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Social Studies

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The Women's Movement



Genre	Comprehension Skills and Strategy	Text Features
Expository nonfiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cause and Effect• Draw Conclusions• Answer Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Captions• Diagram• Map• Glossary

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by Lara Bove





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Women's Suffrage

Voting rights among men and women have not always been equal. While many white men have always had the right to vote, women's voting rights have been restricted in terms of where they could vote and in which elections. In 1869 women could vote in Wyoming. At that time Wyoming was only a territory. It became a state in 1890 and gave women full voting rights, including voting for President of the United States. Soon other western states such as Colorado, Idaho, and Utah gave women the right to vote too.

In other states women could vote in some local elections. In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution became law. An amendment is an addition. This one gave women the right to vote in all elections.

Women and some men worked hard to make voting rights equal for everyone. Their work is known as the women's **suffrage** movement. Suffrage is the right to vote.



Women vote in Wyoming Territory

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Seneca Falls

The women's suffrage movement began in Seneca Falls, New York. The year was 1848, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, two leaders in women's rights, organized a meeting. They put a notice in the newspaper to let people know about the meeting. They called it a women's rights convention.

The Women's Rights Convention took place over two days, and three hundred people attended. Many women who came brought their husbands with them. A few women **suffragists** read speeches. Frederick Douglass, an enslaved man who had escaped to freedom, also spoke. He was a powerful speaker active in the fight to end slavery. Douglass spoke strongly in support of women's rights.

The newspapers covered the convention, but the stories were not favorable. In general, Americans at that time did not think women should be voting, and this included most women. Many American women saw their role as being mothers and wives. They did not think that they needed to vote.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton



At the end of the two days, the convention passed many resolutions, or goals, that the women wanted to achieve. One goal was that women should have the right to vote. Since laws affected women and men alike, women wanted to take part in electing the people who passed the laws. They would have to work hard to make this possible.



These people signed the Declaration of Sentiments at the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York.



Clothing

In the 1800s fashion was strict. The clothes women wore made it difficult for them to do their work, and they worked hard. Women cooked on wood and coal stoves. They collected wood, put it in the stove, and made a fire. They waited for the fire to get hot enough for them to cook. As they cooked, they added wood to keep the fire hot.

Women had to wash clothing by hand. Some women had water pumps, but others had to carry water from a well or stream to do their washing. They used a washboard and scrubbed the clothing by hand. Women also sewed clothing for their families, and many worked on family farms.

Women wore long, heavy dresses with petticoats underneath. Because women's fashion was so **cumbersome** and got in the way of their work, some women thought wearing bloomers would make their work easier. Bloomers were long, baggy pants gathered at the ankle. Bloomers were named after Amelia Bloomer, who edited a magazine called *The Lily*. In her magazine she described the new clothes, saying they were more comfortable for gardening and caring for her children.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton loved bloomers. She said that women needed more freedom with their **attire**. Bloomers gave women more freedom to move about.

Today it seems silly that people would have been upset by women wearing bloomers, but they were. In fact the activists gave up wearing bloomers by 1854 because they did not want people to focus on what they were wearing. They wanted people to listen to what they were saying. Since they were asking for the right to vote, women knew they needed voting men to give them that right.



This woman is wearing bloomers.





Slavery And The Women's Movement

In the early 1800s there were more serious problems than the clothing women wore. Slavery was still legal in half the country.

Many of the women's rights activists were also **abolitionists**. This means they believed slavery should be abolished, or stopped. A woman named Sojourner Truth had been an enslaved person. She had escaped to New York and become a leader in the fight to end slavery. Though she could not read or write, she was a powerful speaker.

In 1851 Sojourner Truth spoke at a women's rights convention in Ohio. No one wrote down her words while she spoke. Later someone wrote it down from memory. In her speech titled "Ain't I a Woman?" she said that if a man says women should be helped into carriages, lifted over ditches, and given the best of everything, why hasn't she been helped. "Ain't I a woman?" she asked.

