ART ACROSS THE CURRICULUM | HISTORY

ANALYSING HISTORICAL SOURCES FROM THE WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENTS

LEVEL 7

OVERVIEW

This resource introduces students to the women's suffrage movement in the United Kingdom using primary and secondary sources from The Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family Suffrage Research Collection at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV). Through scaffolded activities, students analyse historical evidence and interpret the perspectives of women who were involved in the movement at the time. Students then complete a written activity using historical sources to support their analysis.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Ask questions of sources that identify origin, content, function and explain context
• Differentiate between primary sources (those from the time of the event/person/site being investigated) and secondary sources (those that represent later interpretation)
• Organise historical sources into types including artefacts, visual, written and audio
• Examine the history of women’s suffrage with a focus on the United Kingdom suffrage movement
• Formulate a letter which examines the perspectives of women in the suffragette movement using historical sources

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM LINKS

• Asking questions of sources that identify origin, content, explaining context, and analysing reliability the usefulness about the historical context (VCHHC099)
• Differentiating between primary sources (those from the time of the event/person/site being investigated) and secondary sources (those that represent later interpretation) (VCHHC099).
• Organising historical sources into artefacts, visual, written, audio (VCHHC099).
ABOUT THE WORKS

1. THE KRYSTYNA CAMPBELL-PRETTY AM AND FAMILY SUFFRAGE RESEARCH COLLECTION

You might think that women have always had the right to stand in elections and vote, but that isn’t the case. It wasn’t until the late 19th and early 20th century that women were given equal democratic freedoms to men, and only in certain countries, such as New Zealand and Australia. To create this change, women campaigned using both peaceful and confrontational tactics in organised societies known collectively as the women’s suffrage movement.

In the United Kingdom, numerous women’s suffrage societies were established during the mid-19th century and women were eventually granted the same voting rights as men in England in 1928. This momentous event in social history was also a significant time in the history of popular design and fashion with the birth of modernism.

Designers and artists created jewellery, accessories, ceramics, banners, printed items and other artistic objects, which featured distinctive colour schemes and logos to promote the suffrage message and build their political advantage. A wide selection of these objects are kept in the Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family Suffrage Research Collection at the NGV, offering an abundant supply of primary and secondary sources that can be used as evidence to learn more about this period in history.

Visual images defined the suffrage movement, from the purple, green and white sashes worn by the Women’s Social and Political Union, to the ‘Votes for Women’ posters designed by Hilda Dallas and distributed in their thousands around London and beyond. New technologies were also used in printing and distributing daily newspapers.

EXAMPLE SOURCES

The following examples of objects, clothing and documents in The Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family Suffrage Research Collection are recommended for use in conjunction with the activities in this resource. To explore the Collection and find more sources to incorporate, visit NGV International or the NGV website https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/womens-suffrage-research-collection

DRESS AND ADORNMENT

Sashes were an essential part of the ‘suffrage uniform’ and were worn at demonstrations, processions and other public events to visually identify suffrage campaigners. This sash design was first seen at the Women’s Sunday march held on 21 June 1908. In the lead up to that event, the Women’s Social and Political Union treasurer, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence selected the colours white (for purity), purple (for royalty, freedom and dignity), and green (for hope) to represent the WSPU. She impressed on women the importance of sporting the colours, rightly believing that the white, purple and green would become synonymous with the suffrage cause.
MEDALS AND HONOURS

Medals for Valour, such as this one and another in the Collection awarded to Grace Chappelow, were presented by the Women’s Social and Political Union to women who had endured a hunger strike while serving a prison sentence for an act of suffrage militancy. Few of these medals were awarded, making receiving one the crowning achievement for a suffragette. The significance of these medals is emphasised by their comparable design to military medals of bravery.

POSTERS AND POSTCARDS

In 1910, composer and suffrage campaigner Ethel Smyth composed March of the Women as the official anthem of the Women’s Social and Political Union, based on the rousing melody of a traditional Italian folk song. The lyrics were written by journalist and suffragist Cicely Hamilton. March of the Women was widely adopted around the world as a rallying cry for suffragists, and was sung at rallies, meetings and in prison. When composer Thomas Beecham visited Smyth in Holloway Prison in 1912, he reportedly found her conducting a group of women singing the anthem, keeping time with a toothbrush.
LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS

Selina Martin (author)
England 1882–1972
page one from No title c. 1909
coloured ink on paper
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Shaw Research Library
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family Suffrage Research Collection

Selina Martin (author)
England 1882–1972
page two from No title c. 1909
coloured ink on paper
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Shaw Research Library
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family Suffrage Research Collection

Selina Martin (author)
England 1882–1972
page six from No title c. 1909
coloured ink on paper
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Shaw Research Library
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family Suffrage Research Collection

Court summons 1909
paper, ink
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Shaw Research Library
Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM and Family Suffrage Research Collection

Suffragette Selina Martin wrote this six-page typewritten account detailing the period from her arrest on 21 December 1909 to her release from Walton Gaol on 3 February 1910. In this first-person description, the reality and brutality of the suffrage hunger strikes and the subsequent force feeding of women who undertook them is graphically presented. Hunger strikes in gaol were seen by the leaders of the militant Women’s Social and Political Union as an important tool in publicising and arousing support for the suffrage movement, with accounts featured in Votes for Women.

