



## **WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

“Votes for Women”

*In this workshop for Grades 3-5, students examine the story of women’s suffrage from a variety of perspectives, including those of Native American and African American women.*

### **OBJECTIVES:**

*Students will:*

1. Sing and explore the song “Votes for Women.”
2. Ask and answer the question “How did Native American women influence the suffragists?”
3. Ask and answer the question “How did the fight against slavery both advance and divide the women’s movement?”
4. Ask and answer the question “What tactics did women use to win the right to vote?”

### **STANDARDS:**

#### **Common Core:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3/4/5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.2

Determine (Grade 3)/Paraphrase (Grade 4)/Summarize (Grade 5) portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

#### **C-3 Framework:**

D2.Civ.3.3-5 (Civics): Examine the origins and purposes of rules, laws, and key U.S. constitutional provisions.

D2.His.3.3-5 (History): Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.

D2.His.4.3-5 (History): Explain why individuals and groups during the same historical period differed in their perspectives.

### **Maryland Social Studies Framework:**

#### *Essential Questions*

Grade 3: How did early groups influence how we live today?

Grade 4: What causes people to deny freedoms to others?

Grade 5: How has government evolved to expand the meaning of “We the People”?

### **SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL**

Grades 3-5.

### **ESTIMATED TIME TO COMPLETE**

One class period.

### **PREPARATION AND MATERIALS**

- Lyrics (with accompanying chords) of “Votes for Women!” (Appended below.)
- [YouTube video of “Votes for Women!”](#). (Click link or see Civic Circle YouTube channel.)

### **WARMUP/ICEBREAKER**

Go around the room and ask students to name a time they were part of a group decision about what meal to eat, movie to watch or game to play. Did the group decide by voting?

**Discussion:** How would you have felt if everybody else got to vote and you did not? Did you know that African Americans did not get the right to vote in elections until after the Civil War, in 1870, and women did not get the right to vote until 1920? Why do you think it took that long?

### **“Votes for Women!”**

**Watch and listen to or sing** the song “Votes for Women!” Share the song’s lyrics (below) via handout or in the chat. The song may be watched and listened to [on YouTube](#), or sung by a teacher acapella or with an instrument. Encourage students to sing along, especially on the “Votes for Women!” line. (If virtual, sing on mute.)

**Discussion:** What is meant by the line “Votes for women?” Does the singer want people to vote for women, or does the singer want women to vote?

*Ask:* Who had the right to vote at the time of the country’s founding in 1776? (*Wait for students to answer.*)

- In 1776, the Declaration of Independence said that “all men are created equal,” but only white men who owned land and were 21 or older could vote.

*Ask:* Why do you think that was?

- The Founders struggled over who should have the right to vote. They thought people (like them!) who owned land and paid taxes would make better decisions. Eventually they left voting to the states, which opened the way to discrimination.

*Ask:* What did the Declaration of Independence say about women?

- The Declaration of Independence made no mention of women. (It said that “all *men* are created equal.”)

- In 1776, as the Continental Congress gathered in Philadelphia to declare independence from Britain, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John Adams, a leader of the American Revolution and eventually the nation’s second president, to “remember the ladies.”

*Ask a student to read this part of Abigail Adams’s March 31, 1776 letter to her husband:*

**“I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.”**

**Discussion:** Did John Adams and his colleagues “remember the ladies?” What do you think the Constitution said about women or voting?

- The Constitution, signed in 1787 after the U.S. won independence, did not talk about voting rights and did not mention women.
- Women did not get the right to vote until fully 144 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence and 133 years after the Constitution established the nation’s new democratic government.

**Sing, speak or invite a student to read the first verse of the song “Votes for Women!”**

*The Iroquois began the trend  
Women ran the tribe instead of men  
Lucretia Mott said good for you  
We want to run things, too*

*Ask:* Who were the Iroquois?

- The Iroquois, also known as the Haudenosaunee, were a powerful Native American Confederacy, or League, that lived all across Upper New York State. The Iroquois tribes included the Onondaga, Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, and later Tuscarora Nations.
- Iroquois society was “matrilineal,” meaning the family line was traced through women, not men, as in European society.
- Iroquois women were considered “keepers of the culture” and “givers of life,” and controlled highly-valued food resources like corn, beans, and squash. For all these reasons, they were given the power to make and enforce tribal rules, choose leaders, and veto decisions about war.

*Ask:* Who was Lucretia Mott?

- Lucretia Mott was a Quaker preacher active in the anti-slavery movement. She spent an entire month with the people of the Seneca Nation, and saw firsthand that women could have power in society.
- Another leader of the women’s right to vote, or women’s suffrage, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, lived near the Iroquois in Seneca Falls, New York. She interacted with Iroquois women passing through to sell beads and baskets, and spent time with them at the home of a nearby cousin who had visitors from the Onondaga Nation.
- When Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and three other women organized the first Women’s Rights Convention in 1848, they held it in Seneca Falls, an Iroquois region. The convention approved a “Declaration of Sentiments” modeled after the Declaration of Independence that said “all men *and women* are created equal.”

**Sing, speak or invite a student to read the first verse of the song “Votes for Women!”**

*Liz Stanton and Susan B. Anthony  
Also helped fight slavery  
Frederick Douglass was a friend who spoke  
For women’s right to vote*

*Ask:* What was the movement to fight slavery called?

- Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and her longtime friend and organizing partner Susan B. Anthony, were all very active in the anti-slavery movement, known as abolitionism. All the women who organized the Seneca Falls convention were abolitionists.