Sojourner Truth continued to support women's rights. In 1853 she spoke in New York City. This time many **rivals** and opponents came. They sat in the meeting, making a lot of noise so no one could hear the speakers. Sojourner Truth put them in their place. She spoke to them, telling them they could not stop the women's movement, and she promised that women would get their rights.



Sojourner Truth





People Who Made It Happen

Susan B. Anthony

In 1872 Susan B. Anthony voted illegally. Three weeks later, on Thanksgiving Day, a federal marshal came to her home and arrested her. She was released after her lawyer posted bail, but at her trial she was found guilty. She was fined one hundred dollars. Anthony refused to pay the fine, and the government never tried to collect it.

Lucy Stone

Lucy Stone married Henry Blackwell in 1855. She did not take his last name, which was rarely done in the 1850s. In fact she could not sign legal documents as Lucy Stone. Stone was ahead of her time in other ways. She said she would not pay taxes on her home since she couldn't vote. She said it was taxation without representation. The state took some of her furniture as payment for the taxes.



Lucy Stone



Alice Paul

Alice Paul grew up in a Quaker home. She went to college and earned many advanced degrees. That level of education was unusual for anyone at the time. In 1906 Paul went to England where she joined the women's suffrage movement and was jailed three times for her beliefs. In 1909 she came back to the United States, became a suffragist leader, and led marches and other protests. She went to jail three more times and even staged a hunger strike in jail.

Lucretia Mott

Lucretia Mott grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, and became a teacher. Her interest in the women's rights movement first began when she learned that she would be paid half the salary that a male teacher would be paid. Mott also worked to end slavery. She and her husband helped many runaway slaves along the Underground Railroad, a network of safe places for enslaved people to stay as they escaped north to freedom.



Alice Paul



Lucretia Mott





A Movement Tested And Divided

In the 1850s Americans were afraid a war would break out. They did not want to think about women's rights. They were thinking about slavery and war.

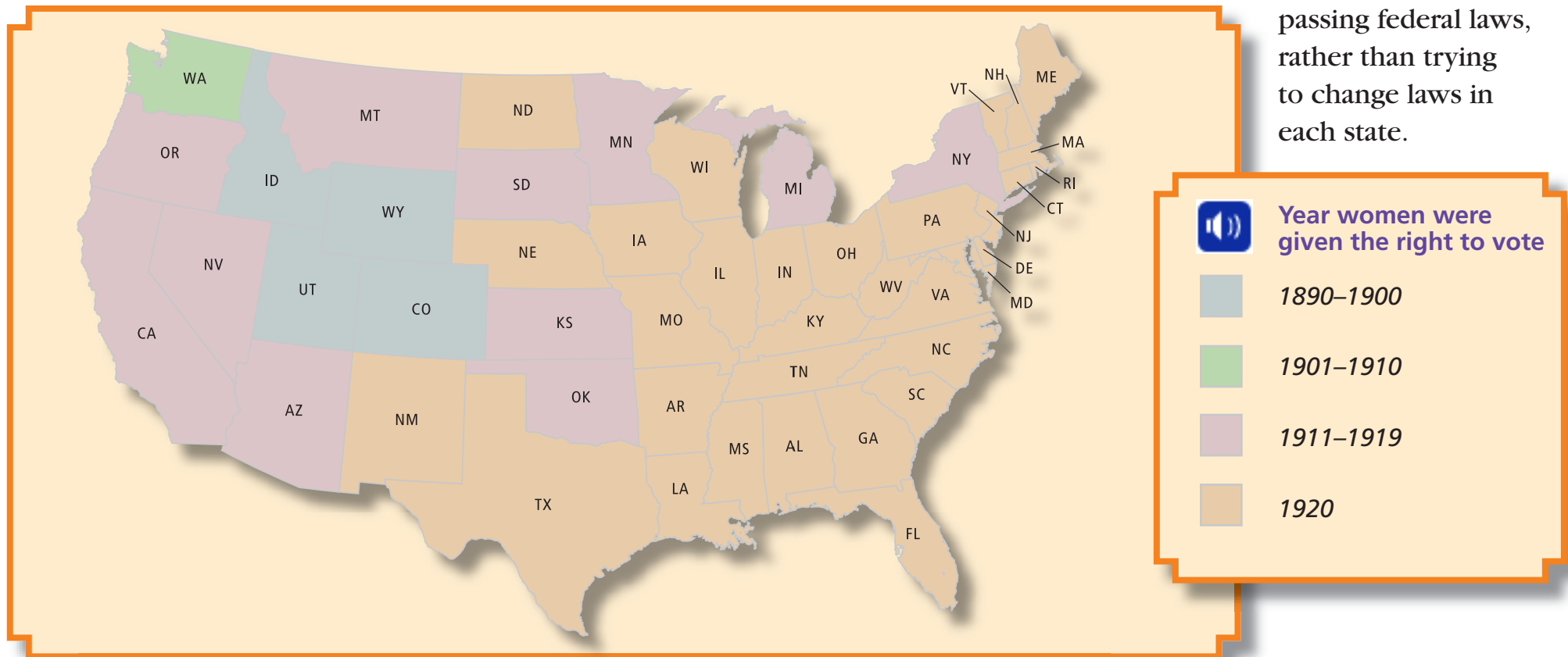
The Civil War began in 1861, when Abraham Lincoln was President. President Lincoln made a deal with the suffragists, promising to support them after the war. The war ended in 1865, and a few days later, President Lincoln was killed. Andrew Johnson became president, but he did not support women's rights.



