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### Women's suffrage lesson plan

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***“Put Into Her Hand this Weapon... ‘tis the Ballot Box”***  
**The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Arkansas and the Life of the Nation**

**Social Studies – 6 – 8 (U.S. History, Arkansas History, World History, Civics, etc.);  
English Language Arts; Geography**

This unit explores the Women’s Suffrage Movement in Arkansas through the use of primary and secondary sources. Students will read newspaper articles and pamphlet excerpts to understand the goals and history of the movement. A list of various activities related to original primary and secondary resources allows teachers the flexibility to choose parts of this lesson plan to use and adapt as needed.

**Essential Question:**

How did the Women’s Suffrage movement develop and succeed in gaining the vote for women in Arkansas?

**Common Core State Standards:**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.10;

**Arkansas Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks:**

RP.6.AH.7-8.6; W7AH.7-8.1; RP6.AH9-12.6; W7.AH.9-12.2; R5.AH.2; PR.14.AH.2; PR.14.AH.4

**Possible literature resources related to the lesson plan:** *Suffragette Sally* by Gertrude Colmore (1911); *The Judge* by Rebecca West (2006); *In Her Own Right* by Elisabeth Griffith (1984); *Split Time* by Felicity Price (2014); *The Sentinel* by Rebecca West (1911); *Seneca Falls Inheritance* by Miriam Grace Monfredo (2013); *The Convert* by Elizabeth Robins (1907); *The Privilege of Voting* by Virginia Ann Harris (2009); *Voting Down the Rose* by Anne B. Gass (2014), *The Hope Chest* by Karen Schwabach (2010); *Chasing Freedom* by Nikki Grimes (2015); *Madam President: The Extraordinary, True (and Evolving) Story of Women in Politics* by Catherine Thimmesh (2008); *Wheels of Change: How Women Rode the Bicycle to Freedom (with a Few Flat Tires Along the Way)* by Sue Macy (2011); *A Most Peculiar Circumstance* by Jen Turano (2013); *Night and Day* by Virginia Woolf (1919); *Good Wives* by Louisa May Alcott (1869).

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### Woman Suffrage Vocabulary

|                        |                     |                      |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Charles Hillman Brough | Fifteenth Amendment | Nineteenth Amendment |
| Progressivism          | Prohibition         | Suffrage             |
| Suffragette            | Temperance          | WCTU                 |

**Charles Hillman Brough** – Twenty-fifth Governor of Arkansas (January 10, 1917 – January 11, 1921). Signed the bill into law that gave women the vote in Arkansas primary elections. Was a supporter of women’s suffrage.

**Fifteenth Amendment** – Amendment to the United States Constitution ratified in 1870 which declared, the “right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

**Nineteenth Amendment** – Amendment to the United States Constitution ratified in 1920 that granted women the right to vote.

**Progressivism** – A political and social movement that grew out of rapid industrialization and modernism that created income inequality. Progressives worked towards enacting social reforms such as temperance, labor reforms, and preventing governmental corruption.

**Prohibition** – The movement to prohibit the use and sale of alcohol. Most women who supported the suffrage movement were also prohibitionists. They saw the suffrage movement as a way to gain power to enact prohibition.

**Suffrage** – The legal ability to vote in elections.

**Suffragette** – A derogatory term for a supporter of woman suffrage. Supporters of the movement preferred to be called “suffragists”. The term “suffragette” was mostly identified with militant suffrage supporters.

**Temperance** – The movement to reduce or prevent the use of alcohol.

**WCTU** – Woman’s Christian Temperance Union was a national organization primarily founded to promote temperance, but also to work for reform in other social causes. Many WCTU members became involved in the suffrage movement.

### Background Information:

On August 18, 1920, the state of Tennessee ratified the Nineteenth Amendment, giving the amendment the needed number of states required to make the amendment law. It was the culmination of a movement that had fought for over fifty years to reach its goal: the vote for

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women. Driven both by a desire to express one's political desires through the polls and a belief that women could make a change in matters particularly important to them, women fought for almost a century to obtain this precious right. In this way, suffragists were a part of a larger movement within Progressivism. Among the issues concerning Progressives were child labor and the prohibition of alcohol. Progressive reformers also believed women would be most concerned with these issues. Progressives understood gaining women's suffrage to be the best means to affect political change on matters that were most important to women. As Progressive movements grew, so did the women's suffrage movement.

In Arkansas, women's suffrage first was proposed at the 1868 Constitutional Convention. Delegates in the convention wanted to protect the voting rights of the newly freed slaves. A few delegates in the convention thought it only a natural extension to also grant women the vote. However, most delegates in the convention did not take the idea of women's suffrage seriously and quickly voted down the proposal. It was the first time in state politics that women's suffrage was connected to the debate over universal suffrage.

In the 1880s, the early stirrings of the Progressive Movement brought new issues to the national conversation. Among these new issues was temperance. Women were often the leaders in the drive to ban alcohol. While women in the South rarely had any political involvement, the temperance movement gave women an issue to which they could easily rally. Because temperance was a political issue, it only seemed natural for women to become involved politically. One of the leaders of the movement in Arkansas was Clara A. McDiarmid who established a newspaper devoted to women's issues called the *Woman's Chronicle*. The newspaper championed both suffrage and temperance and became widely read throughout the United States by those championing woman suffrage and temperance.

With the growth of the movement, opponents to granting women the vote argued that bringing politics into the home would cause rifts between husbands and wives. Others argued that women, who were considered to be a symbol of purity, would be corrupted by politics. Another reason proposed for opposing woman suffrage was that women might neglect their homes because they were more concerned with politics than with their families. Yet another argument held that, if given the vote, women's husbands might control their vote allowing for the head of houses to have, in effect, two votes.

