

The Fight for Women's Suffrage: Comparing Points of View

Duration

One class session of approximately 45 minutes

Resources

1. Teacher Commentary



2. Student Handout



3. Homework



Objectives of Lesson

- To practice identifying and comparing points of view from two authors on the same topic

Common Core Standard

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6:** Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Student Activities

- Practice identifying and comparing points of view in multiple primary source documents.
- Practice identifying details used to support a claim and uphold a point of view.

How to Use This Lesson

This lesson is designed to have students compare the points of view of two or more authors in order to determine how they approach the same topic. The passages that were selected for this exercise relate to the debate over women's suffrage in the United States, but the techniques used to explore the authors' points of view are designed to be universal. The lesson includes several different components designed to reinforce comparative analysis skills, including close reading questions, notes about historical context that can help establish the authors' perspectives, and suggestions for classroom extension activities.

NOTES

Write or type in this area.

The lesson includes two student-facing components: a handout designed to be completed with guidance from a teacher and a homework assignment that students should be able to complete on their own. The teacher's version of the handout is annotated with notes, discussion questions, and suggestions to guide the class through the lesson. The homework assignment builds on the techniques reviewed in the lesson and encourages students to focus on how claims are supported within a point of view.



*Official Program for the Woman Suffrage Procession
in Washington D.C., March 3, 1913*

NOTES

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The Fight for Women's Suffrage: Comparing Points of View

Background Information

The first wave of the suffrage movement in the United States, led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, raised awareness of the issues faced by women in the late 19th century. However, the early efforts to establish more rights for women did not lead to widespread legislative change that would allow women to cast votes in national elections. By the early 20th century, the country had become increasingly divided on the issue of whether or not women should be allowed to vote. The excerpts included in this lesson are from the suffragette era, when advocates of women's suffrage turned to increasingly radical methods. In addition to staging public marches, some suffragettes protested at the White House, engaged in hunger strikes, and made public demands for change. In January 1917, over 200 people were arrested for picketing the White House with banners that compared President Woodrow Wilson to the German Kaiser.

Key Terms

- **Suffrage:** the right to vote
- **Inauguration:** the beginning of a new system
- **Especial:** greater than usual
- **Popular will:** the desires of the population as a whole

Source 1: President Grover Cleveland, "Opinions of Patriots Against Woman Suffrage," *Tulsa Daily World*, November 3, 1918

Before You Read

What do you know about early the 20th-century United States or President Cleveland?

Write or type your response in this area.

Commentary

- ① This lesson plan focuses explicitly on the early 20th century. If you have reviewed earlier women's rights movements in your class, you may want to spend some time connecting to previous material.
- ② The Library of Congress includes an extensive collection of primary source materials on women's suffrage that can be used to enhance this lesson.
<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/womens-suffrage/>
- ③ The women's suffrage protests at the White House marked the first time that protestors had staged an event for a social cause directly at the White House.
- ④ Consider reviewing the importance of understanding historical context here.
Discussion Questions
 1. What was the relationship between the United States and Germany after WWI?
 2. Why would it be considered particularly insulting to compare the U.S. president to the German Kaiser?
- ⑤ President Cleveland is typically not a well studied president. If students cannot recall any information about President Cleveland, encourage them to make connections to the larger historical time period and life in the interwar period.

How could being president affect Cleveland’s opinion of female suffrage? ⑥

Write or type your response in this area.

Source 1: President Grover Cleveland, “Opinions of Patriots Against Woman Suffrage,” *Tulsa Daily World*, November 3, 1918

“I am willing to admit that it was only after a more thorough appreciation of what female suffrage really means that I became fully convinced that its inauguration would vastly increase the unhappy imperfections and shortcomings of our present man-voting suffrage. It’s especial susceptibility to bad leadership and other hurtful influences would constitute it another menacing condition to those which already vex and disturb the deliberate and intelligent expression of the popular will.” ⑦

After You Read

What was President Cleveland’s view of female suffrage? ⑧

Write or type your response in this area.

How did President Cleveland support his position? ⑨

Write or type your response in this area.

- ⑥ President Cleveland had been elected by an all-male voting population. How could that cause him concern about changing the voting population?
- ⑦ Consider focusing on this line with students. President Cleveland clearly saw thought that there were flaws in the current voting system. This is one of the points that both suffragettes and anti-suffragettes agreed on. However, they disagreed on how to solve the problems they saw.
- ⑧ President Cleveland did not support female suffrage.
- ⑨ President Cleveland argued that female suffrage would damage a political system that was already deeply flawed because, in his opinion, female voters could be easily swayed by bad leadership.

Source 2: “Letter to Senator Frank B. Kellogg from Hattie Bordewich,” May 23, 1918

Before You Read

What do you know about the women’s rights movement in the early 20th century United States? ⑩

Write or type your response in this area.

Why would someone write a letter to their senator? ⑪

Write or type your response in this area.

