

WOODROW WILSON HOUSE

LESSON PLANS for Middle and High School Teachers

Social and Political Activism As Influence During the Woman's Suffrage Movement

Dr. Samantha Averett, *MarderVaughn Teacher in Residence*

Rationale:

Students will examine the social and political activism regarding the Woman's Suffrage movement, through voices that tried to influence President Wilson and members of the United States Congress and the strategies used to achieve and deny suffrage for women.

Standard(s):

C3 NCSS

1. DS Civ 2 9-12: Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of Democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.

Objectives:

1. Determine the actions everyday citizens took and can take to influence government officials and governmental activity.
2. Analyze the viewpoints and motivations of the citizens in the early 1900s related to Women's Suffrage.
3. Demonstrate knowledge and practical application of historical skills (sourcing and corroboration).
4. Examine social and political activism and determine the effectiveness of each strategy of activism.

Activity:

1. Students will analyze the documents.
2. Source the authors or creator of each item.
3. Students will group and corroborate the sources.
4. Students will respond to examination prompts.

Guiding Questions:

1. What role did race and gender play in the suffrage debate?
2. Which voices held more significant importance to the president and why? How might the importance of each voice change over time and with different circumstances?

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Sources:

1. Excerpts from a Book
 - a. An excerpt from Mary Elliot Seawell's book *The Ladies' Battle*, written in 1911
2. Speech to Congress
 - a. John A Moon of Tennessee, excerpt from a congressional hearing on January 10, 1918 on the 19th Amendment and woman suffrage
 - b. Excerpts from a speech "*The Justice of Woman Suffrage*" by Mary Church Terrell, undated, on the topic of woman suffrage
3. Letters to the President
 - a. Letter written by John H. Small, congressional member from North Carolina to the president after reading an article in the local newspaper that confirmed President Wilson's anti-suffrage stand
 - b. Caroline Thummel, Vice President of the Woman's State Bar Association of Missouri. Received by the White House on March 3, 1913
4. Newspaper/ Journal
 - a. Unknown author, *The New Republic A Journal of Opinion*. New York, September 16, 1916

Suggested Lesson Structure:

1. Warm Up - Invited the students to discuss the terms [Suggestion: the teacher may want to define the terms with the students and have the students write the definition in their notes or create an anchor chart that will remain visible throughout the lesson. This practice will create a working definition that students can return to throughout the lesson/ reading analysis and group discussions.]
 - a. Race
 - a. Racism
 - b. Gender
 - c. Sexism
 - d. Suffrage
 - e. Social Activism
 - f. Political Activism
2. Students will engage with the theories of Democracy.
 - a. Students will read the excerpt of the Britannica and discuss one of the primary theories of democracy.
3. Sourcing and Document Analysis
 - a. Have students work in pairs to analyze the documents and complete the graphic organizer. This will allow students to discuss the documents and hear from their peers regarding the documents.

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4. Examine
 - a. Students will work individually to examine the information on the graphic organizer to group and corroborate the information to support the stated claim. This activity also requires students to go back to the text for a second reading of the documents. The second reading helps them pull out evidence from the text.
5. Evaluate
 - a. Students will take the information from the graphic organizer, annotations on the documents, and any notes to complete the brief constructive responses. This activity also requires another reading/ skimming of the text to identify evidence to support their claim for the brief constructive response.

Suggested Grade Level:

This lesson is suggested for middle to high school age children.

Suggested Lesson Pace:

Schedule Type	Rationale
80 minute Double Block Schedule	This lesson structure may take one and a half class periods. This will allow for discovery for the first entire class period and then analysis and evaluation in the next class period. This will allow for reflection and analysis of the previous class's information to draw a conclusion based on evidence.
45 minute Single Block Schedule	This lesson structure may take three class periods. This will allow discovery during the first class period and re-examining in the second class period. Finally, the students can use the third class period to reflect and analyze the information from the last two classes to draw a conclusion based on evidence.

Historical Skills

Sourcing – requires students to identify and determine the author’s point of view, influence, purpose, bias, relationships, and trustworthiness.

Corroborating – requires student to understand and interrogate the background information and previous actions and events that influence and/or impact the current topic, event, or person.

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Contextualization – requires students to identify and determine connections and disparities by comparing documents

Close Reading – requires students to analyze and evaluate the text to determine claim, evidence, reasoning, tone, language, word choice, etc.

Source and more information visit Stanford Historical Educational Group.

