

Advocating for Voting Rights: Women's Suffrage in Connecticut

Connecticut Women's Suffrage Lesson Plan for Grades 3 & 4

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Objectives

At the end of the lesson . . .

- Students will be able to identify the importance of voting in a democratic society.
- Students will be able to identify some of the prominent figures in the Connecticut women's suffrage movement.
- Students will be able to explain how Connecticut women's suffrage activists advocated for the right to vote.
- Students will recognize the impact of activism to produce change.
- Students will be able to explain strategies for analyzing primary source documents.

Essential Questions

- Why is voting important?
- Who were some of the women who advocated for voting rights for women in Connecticut?
- How did Connecticut women advocate for voting rights?
- What was the outcome of the suffrage movement, and why did it matter?
- What can primary source documents tell us about the past?
- How can people advocate for positive change today?

Materials

- Online article: "1920: Votes for Women!," https://whereilivect.org/votes_for_women/
- Handout: Primary source document analysis – included below
- Optional Video: Reading/presentation/discussion of "What's Women's Suffrage?" <https://youtu.be/j3VJck2g29c>

Vocabulary

- Suffrage (*noun*): the right to vote in political elections
- Advocate (*verb*): publicly recommend or support
- Activism (*noun*): vigorous action or involvement as a way to achieve social and/or political change
- Protest (*noun*): a public demonstration or organized effort to show disapproval about something
- Primary source (*noun*): a material created during a certain time period that provides evidence about what life was like during that time

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Note to the Teacher:

This lesson plan is designed to work well for in-person, remote, and hybrid learning environments. Some activities have the option for the teacher to lead, or for the teacher to play a video where a *Connecticut Explored* educator leads.

Procedure

1. Start with a classroom brainstorm. What does it mean to vote? What are some things you've voted for in the past? Responses can be shared out loud or written on a board.
2. Introduce the lesson. Explain that we live in a democracy, where people elect their leaders by voting, and that today in Connecticut, voting is a right – meaning it is guaranteed – for all U.S. citizens 18 and older who are not currently incarcerated for a felony. Let students know that today you'll be talking about a time in history when women were not allowed to vote, and about how there were many people who worked to change that. Ask students to take two minutes to free write in response to the question: "Why is voting for our leaders important?"
3. Ask students to share their answers. Identify a key element to the lesson: everyone should have a chance to share their opinion/beliefs
4. Read online article "1920: Votes for Women!" or watch the video. Lead students in discussion of reading/video.
 - a. What strategies did suffragists use to advocate for voting rights?
 - b. Why might those strategies be effective?
 - c. Who were some women who were suffragists? What did they do?
 - d. What is the 19th Amendment? Why does it matter?
 - e. Have you ever given a speech, or made a poster, or gone to a march? Or seen any of those things on TV? What activist strategies do you think work well?
5. Analyze primary source document – small group/class discussion.
 - a. Distribute Handout; ask students to examine the "Suffrage Gains Convert" document (found in "1920: Votes for Women!" online article and in the handout) in small groups of three or four and analyze according to steps on handout.
 - b. Reassemble the class and have groups share back. Discuss answers as a class.
6. Wrap up by reminding students that voting is an important right in our United States democracy, and suffragists worked hard and took risks to make sure that women got that right. And finally, identify that many people, in history and today, use activism to address problems and effect positive change.

Extension Activities

- Read online profile "Mary A. Johnson" Connecticut Historical Society, chs.org/mary-a-johnson/ and analyze alongside "Colored Women's Liberty Loan Committee" photograph (October 21, 1917), State Archives, Connecticut State Library, chs.org/wocvotes.

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- Analyze Isabella Beecher Hooker’s “The Constitutional Rights of the Women of the United States” (1883), <http://gos.sbc.edu/h/hooker.html>. Isabella Beecher Hooker was a prominent Hartford suffragist during the late nineteenth century. She used writing and speeches to try and persuade audiences to give women the right to vote. Read the speech she delivered at an important women’s rights gathering and analyze how she is trying to persuade her listeners. What strategies does she use to make her points convincing? Does she use information, facts, and reason? Does she ask people to trust her or other experts because of their knowledge? Does she try to make people feel strong emotions? Does she use some combination of these strategies?

Alignment to CCSS and CT Social Studies Frameworks – Grades 3 and 4

Grade 3

INQ 3–5.9 Use evidence to develop claims in response to compelling questions.

INQ 3–5.15 Draw on disciplinary concepts to explain the challenges people have faced and opportunities they have created, in addressing local, regional, and global problems at various times and places.

INQ 3–5.16 Explain different strategies and approaches students and others could take in working alone and together to address local, regional, and global problems, and predict possible results of their actions.

HIST 3.2 Compare life in specific historical time periods to life today.

HIST 3.3 Generate questions about individuals who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.

HIST 3.8 Infer the intended audience and purpose of a historical source from information within the source itself.

