

## Lesson Plan: North Dakota Votes for Women Campaign

**Overview of Lesson:** Students will read documents of the suffrage campaign and view political cartoons related to the suffrage movement. Students will use documents to understand the history of woman suffrage in North Dakota and will analyze the language and arguments on both sides of the suffrage issue.

**Grade level:** Grade 9-12. Teachers may choose to use any or all of the four activities.

**Objectives:** Students will learn who the suffragists were, gain insight into the arguments surrounding the campaign for woman suffrage, and learn how political ideas are presented in cartoons.

**Resources:** In addition to resources provided in this lesson plan, refer to North Dakota Studies, Eighth Grade ([ndstudies.gov/gr8](http://ndstudies.gov/gr8)) Unit III, Lesson 4, Topic 8.

<https://www.ndstudies.gov/gr8/content/unit-iii-waves-development-1861-1920/lesson-4-alliances-and-conflicts/topic-8-suffrage>

and North Dakota Studies High School Primary Document Sets:

[http://www.history.nd.gov/textbook/unit4\\_1\\_suffrage\\_intro.html](http://www.history.nd.gov/textbook/unit4_1_suffrage_intro.html)

Teachers may also refer to “A Brief History of Woman Suffrage in North Dakota” in this lesson.

**Learning the Language of the Women’s Suffrage Movement.** Before engaging students in the study of the historical Votes for Women campaign, the students should become familiar with the vocabulary of the movement. Here is a list of important words.

**Voting or Vote.** A personal expression of a choice, often used in making political decisions. For example: “I cast a vote for president today.”

**Suffrage:** The right of citizens to vote in public elections. Women asked for suffrage or to be included in the right to vote.

**Suffragist:** A woman or a man who supported voting rights for women. Suffragette was the term used in England for women who campaigned for the right to vote.

**Franchise or the franchise.** Another word for the vote. This is also used in the verb form as in “Women were enfranchised in 1920.”

**Campaign:** The actions of an organization to gain public support in order to accomplish a goal or goals.

**Constitution:** A body of rules, customs, or laws. A constitution provides a framework for government. Each of the states, many American Indian tribes, and the United States have a constitution.

**Amendment:** A correction to a document. An amendment makes a correction that changes or improves the U.S. or a state constitution. The verb form is to amend.



## Activity 1. Understanding the language of the suffrage campaign.

**Suffragist vs. Suffragette.** American women preferred the term *suffragist*. British women were called *suffragettes* (using the French feminine suffix), and though it was used disparagingly by the opponents of woman suffrage to belittle women who wanted to vote, many British suffrage advocates defiantly claimed the term with pride.

**Discuss:** Which of these terms (suffragist or suffragette) can be applied to men who supported woman suffrage?

**Votes for Women.** The national organizations campaigning for the extension of suffrage to women used the word suffrage, for example the *National American Woman Suffrage Association*. However, in North Dakota, organizations used a title that more clearly stated their goal: *Votes for Women Leagues*.

**Discuss:** Does the title of the organization make a difference in how the members are perceived by the general public or by politicians?

**Right to Vote.** Suffragists often raised the question of women's *rights* in relation to the processes of government. The Declaration of Independence asserts the right of the governed to participate in government:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

**Discuss:** Before 1920, did North Dakota women have the same rights as men?

**Discuss or write a short essay:** Is voting a right or a privilege? Is voting a right that applies to all citizens? Are there limits such as sex, race, wealth, other condition to citizenship rights?



## Activity 2. Analyzing the News: What did North Dakotans say about suffrage?

**Read:** Newspaper clippings and excerpts from the legislature’s suffrage debates help us understand what people thought and said about woman suffrage between 1885 and 1914. People expressed their views (also called arguments or positions) in letters to the editor, in the legislature, in editorials, and in press releases which newspapers published.

**Analyze:** Choose one set of documents. Read each and answer the following questions as part of your analysis. Document Set A: Numbers 1, 2, and 3; Document Set B: Numbers 4, 5, 8, and 12; Document Set C: Numbers 6, 7, 9, and 10.

1. Is the person writing or speaking for or against woman suffrage?

---

---

2. What words and phrases will steer the readers’ views in one direction or the other.

---

---

---

3. How do the writers describe the way people cast their votes?

---

---

---

4. When men vote on the issue of woman suffrage (as in 1914 when the full suffrage measure went to the voters), is the outcome a true measure of women’s interest in voting?