<https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/historical-thinking-chart>

Britannica Excerpt

The theory of democracy

Democratic ideas from Pericles to Rawls

Pericles

In a funeral oration in 430 BCE for those who had fallen in the Peloponnesian War, the Athenian leader Pericles described democratic Athens as “the school of Hellas.” Among the city’s many exemplary qualities, he declared, was its constitution, which “favors the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy.” Pericles continued: “If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if to social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way; if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by obscurity of his condition. The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life.”

Source: Robert A Dahl “The Theory of Democracy” Britannica Online,

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/democracy/The-theory-of-democracy>

1. What theory/ idea of democracy expressed by Pericles?
2. How does that idea/ theory relate to the United States?
3. To what extent is that idea/ theory expressed by the members and actions of the Women Suffrage movement.

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Document A

The disparity between the theory and practice of this government is all the more striking, when one reflects that in refusing to allow women a voice in the government, men are inflicting upon them the same injustice from which their fore[fathers]parents fought so desperately to be free. With hearts afire and tomes which shook the foundations of all the governments of the earth the Puritanfathers declared that taxation without representation is tyranny. In defense of this principle they, together with theequally courageous and loyal women of the colonies endured the horrors of the seven years' war.

But no sooner had freedom and independence been purchased by the blood and treasure of their champions,than the same tyranny which had evoked this righteous war was saddled upon the women though they are taxed equally with men, though the hardships and burdens of war fall as heavily upon women as upon men, though the ills resulting from misgovernment affect them as seriously as their brothers, yet since [they are not represented in affairs] women are denied the right of suffrage of State they [are deprived.] can neither protect themselves nor remove the evils [from] of which vex or [they] oppress them-

Is it not a reproach to a government which owes its very existence to the love of freedom when reduced to their lowest terms the very best reasons which can be assigned for denying women their rights as citizens of this republic are as follows: In the beginning man was physically stronger than woman. The power over her which his tougher muscle enabled him to acquire than has been so crystallized into custom and grafted into law, that it now seems natural for women to be dominated by man and unnatural for her to assert her rights or resist his rule. This usurpation of power, therefore, which had its origin brute force has been maintained through all the centuries with crushing effect to blight the prospects and blast the hopes of its victims.

When one reads those immortal lines in our constitution,in which the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness is guaranteed the citizens of the republic, and reflects upon the large number of intelligent,cultured and patriotic women, to whom the highest happiness is impossible, because they are prohibited by law from discharging their sacredduty to the State, he cannot but be deeply impressed with this striking object lesson or the miscarriageof justice and the futility of good intentions,when adherence to the old law of force is the avowed principle of those who hold the nation's destiny in their hands.

Source: Excerpts from a speech "*The Justice of Woman Suffrage*" by Mary Church Terrell, undated on the topic of woman suffrage.

Terrell, Mary Church. *Mary Church Terrell Papers: Speeches and Writings, -1953; Undated; "The Justice of Woman Suffrage"*. - 1953, 1866. Manuscript/Mixed Material.

<https://www.loc.gov/item/mss425490587/>.

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Document B

The suffragists, in their spoken and published utterances, reveal that, while they propose a stupendous governmental change, they have little knowledge of the fundamentals of government, the evolution of representation, the history of politics, or the genesis, scope, and meaning of suffrage. In their treatment of the subject, they hopelessly confuse political, philanthropic, socialistic, and economic questions; nor do they seem able to discriminate between objects of national and those of state or municipal regulation. Women suddenly proclaiming themselves suffragists, have been, in a few months, and without giving study to the science of government, advanced to leadership. Some of these leaders – for leaders they are, in the true sense of being spokesmen for suffrage – have never studied the Constitution of the United States, and continually show in their speeches and writings, a singular want of knowledge concerning the unique nature of the American form of government.....

The ordinary voter may not understand these things; but suffragists proposing a great, fundamental change in government, a change greater perhaps, that they really contemplated, ought to understand such points, which are among the alphabet of representative government. To attempt enormous governmental changes which knowing this alphabet is like trying to work the integral and differential calculus with mastering the ground rules of arithmetic.....

In suffragist speeches and writings, no mention is made of what women would do if they had a vote.....

It is doubtful, whether in the whole suffrage body, a woman could be found who has an intelligent view of these subjects; nevertheless the suffragists clamor to vote on these and all other matter.....