Many suffragists lost hope in the federal government. Things got even worse when the leaders of the women's rights movement ended up forming two different groups. Lucy Stone started the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony started the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA).

The AWSA had both women and men as members. They worked at the state level, trying to get each state to grant suffrage to women. The NWSA was thought of as a more extreme organization than the AWSA. It allowed only women as members, and it sought to change federal laws. The NWSA felt it was more

effective to focus on passing federal laws, rather than trying to change laws in each state.



Year women were given the right to vote



1890-1900



1901-1910



1911-1919



1920





The NWSA

The NWSA held its first meeting in 1869. In Washington, D.C., Susan B. Anthony asked Congress to pass a sixteenth amendment to the Constitution which would give women the right to vote. Soon it was being called the Susan B. Anthony Amendment.

Congress considered the amendment in 1878, nine years after Anthony first asked for it. When Senator Sargent, from California, introduced the amendment, it did not pass.

The women, however, did not give up. They traveled all across the country making speeches, leading marches, and circulating petitions. Because there were no radios or televisions in the late 1800s, people could not hear or see the speakers unless they went in person. Without planes, cars, or sometimes even paved roads, the suffragists traveled by horse-drawn carriages and on trains. They did not let the difficulty of travel stop them because they believed so strongly in their cause.

The AWSA and the NWSA merged into one group in 1890, and this time the group was called the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Elizabeth Cady Stanton was its first president.



How an Amendment to the Constitution Is Ratified



1

An amendment goes to the House of Representatives. Two-thirds of the representatives must pass it. If they do not, it stops there.



2

If it passes in the House, it goes to the U.S. Senate. Two-thirds of the senators must pass it. If they do not, it stops there.



3

If it passes in the Senate, it goes to the state legislatures. Three-fourths of the legislatures must pass it. If they do not, it is rejected.

There were only forty-eight states in 1920. Today there are fifty states. So today it takes thirty-eight states to ratify, or approve, an amendment.





Signs of Success

As you know, in Wyoming, women could vote beginning in 1869, when Wyoming was a territory. When Wyoming became a state in 1890, it was the first state with women's suffrage. Three years later, Colorado gave women voting rights. Carrie Chapman Catt, an active suffragist, worked to get women's suffrage in the West, and she succeeded in Utah and Idaho.