This court summons was issued to suffragette Selina Martin (under her alias Mary Richards) in September 1909 when she was charged with wilful damage for smashing fourteen panes of glass. Martin was imprisoned many times and was effectively a ‘professional’ suffrage militant. She took part in five demonstrations that included militant incidents between May and September 1909 and spent much of the next year either in prison or recovering from hunger strikes. Only a relatively small group of women were willing to engage in militant activity, so activists like Martin were highly valued by the Pankhurst-led Women's Social and Political Union.
Named for suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst and her political adversary, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, ‘Pank-a-Squith’ was one of many toys and games sold by the Women’s Social and Political Union to raise funds for their campaign. Games were a vehicle for the suffrage message to reach a broad audience and inoffensively enter middle-class homes. Pank-a-Squith is similar to Snakes and Ladders: each player moves their suffragette game figure along a spiral of squares from their ‘home’ to the Houses of Parliament, navigating obstacles, prejudices and obstructions along the way. The first player to reach the final square of ‘universal suffrage’ is the winner.

This figurine was first made in 1978 to mark fifty years of universal female suffrage in England. The figure holds a pamphlet in one hand and a ‘votes for women’ poster in the other, and wears a sash and rosette in the purple, white and green colours of the Women’s Social and Political Union. Royal Doulton was the first established ceramic firm to create products inspired by the suffrage movement. In 1909, it produced two ceramic inkwell figurines that alluded to the 1909 suffrage march on parliament. Both figures were squat and featured dour facial expressions. Although not explicitly anti-suffragist, the inkwells did not depict suffrage activists in a positive light.
PRE-VISIT WARMUP

2. OBJECT ANALYSIS GUIDE – HOUSEHOLD OBJECT INVESTIGATION

Imagine you are an archaeologist or time detective.

1. Select an item from your classroom or your house (e.g. kitchen, bathroom), or even better, ask someone else to select one for you.

2. Imagine it’s an artefact from a lost civilisation and you have never seen it before. Answer the following questions:
   - What do you notice about this artefact? Describe its shape, size, weight, smell and sound.
   - What material/s is it made from?
   - When might it have been made, and why?
   - What do you think its function might be, and why do you think that?

3. Formulate three questions you have about the artefact after studying it.

4. Create a sketch of the artefact and annotate/label it.
A perspective is a person’s point of view, the way in which they see and understand events going on around them. When studying history, primary and secondary sources are important resources for us to explore different perspectives of a past event and understand the lives of the people who were involved.

A primary source is evidence that was made at the time of the historical event, for example an eye-witness account, a letter or an object that was made at that time. A secondary source is the evidence of someone who was not present at the time of the event, for example a textbook or something written by an historian afterwards.

Organise each of the example sources about the women’s suffrage movement into:

5. Type: Such as artefact, audio, visual or written.
6. Source: Is it a primary source or a secondary source?
7. Perspective: Whose perspective is being shown by this piece of evidence?

Example

Votes for Women, sash c. 1909. Toye and Co., London (distributor)

1. Type: Artefact
2. Source: Primary source
3. Perspective: This object is showing the perspective of women suffragettes in the United Kingdom, who were fighting for the right to vote. These sashes were worn as a uniform by those marching in the demonstrations. The sash shows the colours that were chosen to symbolise the women’s cause – white (purity), purple (royalty, freedom and dignity) and green (hope).
ACTIVITY

4. OBJECT ANALYSIS GUIDE – SUFFRAGETTE MATERIAL

Now that you have had some practise analysing sources from the suffragette movement, visit The Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM And Family Suffrage Research Collection at NGV International or research the NGV website and choose your own historical artefact to examine in more detail.

1. Use the information about the artefact to fill in the object-analysis guide, examining the piece of evidence from every angle, using all your senses.
2. Record your observations in column one, using the questions as prompts to guide you.
3. Include any further questions or areas of research you’d like to conduct in column two.
## ARTEFACT ANALYSIS:

Name of artefact: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MY OBSERVATIONS</th>
<th>MY QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artefact Features:</strong> What is it made of?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe its shape and size</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you see any writing or pictures on it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it complete or broken?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artefact History:</strong> When was it made?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who made it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who might have owned it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artefact Function:</strong> What was it made to do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does it have a practical use, or a decorative one, or both?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artefact Perspectives:</strong> Would this artefact have been important to someone? If so, who?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this artefact still important today? Why/Why not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose perspective is shown through this artefact?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POST-VISIT PROJECT

IN SCHOOL

5. PERSPECTIVES OF A SUFFRAGETTE: LETTER WRITING ACTIVITY

Imagine you are a suffragette in the United Kingdom during the early 20th century, fighting for your right to vote. Write a letter to someone detailing your experiences. You could imagine you’re writing to a fellow suffragette in prison, or that you yourself are being held there for campaigning for equal rights.

Use the ‘Letters and Documents’ section from page 4 for some ideas and include references to these primary sources to support your historical experience.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Zoë Thomas, Selling Suffrage: Visual culture and merchandise, NGV Online Essay, 2020

Women’s Suffrage | A Curator’s Perspective, NGV Melbourne, Youtube, 2020
www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Z4FV2Dp3tE