

• *Why Women Won the Vote* •

Starting in the early 1800s, a wide-ranging movement arose to free women from their less than equal position in American society. At first, this movement focused on many other reforms as well—on prison reform, for example, or on public schooling, or above all on the growing movement to abolish slavery.

Of course, women did also start to call for complete political equality. At a famous meeting at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, the modern-day women's rights movement was born.

After the Civil War, various women's rights groups began to focus on one overriding goal—the right to vote. In 1866, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony helped to form the American Equal Rights Association. A few years later, it split into two separate organizations because of disagreements about the Fourteenth Amendment and the Fifteenth Amendment. These amendments were meant to protect the rights of newly freed slaves. However, they did not specifically cover women in the protections they provided. One women's group opposed the amendments, the other did not. In 1890, these two groups reunited to form the National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Its sole purpose was to win women the right to vote.

Of course this single goal did not prevent women from taking a more active part in many other areas of American life. In fact, the late 1800s saw the growth of an increasingly vocal professional class of women who led all sorts of reform efforts. In journalism, education, child welfare, union organizing, civil rights, and more, women were playing a much greater role. In fact, it may well have been this many-sided public activity that made the lack of voting rights for women seem increasingly unfair to millions of Americans, male and female.

The progressive movement of the early 1900s was a response to the disorder and injustices accompanying the arrival of the urban-industrial

age. It was led by a growing group of middle class professionals, including many women taking a more active part in the nation's life. Their experience in progressive reform efforts added considerably to the strength and diversity of the women's rights movement itself.

One progressive movement in particular was a key force in the fight for women's voting rights. That was the temperance movement, led by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. As for regions, the American West led the way starting with Wyoming Territory, which was organized with a women's suffrage provision in 1869.

The final battle for the right to vote was actually a complex one. The activists argued a good deal about tactics. The NAWSA continued to take a moderate and careful approach. In 1913, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns formed the Congressional Union (later named the National Women's Party). It took part in hunger strikes and other dramatic forms of civil disobedience.

Meanwhile resistance to women's suffrage was also fierce—from many men, from distillers and brewers, from urban political machines and even from some women (through the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage led by Mrs. Arthur Dodge). Nevertheless, by the second decade of the twentieth century, the momentum was unstoppable. The active role played by women in World War I only added to this momentum. In 1920, with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, women won the right to vote.

All the primary sources with this lesson are visual to some degree. These sources will help you assess the arguments for and against this movement. They will also help you decide why it won out in the end.

A Women's Suffrage Time Line

1848 . . .

At a convention in Seneca Falls, New York, participants set the goals for the women's rights movement.

1851 . . .

Former slave Sojourner Truth delivers her "Ain't I a Woman?" speech in Akron, Ohio.

1866 . . .

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony form the American Equal Rights Association, whose goal is to achieve universal suffrage—that is, the right to vote for all men and women, black and white.

1869 . . .

The women's rights movement splits into the more radical National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the more conservative American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). Also during this year, Wyoming territory is organized with a provision for women's suffrage.

1872 . . .

Susan B. Anthony is arrested and put on trial in Rochester, New York, for trying to vote for Ulysses S. Grant in the presidential election. Sojourner Truth demands the right to vote in Battle Creek, Michigan, but she is turned away.

1874 . . .

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) is founded. It becomes an important ally in the fight for women's suffrage.

1878 . . .

A Woman Suffrage Amendment is introduced in the United States Congress. The amendment finally passes both houses in 1919.

1890 . . .

The NWSA and the AWSA are reunited as the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

1903 . . .

The Women's Trade Union League of New York is organized to help working women form unions, get education, and better their working conditions.

1911 . . .

The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS) is organized.

1912 . . .

Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive ("Bull Moose") Party becomes the first national political party to adopt a women's suffrage plank.

1913 . . .

Alice Paul and Lucy Burns organize the Congressional Union, later known as the National Women's Party (in 1916). It uses White House picketing and civil disobedience tactics to push for women's suffrage.

1916 . . .

At a convention in New Jersey, NAWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt presents her "winning plan" for a final push to victory. Catt's plan requires coordinated efforts by all state and local suffrage associations.

1917–19 . . .

Women's efforts during World War I win more support for women's suffrage.

1920 . . .

August 26, 1920. The Nineteenth Amendment is ratified.