Though it took a few years, several other western states gave women voting rights as well. Women got voting rights in Washington State in 1910. The next year women in California got the vote. Oregon, Arizona, and Kansas passed women's suffrage in 1912.



*Women's suffrage parade,
New York City, 1912*



The suffragists held parades in New York City and Washington, D.C. Thousands of people marched in one parade in New York City. Sadly, some of the **spectators** caused some trouble for the people marching in the parade. A crowd of people in the middle of the street would not let the marchers pass. The crowd yelled and spit at the marchers, and they even tripped and shoved them. One hundred marchers ended up in the hospital, but the police did not do anything. All of this was printed in the newspapers.

In 1914 World War I began. The suffragists did not want to see the war stop their movement. They had waited during the Civil War, and when that war ended, they got nothing. So this time they persevered. President Woodrow Wilson ran for a second term in 1916. He made campaign promises to keep the United States out of the war.

Wilson also promised Carrie Chapman Catt that he would support women's suffrage, but it was not his priority. Nevertheless, he gained women's support.

Wilson apparently did fairly well with female voters in the dozen or so states that allowed women to vote in 1916.





Picketing at the White House

Soon women began picketing in front of the White House. Their first picket was on January 10, 1917, and after that they came almost every Monday through Saturday. The women picketed in all kinds of weather. In the beginning, President Wilson treated them quite well. He smiled as he drove by them and offered them coffee on cold days.

In April 1917 the United States officially declared war on Germany, and once again, people asked the suffragists to wait for the war to end. They would not wait. They continued their daily pickets at the White House.

By June 1917 the President was not as friendly with the picketers. When he had Russian diplomats visiting, the marchers carried a banner that embarrassed him. It said that the United States was not a democracy. After all, women couldn't vote.

Wilson said that the women had to stop picketing, and if they did not they would be arrested. The women's leader, Alice Paul, consulted with lawyers, who said the women had a legal right to picket. The women continued to picket, and in November 1917, 150 women were arrested and taken to jail.



Women picket for their rights in front of the White House.



Because the women could not be charged with picketing, which was a legal activity, they were charged with obstructing traffic. The women were found guilty and were fined twenty-five dollars each. They chose to serve three days in jail rather than pay the fine.

Less than a week later, the pickets began again. The women were again arrested. In the end these women also spent three days in jail.





Prisoners Gain Public Support

The women continued to picket, and things got much worse. The police continued to arrest them, and the judges gave harsher sentences. By the fall some women were sent to jail for sixty days.

The conditions in jail were horrific. The women were treated roughly, even abused, and their food was rotten and sometimes had worms inside.

This did not seem to change the attitude of politicians, since people who picketed for this cause were still being arrested. Suffragists worked hard to let the public know how badly they were being treated, and people became more and more sympathetic to the cause.

At the end of November 1917, the prisoners were all released, but the suffragists still had not completed their task.

In January 1918 the House passed the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, but it did not pass in the Senate. Another year would go by before that would happen.



Women celebrate their right to vote.



The suffragists did not give up. They held more protests in August 1918. The police arrested them, and the newspapers showed pictures of the prisoners. The women began wearing black armbands. They were saying that justice was dead.

The amendment finally passed in both the House and the Senate in June 1919. The women still had a lot of work to do. They needed thirty-six states to ratify, or approve, the amendment.

The first three states passed the amendment in June 1919. Those states were Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan. The last state to pass the amendment was Tennessee, on August 18, 1920. Women had finally won the right to vote. It was a long struggle—only one woman who had attended the Seneca Falls convention was still alive. Charlotte Woodward was the only one to live to see the dream become reality.





Now Try This

Be an Activist

An activist is someone who tries to change society or government. Because many people do not like change, activists are not always popular. Activists, however, can be recognized for their courage.