The suffragists have assumed that the revolution would be over when a woman can walk up to the polling booth and deposit a ballot in the box. It is at this point, however, that the revolution would begin. It is true that limited suffrage prevails in twenty to states, and full suffrage in five – Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah and Washington, and still there is no general revolution. But it must be remembered that in the state where there is limited suffrage, women have shown a general indifference to exercising suffrage, while the experiment in the five newer and sparsely settled state in which there is full suffrage affords no adequate test for full suffrage in great centers of civilization, and in vast and crowded communities, with immense and diversified interests.

Wyoming is a state of cowboys and cattle ranges. Idaho is dominated to a great degree by the Mormon Church, which has ever been the good friend of woman suffrage, and the most powerful advocate it has yet had. In Utah, the women voters, under the lead of Mormonism, have voted steadily in favor of polygamists and law breakers, who have been sent to Congress, in defiance of the law, by the votes of women. In the state of Washington, the experiment has been too recent to afford any data. In may be noted however, that the same phenomenon was repeated in

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Washington as in Colorado. When woman suffrage was adopted in Colorado in 1893, the state had the highest divorce rate of any state or territory in the Union. When Washington adopted woman suffrage in 1910, that state led every state and territory in the Union in divorce.....

Besides, voting is not a right at all, and those who speak of it as a right show ignorance of the nature of suffrage.....

Supposing the ballots of women, however, to have been deposited by the indulgence of men, women will surely be called upon to legislate for men upon subjects of which no woman had ever had, or ever can have, any practical experience. True, men now legislate for women. But there is no trade, profession, or handicraft, of which women have a monopoly, and in which no man has any experience. It has often been pointed out that women could not, with justice, ask to legislate upon matters of war and peace, as no woman can do military duty; but this point may be extended much further. No woman can have any practical knowledge of shipping and navigation, of the work of trainmen on railways, of mining, or of many other subjects of the highest importance. Their legislation, therefore, would not probably be intelligent, and the laws they devised for the betterment of sailors, trainmen, miners, etc., might be highly objectionable to the very persons they sought to benefit. If obedience should be refused to these laws, who is to enforce them? The men? Is it likely they will? And if the effort should be made, what stupendous disorders would occur! The entire execution of the law would be in the hand of men, backed up by an irresponsible electorate which could not lift a finger to apprehend or punish a criminal. And if all the dangers and difficulties of executing the law lay upon men, what right have women to make the law?.....

So far, however, from the suffragists showing any antagonism to divorce, there seems to be a close relation between suffrage and divorce..... Some of their most prominent leaders are divorced women.....

But that woman suffrage tends to divorce is plain to all who know anything of men and women. Political differences in families, between brother, for example, who vote on differing sides, do not promote harmony. How much more inharmonious must be political differences between a husband and wife, each of whom has a vote which may be used as a weapon against the other? What is likely to be the state of the family, when the husband votes one ticket, and the wife votes another?

Source: An excerpt from Mary Elliot Seawell's book *The Ladies' Battle*, written in 1911

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Document C

My Dear Mr. President:

I am greatly gratified to read in the afternoon paper that you intend to remain firm in your past attitude regarding the proposed amendment to the Constitution for woman's suffrage. Although doubting whether the best interests of women would be promoted by being clothed with right of suffrage, yet if I lived in the North, or any other state not having a large negro population, I could probably be induced to favor it as a state matter. Neither am I stickler for the rights of the states in matter not fundamental. However, I am so clearly convinced that the fathers acted wisely when they decline to grant to the Federal Government the right to fix the qualifications of suffrage, that my judgment appears to be unalterable. To illustrate one evil result. It would be most unfortunate for North Carolina, because the Fifteenth Amendment would automatically apply and confer suffrage upon negro women. The same illustration would apply more acutely to South Carolina and Mississippi. Thirty – six states ought not to have the right to impose this result on Mississippi. I believe the thoughtful people of the country, regardless of their party allegiance, now regard the adoption of the fifteenth Amendment as an error, particularly at the period of its adoption.

If the Federal Government may negatively restrain a state from regulating suffrage, it might with equal or greater propriety be granted the power by positive enactment to forbid the manufacture or sale of intoxicating liquors. I am opposed to this last amendment, and I have been gratified at your position thereon.

Unless my study of the fundamentals upon which this great Democracy is based are incorrect, its perpetuity depends upon preserving to the states the right of local self government and the full exercise of its police powers regarding all strictly local matters.

