

# Assembly Resource KS3 and KS2: Votes for Women



## Additional Resources:

Audio story with slideshow: Stories from Parliament, Votes for Women which can be found at [www.parliament.uk/education](http://www.parliament.uk/education)

Note: These assemblies are intended to be used after students have watched the audio slideshows. The story is in two parts each of about seven minutes. You might choose to play one or both during this or subsequent assemblies, or in class.

For further background on the suffragette movement see:  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3153388.stm>



## KS3 (age 11-14) - Suffragettes and Direct Action

**Aim:** To explore the direct action taken during the Suffragette campaign of the early 20th century.

1. Say that a new protest movement is sweeping the land. You'll call them 'The Demanders'. Many members protest peacefully, marching, singing, chanting, carrying banners and attending meetings. Others take a more direct-action approach, chaining themselves to railings, smashing windows and damaging property, setting fires, going on hunger strike in prison, throwing themselves down stairs and more – all to draw attention to their cause.
2. Explain that these were all actions undertaken by Suffragettes in the early part of the 20th Century. Recap that these were women, and some men, protesting against the unfairness of a society in which women were not allowed to vote, and demanding votes for women as a basic human right. Recap the essential details of the movement, referring to the audio slideshow stories and the Factsheet. Does this change how you view the actions of 'The Demanders'? Does the fact that the suffragette cause was just mean that their actions were right?
3. Point out that other women, just as determined to see change, protested using non-violent means. There are people who think that the direct action damaged the cause of equality. Others are convinced that it was crucial in swaying public opinion and then Parliament. What do you think? If appropriate, take responses to these questions or suggest that this is 'something to think about'.
4. Point out that there is one crucial difference between the suffragette movement and groups using similar tactics today. All adults in the UK have the right to vote so if they don't like something they can lobby, protest within the law and have a voice to persuade Parliament to change things. This fundamental right was denied to all women until they won the right to vote in 1918 – but only if they were over 30! It wasn't until 1928 that they were allowed to vote on the same terms as men.

### **Time for reflection**

What do you think of the direct action undertaken by sections of the suffragette movement?

Has democracy yet delivered a truly fair society for women? If not, how do you think society needs to change?

In which parts of the world are women still denied equal rights under the law?

## KS2 (age 7-11) - Suffragettes and the vote

**Aim:** To explore the idea of fairness and relate this to the historic struggle to achieve votes for women.

1. Ask some simple open questions to which most students will be able to respond, asking them to put their hands up and wait to be selected to answer.  
Questions might include:  
What is your favourite food?                      What is the best games console?  
What is your favourite book?                      Which sports do you most like playing?  
The important point is that you should select only boys to answer.
2. Ask if anyone has noticed anything unusual about this question and answer session. If necessary prompt: 'It's something to do with who I'm asking to answer'. To help make the point, continue to ask only the boys to answer this question.
3. Admit that you have only been asking the boys and ask for a show of hands: 'Who thinks that I should also take answers from the girls?' Make it clear that this time you will count all the responses, not just boys!
4. Ask if anyone can suggest why the girls should be included in answering questions. Take and value all responses, this time including girls and draw out the idea of fairness, that there was no reason to exclude the girls. Ask some of the girls what they thought and felt about not being asked. You could also ask the boys for their responses. You might choose to point out that for these questions there's a reason to ask only girls or boys!
5. Ask if anyone has heard the word 'Suffragette' and can explain what it means. Value all responses and explain that 'suffrage' is an old word meaning 'having the right to vote'. Explain that for a long time women were not allowed to vote in General Elections but in the early 20th Century many women, and some men, began to demand equal rights for women. A newspaper called them 'Suffragettes'. They began protesting around the country and were imprisoned, force fed, spat upon and worse just because they wanted to be acknowledged as equal. They eventually won the right to vote in 1918 – but only if they were over 30! It was not until 1928 that they were allowed to vote on the same terms as men.

Introduce the audio slideshow either for watching now or at a later time.

### Time for Reflection

Imagine that only girls or only boys were allowed to answer questions all day, every day... what would it feel like?

Can you imagine how the suffragettes felt - expected to obey the law but having no vote in who governed them?

Will you use your vote when you are older? Are there things you can vote for already such as school council elections?