HIST 3.9 Generate questions about multiple historical sources and their relationships to particular historical events and developments.

CIV 3.2 Explain how a democracy relies on people’s responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate.

CIV 3.6 Explain how rules and laws change society and how people change rules and laws.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.2 Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.7 Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2 Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

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Grade 4

INQ 3–5.15 Draw on disciplinary concepts to explain the challenges people have faced and opportunities they have created, in addressing local, regional, and global problems at various times and places.

INQ 3–5.16 Explain different strategies and approaches students and others could take in working alone and together to address local, regional, and global problems, and predict possible results of their actions.

HIST 4.1 Explain connections among historical contexts and people's perspectives at the time.

HIST 4.2 Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments.

CIV 4.1 Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3 Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.2 Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

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HANDOUT

Analyzing Primary Source Documents

A primary source is like a voice from the past. It can tell us about what life was like long ago.

Primary sources include:

- Documents such as letters, books, posters, and old newspaper articles
- Objects such as tools, toys, clothing, and furniture
- Photographs, paintings, or other artwork

Historians use primary sources to help them understand what people were thinking and doing. Historians are like detectives. They identify clues from the primary source. The clues help them understand a bigger story.

Today, you will be acting as a historian. You will think like a detective and look for clues in a primary source *document*. You will investigate what "Suffrage Gains Convert" tells about the women's suffrage movement in Connecticut.

Look at the primary source document. It was published in the *Boston Globe* newspaper on June 21, 1915.

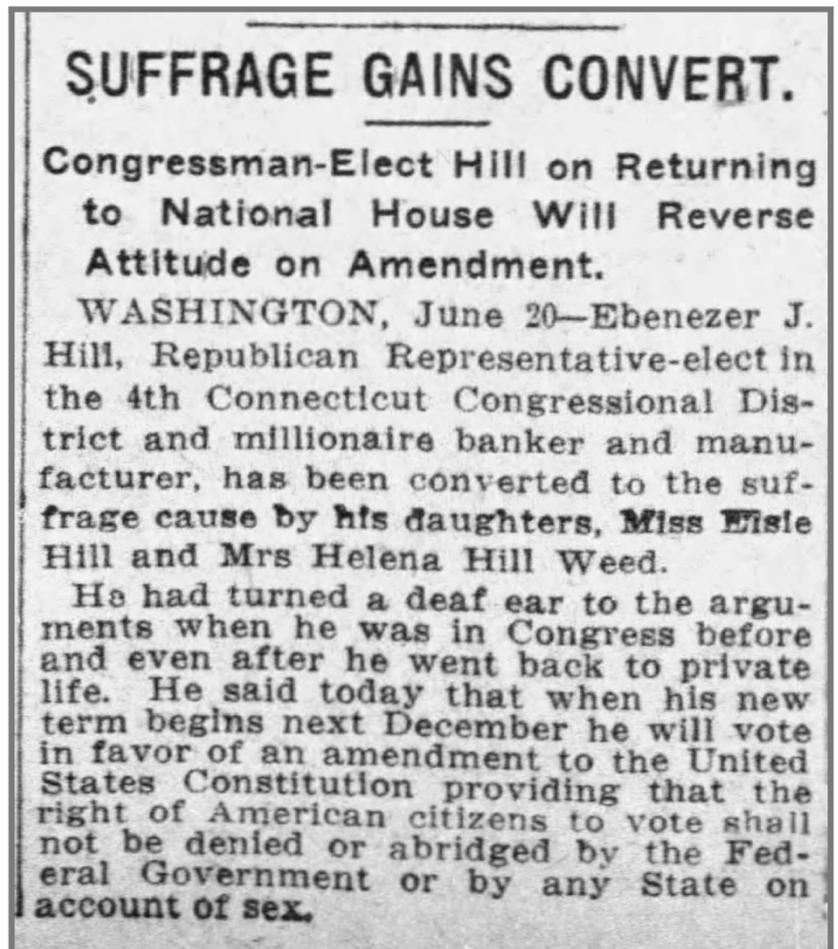
Create a journal to write down your observations and conclusions.

Step 1: Physical details

- What kind of document does it look like?
- What general qualities do you notice about it? (Is it handwritten or typed, formal or informal, find clues from arrangement of the text)

Step 2: Content.

- What does it say?
- Which words, phrases stand out/seem important?



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(Dates, names, bolded information, quotations.)

- What do you think is the document's overall purpose or message?

Step 3: Author.

- Who might have written it?
- How would the author's identity influence the message?
- What strategies are the author using to convey their message?

Step 4: Audience.

- Who might have read it?
- Who might have been interested in it?

Step 5: Cultural/historical context.

- When was it created? Where does it fit into the timeline of the story of women's suffrage?
- What does this document tell us about the suffrage movement?
- What does it not tell us?

Discuss your evidence with your group members and prepare to present your findings and your conclusions to your class.