If one is to consider political expediency in considering a fundamental question of government, our Party will not lose any strength in this election by the maintenance of your position, that the states should retain the right to regulate suffrage. Mr. Hughes appears to give two reasons for his recent conversion. He says he has come to favor women's suffrage by Constitutional amendment in order to stop the agitation, and further because the country ought to have a uniform policy on the question. I respectfully submit that his reasons are weak.

I tried to make an appointment today to see you, in order to make to you a similar expression, but learned that you were not making further engagements this week. This was before I read the afternoon paper.

I believe we are going to win, and my humble way I wish to take part in achieving the victory.

I beg pardon for the intrusion on your time

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Very Sincerely,

John H. Small

Source: Letter written by John H. Small, congressional member from North Carolina to the president after reading an article in the local newspaper that confirmed President Wilson anti-suffrage stands.

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Document D

When the history of the conversion of the American male electorate in acquiescence in votes for women comes to be written, one of the most interesting chapters in the whole volume will be the account of President Wilson's progress from somewhat equivocal opposition to a similar equivocal advocacy. Previous to his election to the presidency and for some time thereafter he was not willing to trust women with the vote, although he was too prudent publicly to announce his opinions. Later when pressed for a frank statement he sheltered himself behind his party, and refused to use his influence in favor of suffrage, because his party had not instructed him what to say and to do. Later still when the submission of a suffrage amendment in New Jersey compelled him to announce a personal preference, he elected to vote for the enfranchisement of women, but in doing so he was still careful to disassociate his preference from any party meaning or any special responsibility for urging others to follow his example.

Recently his party declared for women suffrage insofar as it could be obtained by amending state constitutions, and Mr. Wilson is known to share this attitude. It is the inevitable attitude of a party politician in approaching suffrage, because it squares his record without committing him or his associates to any responsibility for promoting their ostensible opinions.

He has reached, consequently, the stage of not overtly opposing a federal amendment, at least during a campaign against an opponent who frankly favors it. Probably he will not progress further than this during the present campaign, but suffragists may well be encouraged to believe that the firm yet discreet exercise of a little more pressure will finally open the president's mind to the advantage of securing suffrage by means of a federal amendment.

Source: Unknown author, *The New Republic* A Journal of Opinion. New York, September 16, 1916

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Document E

There are various reasons assigned why the amendment should be passed and many why it should not be passed. There are many people who believe in the right of women to exercise suffrage who cannot, so long as they represent the will of the majority of the people and oppose the destruction of the rights of States, consent to the granting of suffrage by Federal amendment. Some contend that the mingling of women in politics would purify the electorate and make the Government safer and better. They may be correct. Others contend that such conduct would render women less modest and therefore less worthy of the respect of men, and at last produce a race wanting in that delicate refinement and feeling of sentiment that comes from the tender and confiding life of a pure woman, unstained with the gross and sinister methods of political life. This may possibly be true. It is most likely true that both ideas present a remote contingency and cannot be of much value in the practical determination of the question. Logically, no man can deny that a woman is entitled to all the rights and privileges, including the right of suffrage, that men enjoy; nor has man the moral right to determine whether it is best for women to exercise the right to vote or not. Women should be permitted to determine for themselves that which they think is best for them. For men to determine that women ought not to vote is to destroy the equal justice to which the sexes are entitled.....

Again, the advocates of the Federal amendment say to you. Why? The Constitution prohibits the denial of the right of suffrage to any person by reason of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Are you not therefore willing to give to the white women of the country the same rights that the negro man has?" Of course this is a mere ad hominem argument, just like a good woman always uses. The negro man does not get affirmatively his right to vote by the fifteenth amendment. But that amendment is a restriction on the liberty of the State and its sovereign power in the selection of its electors. It should not have been passed. The fact that this wrong was done does not justify the perpetration of another wrong along the same line. Then, too, this amendment was passed at the close of a long and bloody war, when the real South had no voice in the Government. Many of the States of the South that were forced to vote for this amendment voted at a time when a majority of its best citizens were disfranchised and had no voice in the local government of the States. It is the only amendment to the Federal Constitution that was coerced. I have no objection to the colored man voting, but this privilege should have come from the States.....