Visual Primary Source Document 1



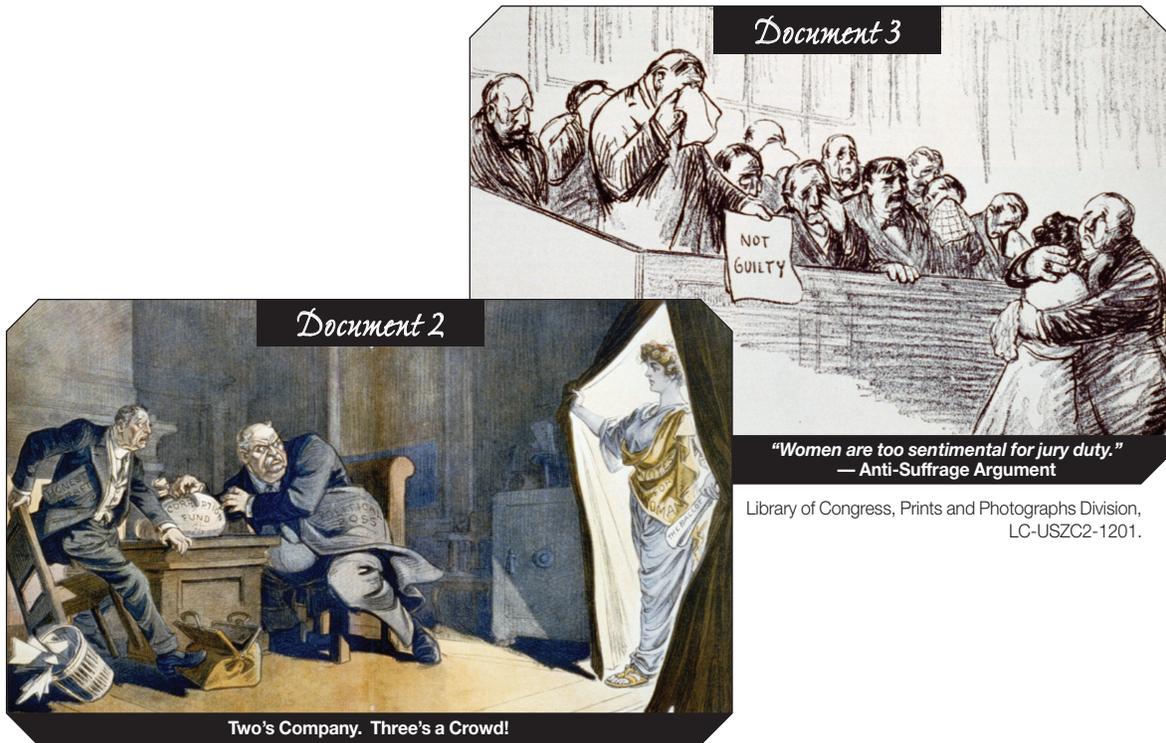
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZC2-1021.

Information on Document 1

This 1896 lithograph from the political humor magazine *Puck* is titled “At the Emancipated Women’s Club.” It is a caricature of women’s suffrage. In it, a page has come over to an elegantly dressed woman. She says, “Your

husband wants to see you, Mum. He says the baby’s tooth is through at last, and he had to come and show it to you, Mum!” The woman’s husband is standing at the door with three children.

Visual Primary Source Documents 2 & 3



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZC2-1183.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division,
LC-USZC2-1201.

Information on Documents 2 & 3

Document 2 This 1914 cartoon by Keppler from *Puck* is titled "Two's Company. Three's a Crowd." It is a caricature showing two corrupt male politicians looking up in shock as a woman labeled "votes for women" stands in the doorway.

Document 3 A 1915 lithograph from *Puck*. It shows a jury of men crying as one of them holds out a piece of paper reading "not guilty", and a man embracing a woman. The caption for the illustration is "Women are too sentimental for jury duty."