---

---

5. Do the writers or speakers use humor? Explain your answer.

---

---

---

**Write:** Based on your analysis (answers to the above questions), write a paper of about 500 or so words that addresses one of these topics:

- a. Which of the documents you read was the most effective in presenting an argument? Why was it effective? Would this document help someone make up his/her mind about whether women should have the privilege of voting?
- b. Some of these documents use humor to make a point. Is humor a useful tool in discussing political issues? Explain your answer with logic or examples.
- c. Does it matter if women want to vote or do not want to vote? How did women express their interest in voting?
- d. How does suffrage history relate to current topics in American political discussions?

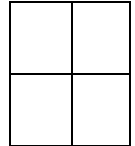


### Activity 3. Analyzing a Political Cartoon

## Worksheet

Images, whether paintings, drawings, cartoons, or photographs, are made up of details that combine to convey a message. The Artist who made the photo or drawing is trying to tell the Viewer something. The Viewer, however, brings her or his own ideas to the image which may affect the message. Use this worksheet to analyze a cartoon in the Political Cartoons File to determine the Artist's message. Then, determine how you, the Viewer, understand the message.

1. What do you see in this Image? It may help to use your imagination to divide the image into quadrants (four parts). Examine each part carefully to find all the details.



---

---

---

How many people are in the image? Are they men or women?

---

---

2. What are the people wearing?

---

---

3. Are there objects in the picture? Are people carrying objects? What are the objects?

---

---

4. Are there labels on the people or the objects?

---

---



5. Does this image have a political message? What do you think the message is?

---

---

6. Does this image evoke an emotional response? What is your feeling about this image?

---

---

7. Read the caption. What is the message the Artist was sending in to the Viewer?

---

---

8. What was your response to this image? Did you respond to the image in the way you think the Artist wanted you to? Do you think the Artist made the message clear? Does the image have the same message today as it had when it was first published?

---

---

---

---

---

9. Look at a political cartoon in a recent newspaper or choose a cartoon from [politicalcartoons.com](http://politicalcartoons.com) or [usnews.com/cartoons](http://usnews.com/cartoons). Apply your analytical skills to the cartoon. Comment on the image, the message, and the effectiveness of this cartoon.

---

---

---



## Activity 4. Debating Suffrage

In a democracy like ours, debate about ideas or the best way to accomplish legislative goals is important. While debates might seem acrimonious or contentious, they help to clarify people's interests and political positions.

In this activity, organize your class into debate teams. Choose one of the topics listed below. Each topic should be addressed by two teams – one takes the affirmative (supports the statement); the other takes the negative (opposes the statement). You may use a formal debate style or discuss the statement as a panel of "experts." As you prepare for the debate, imagine that you are living before 1920.

The class will listen to the debates and draw conclusions from the strength of your arguments. You may choose to appoint debate judges who will determine a winner (and present their reasons for their decision) or the class as a whole might choose the winner.

Conduct research using the documents in the Documents File. You may do some research of your own in the library or use online research tools listed below.

### Excellent online research sites for North Dakota Documents:

- a. Hathi Trust Digital Library. [https://www.hathitrust.org/digital\\_library](https://www.hathitrust.org/digital_library). Here you will find the *Journal of the North Dakota Constitutional Convention, 1889* and the *Official Report of the Proceedings and Debates of the Constitutional Convention*. This site is searchable.
- b. Chronicling America. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>. This site contains a collection of digitized historical newspapers. Many North Dakota newspapers are included. This site is searchable.
- c. National Archives. [archives.gov](https://www.archives.gov/). This site will offer a view of national suffrage issues.

### Debate Topics:

1. Resolved: Voting is a privilege that must be earned, not an inherent right.
2. Resolved: the 1917 law extending limited suffrage to women is not constitutional according to Article V, Sections; 121 and 122 of the North Dakota Constitution. (See below)
3. Resolved: Women should not vote because they must not neglect their responsibilities to their homes and children.

Article V, Sections 121 and 122, Constitution of North Dakota, 1889. "The legislative assembly shall be empowered to make further extensions of suffrage hereafter, at its discretion, to all citizens of mature age and sound mind, not convicted of a crime, without regard to sex; but no law extending or restricting the right of suffrage shall be in force until adopted by a majority of the electors of the state voting at a general election."