It has been insisted that the real purpose of this amendment is the basis for political legislation that will ultimately deprive the Southern States of representation in part in Congress and their force in national affairs. This may be and probably is true. It could occur if Congress should force, all persons to vote under penalties. For Tennessee to grant suffrage to her women would be no material harm to the State, but to deprive her of the right by Federal amendment to do so' or to force her to do so would be to deprive her of her' sovereign power. Some of the Southern States

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are in a different' attitude from Tennessee and Kentucky and other border States which have but a small colored population. In those Southern States where the colored population outnumbered the white to double the number of ignorant voters by giving the colored woman the right to vote would produce a condition that would be absolutely intolerable. We owe something to the wishes and the sentiments of the people of our sister States struggling to maintain law and order and white supremacy, 'and If suffrage' can be given to the women State by State, as the States will it, and the errors and injustice as to some of the States could be avoided which a Federal amendment would produce, it would seem the part of wisdom to do so.

Source: John A Moon of Tennessee, excerpt from a congressional hearing on January 10, 1918 on the 19th amendment and woman suffrage.

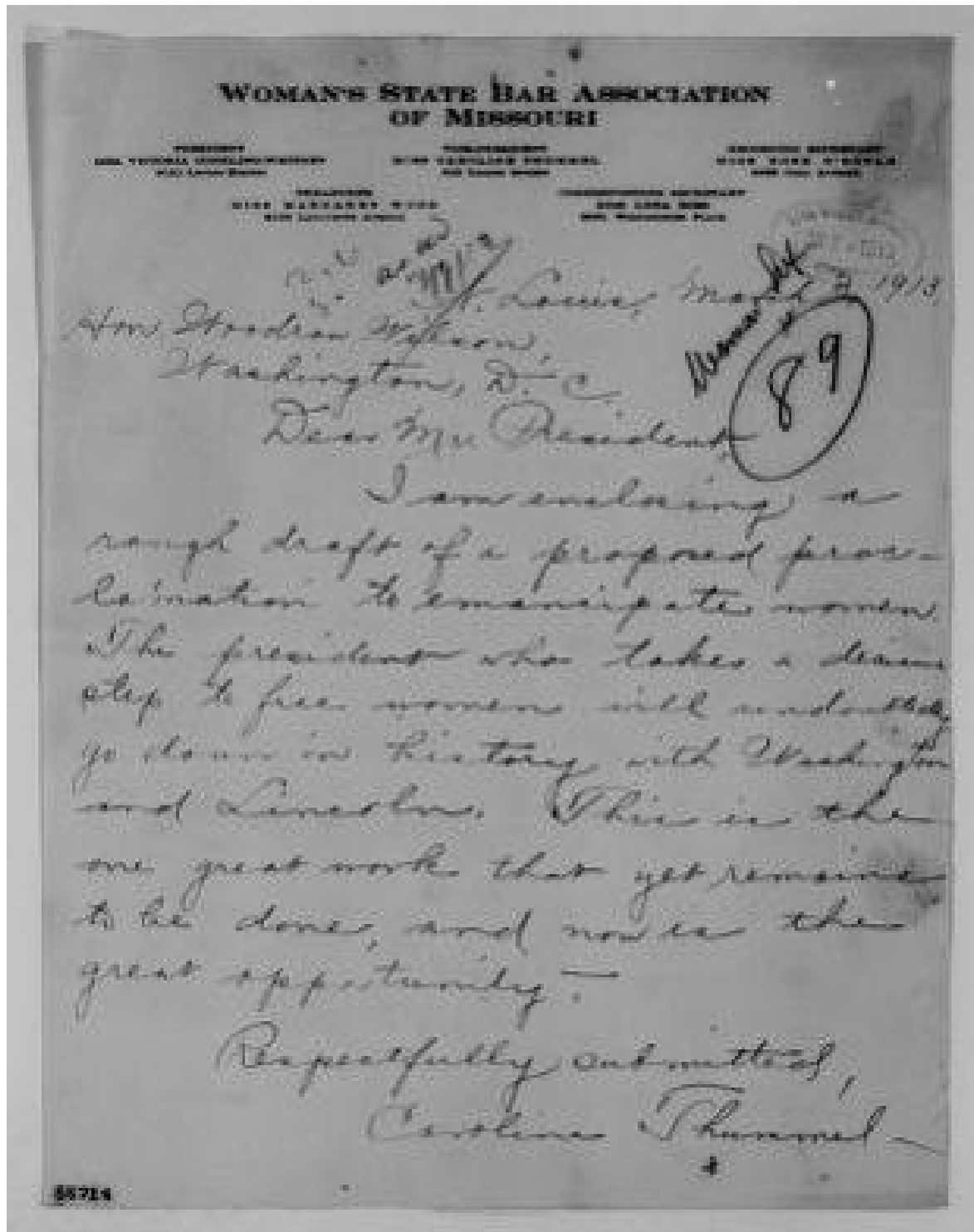
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Document F



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Transcript of document.