Comparing the Documents

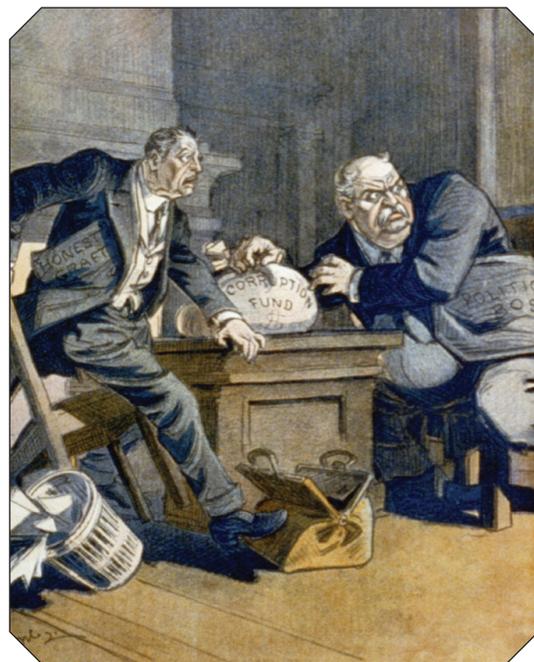
★ *The Visual Sources*

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the “Comparison Essay” worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

Which of these primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand the triumph of the women’s suffrage movement?



Document 1



Documents 2 & 3

Written/Visual Primary Source Document 1

Information on Document 1

This cartoon appeared in a New York Times company monthly magazine in October 1920, a few weeks after the women's suffrage amendment passed, granting all women the right to vote. The cartoon shows a woman carrying buckets on a yoke, looking up at a ladder rising to the sky. The bottom rungs are labeled "Slavery," "House Drudgery," "Shop Work," etc. The top rungs are labeled "Equal Suffrage," "Wage Equality," "Presidency," etc.

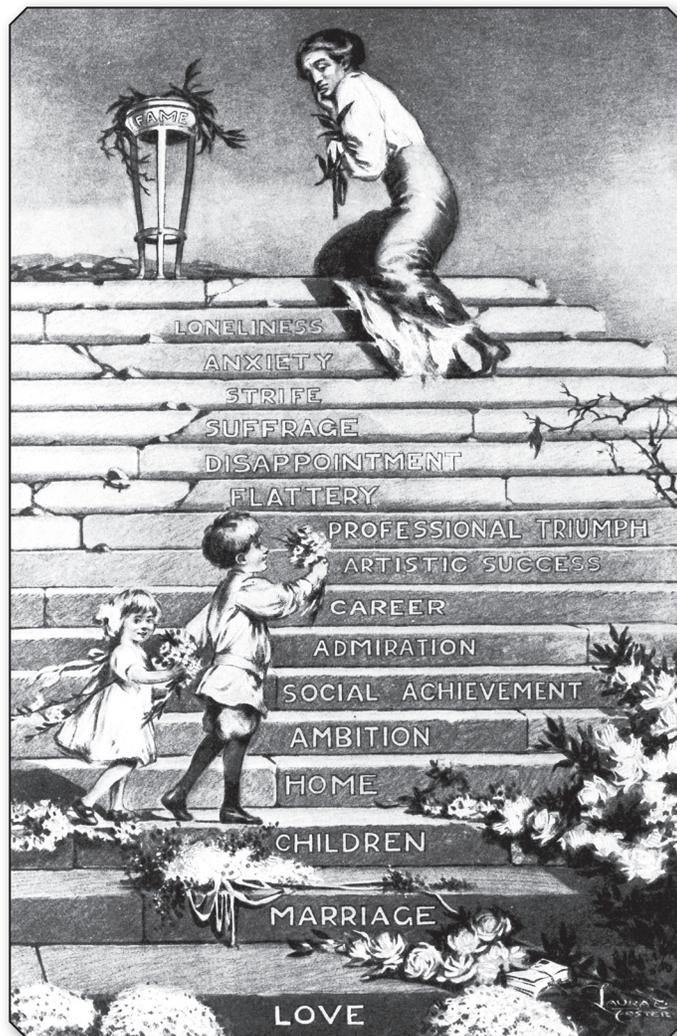


Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-02919.

Written/Visual Primary Source Document 2

Information on Document 2

This cartoon by Laura E. Foster appeared in *Life* magazine on August 22, 1912. It is titled "Looking Backward." It shows a woman at the top of a staircase with steps labeled "Loneliness," "Anxiety," "Strife," "Suffrage," and "Career," approaching a stand labeled "Fame," as she looks back at children holding out flowers standing on lower steps labeled "Home," "Children," "Marriage," and "Love."



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-02940.

Comparing the Documents

★ *The Written/Visual Sources*

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Document 1



Document 2