

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND SUFFRAGE

LEVEL:

High School

TIMEFRAME:

Approximately one class session

OBJECTIVES:

Students will examine suffrage-era primary sources to understand the legacy of the American Revolution in the thoughts, actions, and goals of the women's movement.

STANDARDS:

- Role of Government
 - Using multiple historical sources to identify further areas of inquiry
 - Explain how interpretations of historical events change over time
 - American Revolution
-

PROCEDURE:

1. Distribute the primary source set for students to read.
 - a. Excerpt: The Declaration of Sentiments, July 1848
 - b. "Suffragists Off for Farms in Garb of '76," The Sun, July 2, 1913
 - c. "Retouching an Old Masterpiece," Paul Stahr, Life Magazine, 1915
 - d. "Votes for Women," National Museum of American History, 1915
 - e. Excerpts: "The History of Woman's Suffrage," 1848-1861
 - f. Excerpt: Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Mary Morris Hamilton, 1858
 2. Ask students to evaluate the following statement using the primary sources: **Analyze the impact and legacy of the American Revolution on the ideals, goals, and actions of the women's suffrage movement.**
-

OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Read Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?" Discuss the use of the American Revolution in the abolition movement and how this rhetoric is similar/different to the suffrage movement.

Source A – Excerpt: Declaration of Sentiments drafted at the Seneca Falls Convention, July 1848

Source Type: Document

1 We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal; that they are
2 endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and
3 the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just
4 powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of Government becomes
5 destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to
6 insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and
7 organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and
8 happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be
9 changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind
10 are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves, by abolishing the
11 forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing
12 invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their
13 duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has
14 been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity
15 which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

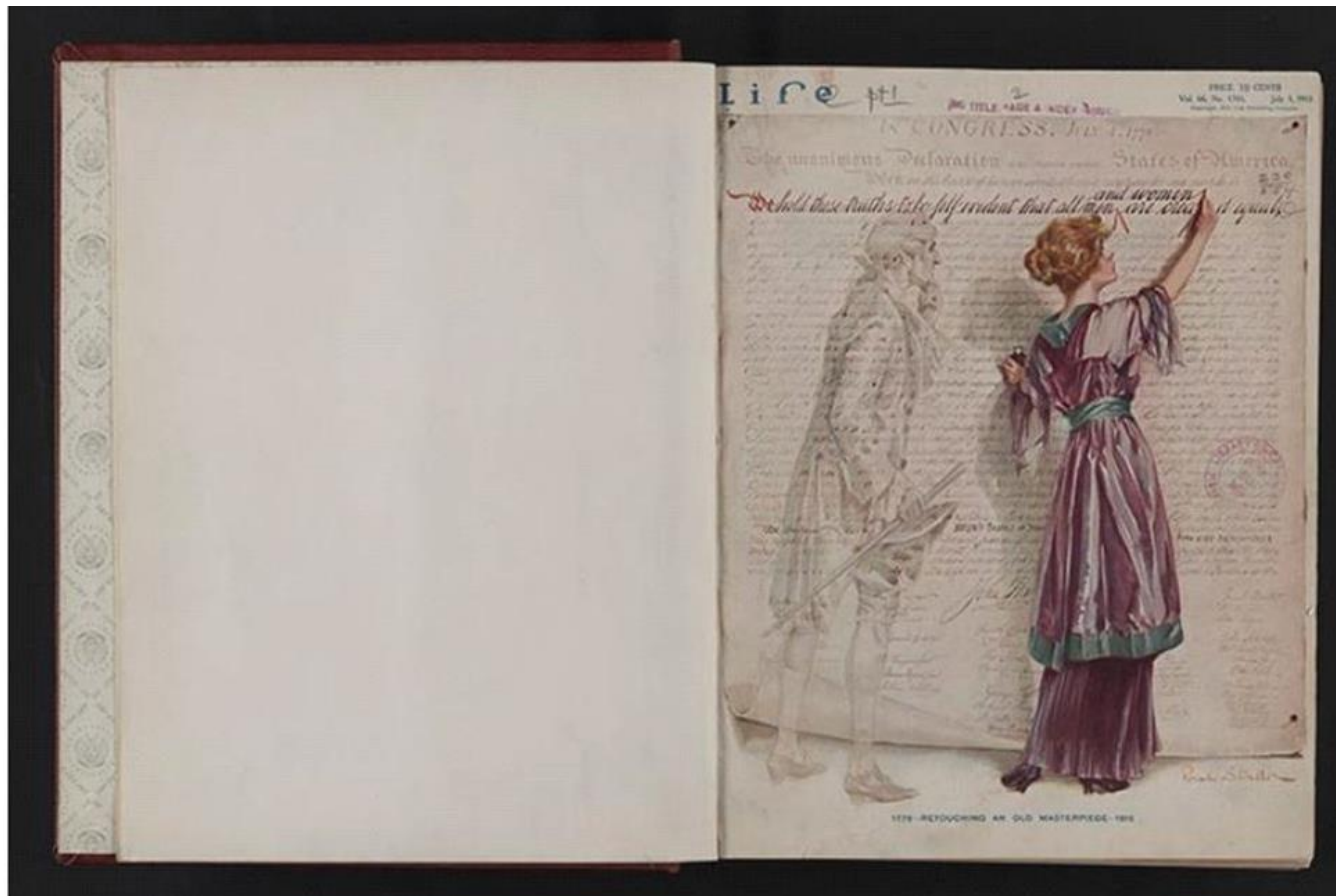
Source B – “Suffragists Off for Farms in Garb of ‘76” in *The Sun*, July 2, 1913

Source Type: Newspaper Article

- 1 Suffrage and the spirit of '76 were commingled in the caravan which left State
- 2 headquarters...yesterday to carry suffrage literature and speeches to farmers... The vehicle itself
- 3 was... built in 1776...and in honor of that memorable date the caravaners, Mrs. Wilmer Kearns
- 4 and Miss Irene Davison, wore Continental costumes, blue coats with yellow facings and three
- 5 cornered hats.