Source 2: “Letter to Senator Frank B. Kellogg from Hattie Bordewich,” May 23, 1918

“I have earned my own living since I was eighteen, can read and write good English and take an interest in the affairs of my country; I pay taxes and can only vote at school meetings and for County Superintendent of Schools, while many men who do none of these things, may vote indiscriminately. I want equal suffrage for women and would appreciate the aid of our Minnesota delegation in Congress to this end.” ⑫

After You Read

What was Hattie Bordewich’s view of female suffrage? ⑬

Write or type your response in this area.

How did Hattie Bordewich support her position? ⑭

Write or type your response in this area.

⑩ There are very few historical records that describe the life of Hattie Bordewich. When it is not possible to know information about the author, students can draw conclusions from more general characteristics.

⑪ This is a great way to help your students draw connections between different forms of protest. While some people continue to mail letters of protest to their senators, other forms of protest (like commenting on social media) have become more popular. Encourage students to think about different ways to get their political opinions heard.

⑫ Voting laws varied significantly throughout the country. While some locations allowed women to vote locally, they were prohibited from voting in national elections.

⑬ Hattie Bordewich was in favor of female suffrage.

⑭ Bordewich makes the argument that women deserved to vote because they were fully participating in all other aspects of American life.

Putting it Together

What did the authors of the two sources disagree about? ⑮

Write or type your response in this area.

- ⑮ The authors disagreed on whether or not women should be allowed to vote in national elections.
- ⑯ They agree that allowing women to vote would constitute a significant change to the political system in the United States.
- ⑰ Answers will vary, but they should emphasize how the authors agree and disagree.

What did the authors of the two sources agree on? ⑯

Write or type your response in this area.

How could both sources be used to support the following thesis statement? ⑰

During the early 20th century, advocates both for and against women's suffrage argued that allowing women to vote would permanently alter the system of political representation in the United States.

Write or type your response in this area.

Background Information

The first wave of the suffrage movement in the United States, led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, raised awareness of the issues faced by women in the late 19th century. However, the early efforts to establish more rights for women did not lead to widespread legislative change that would allow women to cast votes in national elections. By the early 20th century, the country had become increasingly divided on the issue of whether or not women should be allowed to vote. The excerpts included in this lesson are from the suffragette era, when advocates of women's suffrage turned to increasingly radical methods. In addition to staging public marches, some suffragettes protested at the White House, engaged in hunger strikes, and made public demands for change. In January 1917, over 200 people were arrested for picketing the White House with banners that compared President Woodrow Wilson to the German Kaiser.

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Before You Read

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Write or type your response in this area.

How could being president affect Cleveland's opinion of female suffrage?

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How did President Cleveland support his position?

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After You Read

What was Hattie Bordewich’s view of female suffrage?

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How did Hattie Bordewich support her position?

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Putting it Together

What did the authors of the two sources disagree about?

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How could both sources be used to support the following thesis statement?

During the early 20th century, advocates both for and against women's suffrage argued that allowing women to vote would permanently alter the system of political representation in the United States.

Write or type your response in this area.

The authors of both of these sources are opposed to women's suffrage, but they use different rationales. They disagree over **why** women's suffrage should not be allowed.

Source 1: Josephine Jewell Dodge, "Credo of the New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage," 1915

We believe in every possible advancement to women. We believe that this advancement should be along those legitimate lines of work and endeavor for which she is best fitted and for which she has now unlimited opportunities. We believe this advancement will be better achieved through strictly non-partisan effort and without the limitations of the ballot. We believe in Progress, not in Politics for women.

Source 2: President Grover Cleveland, "Opinions of Patriots Against Woman Suffrage," *Tulsa Daily World*, November 3, 1918

I am willing to admit that it was only after a more thorough appreciation of what female suffrage really means that I became fully convinced that its inauguration would vastly increase the unhappy imperfections and shortcomings of our present man-voting suffrage. It's especial susceptibility to bad leadership and other hurtful influences would constitute it another menacing condition to those which already vex and disturb the deliberate and intelligent expression of the popular will.

How do they support their arguments differently?

Write or type your response in this area.

What do these differences tell us about the challenges of reading multiple sources side by side?

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The Fight for Women's Suffrage: Comparing Points of View

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How do they support their arguments differently?

The author of Source 1 is opposed to women's suffrage because he feels that it would not be appropriate for women to vote because it would go against their inherent nature and tasks for which (in the author's opinion) women are "best fitted." The author of Source 2 is opposed to women's suffrage because he feels that allowing women to vote would cause damage to the U.S. political system and make it more susceptible to demagogues.

What do these differences tell us about the challenges of reading multiple sources side by side?

Reading these two sources side by side reminds us that authors may have very different reasons why they agree or disagree. It is important to look at how the authors construct their arguments—instead of just their conclusions—to understand the importance of a source as a historical document.