Read through. Discussion:

- Which strategy do students think is smarter?

Slide 11: Map: Discussion question:

- Why were some of the Western states open to woman suffrage long before the Eastern states?

Encourage students to come up with their own hypotheses.
Some possible hypotheses:

- Many of these states were sparsely populated, and if women counted, they would have more representation.
- The West, in general, has been less tied to tradition.
- The Populist movement, which took hold in the 1880s and 1890s, politicized many women.
- In Utah, the Mormons supported woman suffrage so that women could vote in support of polygamy.

Citations:

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *A History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1 (Rochester, N.Y.: Fowler and Wells, 1889), pp. 70-71.

The Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls Conference, 1848 (Modified)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, two American activists in the movement to abolish slavery organized the first conference to address Women's rights and issues in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. The Declaration of the Seneca Falls Convention was signed by sixty-eight women and thirty-two men.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. . . . Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance (loyalty) to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government. . . . The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations (taking away power) on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise (right to vote).

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He becomes, in marriage, for all intents and purposes, her master--the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer punishment.

He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of religion, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has given to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies (crimes) which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of insignificant in man.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, --in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

Source: Declaration of Sentiments, written in 1848 by Elizabeth Cady Stanton.