*Ask:* Who was Frederick Douglass?

- One of their allies was Frederick Douglass, a former enslaved person who had escaped to freedom and became a famous abolitionist speaker and activist. At the convention, he helped convince people to pass a resolution calling for women's right to vote.

- Nevertheless, the Seneca Falls convention did not address the racism Black women faced. This happened repeatedly in the suffrage movement, and eventually led to a split between Black and white women seeking voting rights.

- An important leader of the African American wing of the movement was Ida B. Wells, a prominent Black journalist who fought both for suffrage and civil rights. Other crucial Black women leaders in the early days of the movement included Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth.

**Sing, speak or invite a student to read the first verse of the song "Votes for Women!"**

*They chained themselves to the White House gate  
Marched and demonstrated state by state  
Finally, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment passed  
And women got to vote at last*

- Women fought long and hard for the right to vote. They sent a petition with 10,000 signatures to Congress, and organized parade-style marches with thousands of people in New York City and Washington, D.C.

- They cast ballots in elections even though it was illegal, ran for public office, went to prison, held hunger strikes, held vigils, and chained themselves to the fence at the White House. They also got their message out in creative ways, like writing songs and putting on plays.

- The splits in the movement got bitter. Some white women objected when the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution gave African American men the right to vote, in 1870. They thought it was unfair that some men should get the right to vote before all women did.

- One prominent Black civil rights activist, W.E.B. Du Bois, argued that no group could truly win civil rights by denying the rights of others.

**Discussion:** What do you think? Do you agree or disagree with Du Bois? (*Wait for students to answer.*)

- When one group has power, one way they keep it is by pitting less-powerful groups against one another.

*Ask:* Why do you think people objected to women voting?

- People had old-fashioned ideas, like the notion that women should stick to traditional roles like running households and raising children. Some of those ideas persist today.

*Ask:* How did women finally win suffrage?

- Women won the right to vote the same way African American men did, with an amendment to the Constitution. An amendment is an update or a change. One way to pass a constitutional amendment is if enough states approve. One by one, starting with Wyoming and ending with Tennessee, enough states approved women's voting rights to pass the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed women the right to vote. It took effect on August 26, 1920.

*Sing, or invite a student to sing or say, the last verse of the song:*

*Now it's been 100 years  
It took arrests, abuse and tears  
The fight for justice isn't done  
But this time women won*

**Discussion:** What do you think it meant by this verse? Was everything perfect after the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, or did women have to keep fighting? (*Wait for students to answer.*)

- The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment didn't fix everything, just as the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment hadn't. First of all, votes of color, both men and women, faced discrimination. States made up obstacles, like fees called poll taxes, or elaborate tests that weren't given to other people, to block them from voting.
- Native Americans, though they had inspired the suffragists, didn't win the right to vote until 1924. Chinese Americans weren't guaranteed the right to vote until 1943.
- The worst barriers to voting weren't removed for people of color until the 1960s, when major civil rights laws were passed. Even today, states keep coming up with ways to make voting harder, like requiring people to show picture IDs, which can be expensive to obtain, or limiting the number of places you can cast your ballot.

**Discussion:** What do you think about voting rights? Should voting be made easier or harder?

### **Conclusion: "Votes for Women!"**

- Sing "Votes for Women!" again (acapella/with instruments or YouTube), and this time invite students to move, dance, and/or create hand motions and choreography if desired.
- Conclude with final popcorn/round robin. Do you agree that the fight for justice isn't done? What would you fight for, if you had the chance? Are women equal now?

### **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

*How did Iroquois/Haudenosaunee women influence the suffragists? | Do new rights for one group always have to come at the expense of the rights of another? | Does the Constitution need to be amended again, and if so how? | What rights are women and other groups still fighting for?*

## VOCABULARY

*Abolitionist, Amendment, Haudenosaunee, Matrilineal, Sentiments, Suffrage.*

## MATERIALS

### Votes for Women!

E7

Votes for women! Votes! Votes for women! (X X)

E7

Votes for women! Votes! Votes for women!

A7

G7

The women fought a revolution

E7

A

Just like the one that set the nation free

A7

G7

They won a better constitution

E7

A

That treated men and women equally

E7

The Iroquois began the trend

Am

Women ran the tribe instead of men

Dm

Lucretia Mott said good for you

E7

We want to run things, too

A7

G7

The women fought a revolution

E7

A

Just like the one that set the nation free

A7

G7

They won a better constitution

E7

A

That treated men and women equally

E7  
Liz Stanton and Susan B. Anthony  
Am  
Also helped fight slavery  
Dm  
Frederick Douglass was a friend who spoke  
E7  
For women's right to vote

A7 G7  
The women fought a revolution  
E7 A  
Just like the one that set the nation free  
A7 G7  
They won a better constitution  
E7 A  
That treated men and women equally

E7  
They chained themselves to the White House gate  
Am  
Marched and demonstrated state by state  
Dm  
Finally the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment passed  
E7  
And women got to vote at last

E7  
Votes for women! Votes! Votes for women! (X X)  
E7  
Votes for women! Votes! Votes for women!

A7 G7  
The women fought a revolution  
E7 A  
Just like the one that set the nation free  
A7 G7  
They won a better constitution  
E7 A  
That treated men and women equally

E7  
Now it's been 100 years  
Am  
It took arrests, abuse and tears  
Dm