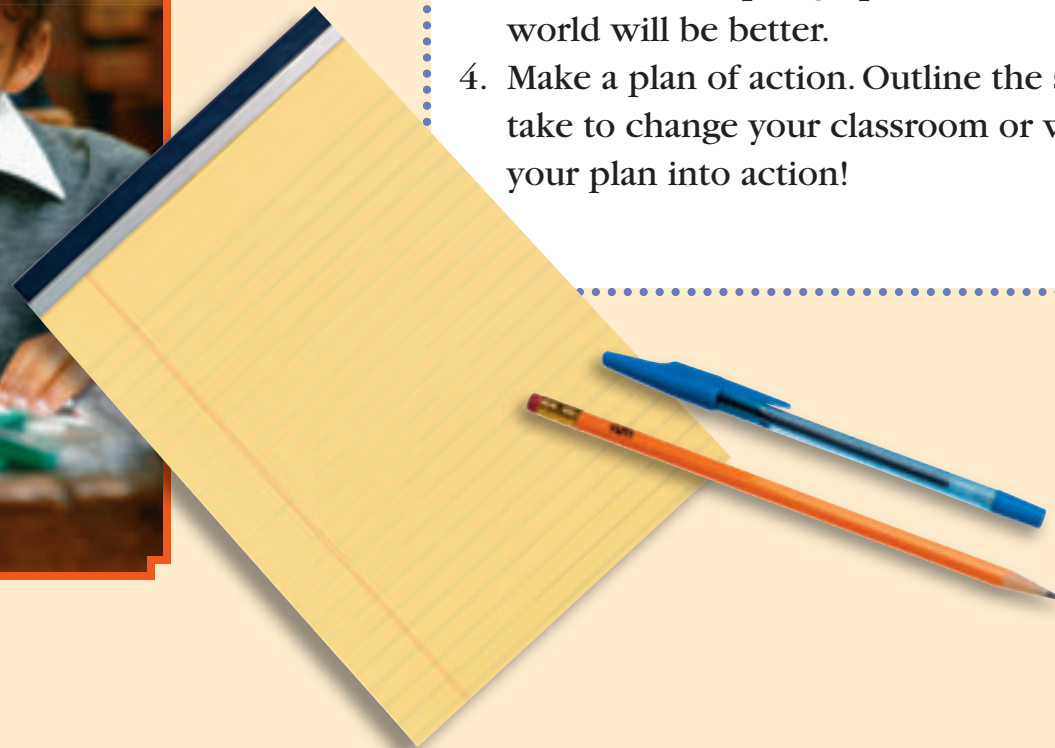
An activist does three things:

1. Makes people aware of an issue.
2. Helps people see that change is needed.
3. Convinces the leadership to make the change.



Here's How to Do It!

1. Think of an issue that is important to you. You might want to improve education for the poor. You might want to help care for homeless people. Or you may have another entirely different idea.
2. Look back at the three activist steps on page 22. Then think about and write down your answers to these questions.
 - Who are you trying to make aware of the issue? How will you make them aware?
 - Why is change needed? How can you help people see this?
 - What leaders need to be convinced? How will you do this?
3. How will things be better if your changes are made? Write a paragraph describing how the world will be better.
4. Make a plan of action. Outline the steps you will take to change your classroom or world. Then put your plan into action!





Glossary

abolitionists *n.* people who actively tried to end slavery.

attire *n.* clothing; what a person wears.

cumbersome *adj.* difficult to deal with.

rivals *n.* people who want and try to get the same thing as another or do better than another; competitor.

spectators *n.* people who are watching an event.

suffrage *n.* the right to vote.

suffragists *n.* people who actively tried to get women the right to vote.



Reader Response

1. Using a chart similar to the one below, show what caused suffragists to be jailed. What were some effects of suffragists being jailed?

Cause	Effect

2. What were bloomers? How can you find out more about bloomers?
3. Look through the book and find examples of verbs ending in *-ing*. Choose two sentences with *-ing* words and try to rewrite them without using *-ing*.
4. Use the map on pages 12 and 13 to find out which states allowed women to vote between 1890 and 1900.