Source C – *Retouching an Old Masterpiece*, Paul Stahr, 1915, Library of Congress

Source Type: Illustration



Source D – *Votes for Women*, National Museum of American History, c. 1915

Source Type: Postcard



Source E – Excerpts: *The History of Woman Suffrage*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, 1848-1861

Source Type: Book

- 1 Woman's political equality with man is the legitimate outgrowth of the fundamental principles of
- 2 our Government, clearly set forth in the Declaration of Independence in 1776, in the United States
- 3 Constitution adopted in 1784...
- 4 That to the taste and suggestions of Mrs. Elizabeth Ross, of Philadelphia, we owe the beauty of
- 5 the Union's flag can not be denied... though to woman it is but an ignis fatuus, an ever waving
- 6 signal of the ingratitude of the republic to one-half its citizens.
- 7 Why should not the American Revolution have been successful, when women so nobly sustained
- 8 republican principles, taking the initiative in self-sacrifice and pointing the path to man by
- 9 patriotic example?

Source F – Excerpt: Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Mount Vernon Ladies' Association Vice Regent Mary Morris Hamilton August 27, 1858

Source Type: Letter

Background: The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, founded in 1853, is an entirely female-run preservation organization dedicated to protecting George Washington's home at Mount Vernon. Mary Morris Hamilton was one of the original board members in 1858.

- 1 I have just received your letter of the 24th inst., inviting me to become one of the “Lady
- 2 Managers” of the Mount Vernon Association.
- 3 Gladly would I aid a work in which noble women feel much enthusiasm as the purchase and
- 4 renovation of Mount Vernon seems everywhere to call forth. But, most respectfully do I decline
- 5 the honor you offer me; for every energy of my body and soul is pledged to a higher and holier
- 6 work than building monuments...
- 7 Woman labors hard to restore Mount Vernon, and forgets that the good old Revolutionary
- 8 Fathers, in declaring that “All men are created free and equal,” lost sight, altogether, of the negro
- 9 and the woman, and pronounced all those laws and statutes, which the repudiated for themselves,
- 10 wise and good for their mothers, wives, daughters, and slaves...What duty so imperative on
- 11 women as to educate, elevate and dignify her own sex? Until we give to the world freedom, and a
- 12 new type of womanhood, we have no energies to spend elsewhere.
- 13 Yours, Respectfully,
- 14 Elizabeth Cady Stanton

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Timeline of Women's Suffrage¹

1848: The Declaration of Sentiments published at Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, NY.

1850/1851: First and Second National Women's Rights Convention held in Massachusetts

1868: *The Revolution*, a newspaper in support of women's enfranchisement, begins publication under Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

1869: Suffragists found the American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Women Suffrage Association in Boston and New York, respectively.

1872: Susan B. Anthony casts a vote in the presidential election, and is arrested and later convicted.

1878: A women's suffrage amendment is first presented to the United States Congress.

1887: The amendment for women's enfranchisement is struck down in Congress.

1890: The National American Woman Suffrage Association is formed when the American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Women Suffrage Association merge. Their goal is to attain suffrage on a state by state basis. Wyoming is added to the Union, becoming the first U.S. state to provide women's suffrage in their state constitution.

1893: Colorado grants suffrage to women.

1896: National Association of Colored Women's Clubs is founded to fight for equality; Iowa and Utah grant women the right to vote.

1900-1910: Throughout the Progressive Era, the suffrage movement gains traction among workers unions, Western states, etc. At the same time, groups like the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, run by women and men alike, organize in opposition to the amendment, arguing that women's suffrage would ruin families, complicate politics, and destroy femininity.

1912: Teddy Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party campaigns in support of suffrage and three Western states, Oregon, Kansas, and Arizona, grant women the right to vote.

1912-1915: Visibility for women's suffrage continues to grow, as suffrage parades rally women across America, petitions reach Congress, and Nevada and Montana grant women the right to vote. The movement also becomes more aggressive, and some women are arrested, jailed, and tortured for their actions in pursuit of the vote. Hunger strikes and forms of civil

¹ "Timeline," Crusade for the Vote, *National Women's History Museum*, <http://www.crusadeforthetvote.org/>.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

disobedience become more common, and Americans react to the mistreatment of suffragists with growing support for their cause.

1916: Jeannette Rankin (R-Montana) becomes the first woman elected to the House of Representatives and to hold federal office in America.

1917: New York grants suffrage while women picket the White House, displaying criticisms of Woodrow Wilson's hesitation towards suffrage.

1918: An amendment granting suffrage passes in the House but fails in the Senate. Woodrow Wilson publicly supports suffrage.

1919: The senate passes the 19th amendment.

1920: The 19th amendment is ratified by the United States of America. White, American women have full voting rights—it is important to note that many other groups were denied the right to vote throughout the 20th century.