Dear Mr. President,

I am enclosing a rough draft of a proposed proclamation to emancipate women. The president who takes a decisive step to free women will undoubtedly go down in history with Washington and Lincoln. This is the one great work that yet remains to be done and now is the great opportunity.

Respectfully submitted

Caroline Thummel

Source: Caroline Thummel, Vice President of the Woman's State Bar Association of Missouri. Received by the White House on March 3, 1913

Wilson, Woodrow. *Woodrow Wilson Papers: Series 4: Executive Office File, -1921; 89, 1913, Mar.-Apr. 1913*. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss4602900303/>.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

Student will source and analyze each document by completing the table below.

Document Letter	Date and Author	Sourcing -Bias -Point of View -Historical Context	Why did the author oppose or support suffrage?	Evidence from the text that supports your claim.	How might this influence President Wilson

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Document Letter	Date and Author	Sourcing -Bias -Point of View -Historical Context	Why did the author oppose or support suffrage?	Evidence from the text that supports your claim.	How might this influence President Wilson

Corroborate the documents provided.

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1. Identify and explain the documents that are most likely to influence the President Wilson and his actions on woman's suffrage.

Document Letter _____

Explanation:

Document Letter _____

Explanation:

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Document Letter _____

Explanation:

Document Letter _____

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Explanation:

2. Identify and explain the documents that are least likely to influence the President Wilson and his actions on woman's suffrage.

Document Letter _____

Explanation:

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Use the evidence from the documents provided to respond to the brief constructive response questions

1. Briefly explain why an argument based on race would be an effective strategy to convince President Wilson and others to vote for or against women's suffrage and the 19th amendment during the early 1900s?
2. Briefly explain why an argument based on gender would be an effective strategy to convince President Wilson and others to vote for or against woman's suffrage and the 19th amendment during the early 1900s?
3. Pick one of the strategies and briefly describe today's effective use or misuse of that selected strategy.

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Suggested Look for.....

Document Letter	Date and Author	Sourcing -Bias -Point of View -Historical Context	Why did the author oppose or support suffrage?	Evidence from the text that supports your claim.	How might this influence President Wilson
A	Mary Church Terrell	-African American woman -Suffrage -Middle class -Race woman -Club woman	Support -Freedom -Equality -Protection -Social Mobility	“When one reads.....the nation’s destroy in their hands.	Students should use this section to explain why this question should persuade or inform the president.
B	Mary Elliot Seawell. 1911	-White woman -Anti-suffrage -Middle class	Oppose -Ignorance -Lack of ability -Miscarriage or misunderstanding of freedom and equality	Beside, voting.....nature of suffrage. Their legislation, therefore.....persons they sought to benefit.	Students should use this section to explain why this question should persuade or inform the president.
C	John H. Small	-White man -Upper Middle class -Southerner -Congressional member	Oppose -Inequality -Lack of experience -Limited federal government -State’s Rights	Unless my study.....police powers regarding all strictly local matters.	Students should use this section to explain why this question should persuade or inform the president.

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Document Letter	Date and Author	Sourcing -Bias -Point of View -Historical Context	Why did the author oppose or support suffrage?	Evidence from the text that supports your claim.	How might this influence President Wilson
D	Unknown, Sept. 16, 1916	-Maybe a East Coast Resident -New Jersey/ New York resident -Information about suffrage and Mr. Wilson	Unclear but seems to favor the ideas of Woman's Suffrage	Probably he will bot progress further.....by means of a federal amendment.	Students should use this section to explain why this question should persuade or inform the president.
E	John Moon 1918	-White man -Upper middle class -Southerner -Congressional member	Oppose -Fear -Maintenance of white supremacy	In those Southern states where.....be absolutely intolerable.	Students should use this section to explain why this question should persuade or inform the president.
F	Caroline Thummel, March 3, 1913	-White woman -Midwesterners -Club woman	Support -History -Legacy -Public image	The president who takes a.....done now is the great opportunity.	Students should use this section to explain why this question should persuade or inform the president.

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