

The Suffrage Movement

American women worked for 72 years to win the right to vote. Beginning in 1848 with the first Women's Rights National Convention, women suffragists educated the public and pressured politicians to accept their demands. They used every tactic available to make their issue visible, from petitions and lectures to demonstrations and civil disobedience. Finally, in 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was passed—giving women the right to vote in every election—local, state, and national. Why was it so difficult to change the minds of many American men and some women?

Complete the following activities to learn more about the women's suffrage movement...



1. Read the following quotes from two presidents at the beginning of the century.

President Grover Cleveland:

“Sensible and responsible women do not want the vote. The relative positions to be assumed by man and woman in the working of our civilization were assigned long ago by a higher intelligence than ours.”

President Theodore Roosevelt:

“The President of the United States does not absent himself from the country during the term of his Presidency, it is his domain. So it will be with woman: she is the queen of her empire and that empire is the home.”

Discuss the following in your group:

- Reread each sentence in the quotes one at a time. What is the President saying about women? What does it mean that the positions of men and women “were assigned by a higher intelligence than ours”?
 - If you were a woman living in the early twentieth century, what would your response to this kind of attitude be?
 - Would you agree with these two presidents? Would you not care either way?
 - Do you think that the writers of the constitution intentionally used “all men are created equal” to specify that only men deserved the rights provided in the document? Do you think it should have said men and women?
 - What reasons do you think men had for not wanting women to vote?
 - South Carolinian women were slow to join the suffrage movement and even when Congress passed the 19th Amendment and sent it to the individual states to be ratified the South Carolina General Assembly rejected the amendment 93-21 in the House and 32-3 in the Senate. The 19th amendment was not officially passed until 1969 when Governor Robert McNair signed a bill making the amendment "law". Now think about what you know about South Carolina during this time period. How do you think the following ideas about the role of women in the South effect the suffrage movement:
 - **TRADITION:** The women of South Carolina still believed in the ideal of the "Southern Lady." This ideal encouraged women to be subservient to their husbands and to take pride in their place in the home as mother and homemaker. This ideal did not allow for women to take the time to fight for their right to vote.
 - **RELIGION:** The evangelical Protestant church did not support female members in fighting for their right to vote. Since the church was such a big part of the lives of South Carolinians (91% of church-goers in South Carolina in 1888 were either Methodist or Baptist), they were discouraged from joining the suffrage movement.
2. Choose one of the following suffragette’s to learn more about and create a biographical bookmark. Bookmarks should include a photograph from <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/suffrg:portrait> , full name, dates of birth/death, hometown/ state, and a summary of her contributions to the suffragist movement as well as any other interesting or important information.

Abigail Scott Duniway
Alice Paul
Alice Stone Blackwell
Anna Howard Shaw
Belva Lockwood
Carrie Chapman Catt

Elizabeth Cady Stanton
Frances Willard
Julia Ward Howe
Lucretia Coffin Mott
Lucy Stone
Mary A. Livermore

Mary Church Terrell
Maud Wood Park
Paulina W. Davis
Sojourner Truth
Susan B. Anthony