Despite these arguments against women's suffrage, the movement continued to grow. By 1917, the movement had grown enough that John A. Riggs, a legislator who had promised his mother that he would support women's suffrage, introduced a bill into the Arkansas legislature allowing woman to vote in primary elections. By allowing women to vote in Arkansas's primaries, the legislature had dodged two problems that had derailed the drive for woman suffrage in the past. The first was the issue of the Arkansas Constitution of 1874, which expressly forbade women

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from voting in general elections. To allow voting in the general election, the legislature required an amendment to the constitution. The second issue facing the legislature was that passing this measure allowing women to vote in the primaries helped to settle the voting matter on a state level. This avoided the issue of the Fifteenth Amendment which had worried supporters who felt that women’s suffrage might lead to a drive for African American suffrage as well, which would weaken white supremacy. And at this time, voting in the Democratic primary in a one party state such as Arkansas was the same as voting in the general election. Governor Charles Hillman Brough brought official support to the movement when he became the first sitting governor to openly support women’s suffrage. By the time that the United States Congress proposed the Nineteenth Amendment, Arkansas was the second Southern state to ratify it on July 28, 1919.

To learn more about the Woman Suffrage Movement, read the following Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture articles:

Woman Suffrage Movement

[www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=403](http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=403)

Adolphine Fletcher Terry (1882–1976)

<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1779>

Florence Lee Brown Cotnam (1865–1932)

<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=536>

John Andrew Riggs (1867–1936)

<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=5509>

League of Women Voters

<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4864>

## **Activities**

### **Activity 1. Analyze newspaper editorials on woman suffrage in Arkansas and write your own letters**

1. Read the *Fort Smith Elevator* article from April 26, 1889 opposing woman suffrage.
2. Ask students to imagine themselves as woman suffrage supporters from the time and to write a letter to William Luce addressing his arguments.

“Female Suffrage,” *Fort Smith Elevator*, April 26, 1889

<http://ahc.digital-ar.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16790coll11/id/351>

### **Activity 2. Examining the debate about woman suffrage**

1. Read the *Woman’s Chronicle* article from August 31, 1889 discussing why women need to be granted the vote.

Women's suffrage lesson plan, Arkansas State Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas.

2. The author identifies a number of arguments that have been used by those opposing woman suffrage. Have the students make a list of the arguments of the opposition to woman suffrage. What images of women does the opposition promote and how would women voting damage that image?
3. Make a separate list identifying how the author opposes those arguments.  
"An Open Letter," *Woman's Chronicle*, August 31, 1889

### **Activity 3. Create "Found Poetry" about the Woman Suffrage movement**

1. Found poetry is a type of poetry created by taking words, phrases, and sometimes whole passages from other sources and reframing them as poetry by making changes in spacing and lines, or by adding or deleting text, thus imparting new meaning. Talk with the students about "Found Poetry" and give an example (see examples and further information through the Found Poetry with Primary Sources: The Great Depression, Lesson Plan from the Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/poetry/procedure.html>).
2. Have students select material from the letter written from E.C. Browning to Senator Turner Butler.
3. The students will compose a "Found Poetry" piece based on the selected passage.
4. The final poems can be written on paper and handed in or presented orally. The poems can be compiled into a class booklet.
5. The poems can lead to further discussion about the Woman Suffrage Movement.  
Letter from E.C. Browning to Senator Turner Butler, November 29, 1899, S.S. Wassell Family Collection, Arkansas History Commission

### **Activity 4. Do a "Word Splash" with the Woman Suffrage movement words provided on page 7 and found in the attached documents**

1. Do a "Word Splash" as a pre-lesson activity where the students are given words related to the lesson and asked to discuss how the words might be related to the topic. After the lesson is finished, then the students are asked to pull words out of a text that might be significant to the lesson. The students will then explain why they chose the words they chose. For more information visit <http://www.teachhub.com/classroom-games-how-use-word-splash> or [www.education.nh.gov/spotlight/ccss/documents/wordsplash.pdf](http://www.education.nh.gov/spotlight/ccss/documents/wordsplash.pdf)

### **Other Resources on the Woman Suffrage Movement**

"The Woman Suffrage Movement in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 15 (1956), pp. 17 – 52.

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Teacher Guide and Primary Sources from the Library of Congress.

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/womens-suffrage/>

Woman Suffrage Photographs and Prints from the Library of Congress.

[http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/076\\_vfw.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/076_vfw.html)

Teacher Guide and Primary Sources from the National Archives.

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/woman-suffrage/>

Companion Website for the PBS Documentary, *Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, Features teachers guide and resources.

<http://www.pbs.org/stantonanthony/index.html>

List of Teachers Resources on Woman Suffrage from Scholastic Books.

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/womens-suffrage-books-and-resources>

Resources from the History Channel.

<http://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/the-fight-for-womens-suffrage>

"100 Years Ago, The 1913 Women's Suffrage Parade," *The Atlantic*, March 1, 2013.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2013/03/100-years-ago-the-1913-womens-suffrage-parade/100465/>

Woman Suffrage Online Exhibit from Washington State University.

<http://digitalexhibits.wsulibs.wsu.edu/exhibits/show/woman-suffrage-exhibit>

Catt Collection Suffrage Photographs from Bryn Mawr College.

<http://tritych.brynmawr.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/suffragists>

Women of Protest: Photographs from the Records of the National Woman's Party from the Library of Congress.

<http://www.loc.gov/collection/women-of-protest/about-this-collection/>

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