

4

The rising of women

DOMINATION

INFLUENCE

OPPOSITION

RÉVOLTE



1. British women: “Deeds not Words!”

1. Observe the pictures and say what suffragettes did and endured to get the right to vote.
2. Read the article and check your hypotheses.



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In 1903, the campaign for women’s suffrage was intensified by the founding of the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU), whose motto was “Deeds¹ not words”. Associated particularly with Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia, it² was far more militant than the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies.

At the WSPU’s inaugural meeting, the suffragettes declared that the situation was so serious it would have to pursue extreme measures of civil disobedience.

Women began chaining themselves to railings, and within five years the campaign had extended to smashing² windows. By 1911, the UK had witnessed the first act of suffragette arson³ and two years later Emily Davison died at the Derby⁴ as she rushed out to bring down the king’s horse.

In Parliament, pressure for change was led by some liberal MPs⁵. But away from the reasoned debate of Westminster, prisons filled with women prepared to go to jail for the right to vote. The civil disobedience continued behind bars, with many women force-fed to prevent them hunger striking.

World War One proved to be the turning point for the campaign. The suffragettes effectively put on hold their campaign of civil direct action in the interests of national unity. As men went to the Western Front, women proved how indispensable they were in the fields and armaments factories. By 1918, no government could resist and the Representation of the Peoples Act allowed women over 30 the right to vote. It would take a further 10 years to abolish the age qualification and put men and women on an equal footing.

Dominic CASCIANI, in *BBC News Online*, October 2, 2003 (abridged)

1. *acte* – 2. *briser* – 3. *incendie volontaire* – 4. [ˈdɑːbɪ] a famous horse race run at Epsom, Surrey – 5. [emˈpiː] Member of Parliament

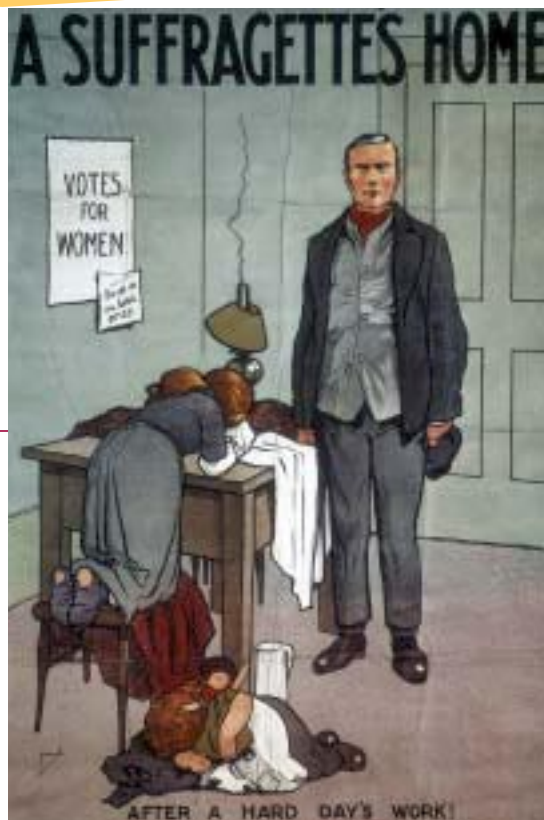


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3. Why did the suffragettes resort to (*avoir recours à*) such violent actions?
4. What decided the government to grant women the right to vote? When did all British women finally get this right?
5. How do you feel about what the suffragettes did?

2. Woman suffrage in the USA

1. This poster was printed in the early 20th century. Describe the place, the characters (father and children) and the situation. Who is missing and why? In your opinion, who sponsored this poster?
2. Read the text and say how long it took for women to get the right to vote in the USA. To what extent does the poster explain why it took so long?



1848 – Seneca Falls, N.Y., general declaration of the rights of women prepared by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott.

1869 – The National Woman Suffrage Association, led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, is formed to obtain an amendment to the US Constitution. The same year, the American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Lucy Stone, is organised to work through the state legislatures.

1869 – Wyoming is the first state to grant suffrage to the women within its borders.

1912 – Twelve states give women the right to vote.

1920 – The 19th Amendment to the Constitution grants nationwide suffrage to women.

3. Bread and Roses

As we come marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill-lofts¹ gray
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing, "Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses."

- 5 As we come marching, marching, we battle, too, for men –
For they are women's children, and we mother them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated² from birth until life closes –
Hearts starve³ as well as bodies: Give us Bread, but Give us Roses!

As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead

- 10 Go crying through our singing their ancient song of Bread.
Small art and love and beauty their drudging⁴ spirits knew.
Yes, it is bread we fight for – but we fight for Roses, too.

As we come marching, marching, we bring the Greater Days.
The rising of the women means the rising of the race –

- 15 No more the drudge and idler⁵ – ten that toil⁶ where one reposes,
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses!

James OPPENHEIM, 1911

1. atelier – 2. exploiter – 3. être affamé – 4. ici, corvéable – 5. oisif – 6. trimer

In January 1912, in the great textile centre of Lawrence, Massachusetts, 20,000 workers walked out of the mills (filature) in spontaneous protest against a cut in their weekly pay. During one of the many parades conducted by the strikers, some young girls carried a banner with the slogan: "We want bread and roses too." They were quoting a poem which was to become a landmark for years to come.

1. In your own words, sum up what happened in 1912 at Lawrence, Massachusetts.
2. What did these women mean when they said: *Give us Bread, but Give us Roses!* (l. 8)? Find elements in the poem to justify your answer.
3. Explain: ... *The rising of the women means the rising of the race* – (l. 14) Do you agree?

4. The Women's Liberation Movement

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Men will not liberate women; women must free themselves. They have waited too long as it is. Now the largest minority group is getting angry. Women are tired of working for everyone's liberation except their own.

Joreen, *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970)

1. When do you think these photos were taken? Justify.
2. Explain the sentence: "We are the 51% minority." (Picture 1)
3. What were the women in picture 2 demonstrating against?
4. Read all the posters and explain in your own words what the main claims of the Women's Lib movement were.
5. Explain the sentence: "Sisterhood is powerful."
6. How do you explain the presence of men in the three pictures?



2

5. Talking point

1. Would you say that the women's demands expressed in these pages have been met nowadays throughout the world?
2. Do you believe that the statement "Women must free themselves" is still true today?

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