



# How Women Got

# The Vote

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Words that are in the glossary on page 21 will **look like this**.

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We hope you enjoy this book.

## Revisions

**21st November 2019:**

Removed bottom image on page 15 due to a copyright claim.

Spelling and grammar mistakes corrected.

Hyperlink added on page 17.

Removed numbers in titles on pages 3 and 4.

# When did women get the vote?

## When did women get the vote?

Women got the vote in the United Kingdom in 1918 after years of campaigning. But it had taken a long time to get there - and there was still a long way to go.

They partly got the vote thanks to their work in and out of the factories during World War 1. In order to get the vote, it took many years of hard campaigning.

Emily Davidson, a suffragette, wanted to put a banner on the side of one of the King's horses. Unfortunately, she got run over by the King's horse and the race immediately stopped.

Some people believe that Emily was

trying to kill herself. This is simply not true as she was carrying a return train ticket to her home town and had planned to go on holiday with her sister.

There were two different ways of campaigning that the women tried in order to get their point across: the Suffragists and the Suffragettes.

## The two types of campaigners

The **Suffragists** were women who wanted to get the vote using peaceful methods, such as talking to men and trying to gain people's support that way.

The **Suffragettes** were women who campaigned using violent methods, such as chaining themselves to walls,

starving themselves, smashing shop windows and occasionally setting off a bomb.



**Top right** are a large group of suffragists marching down the Fifth Avenue, New York.

**Below that** is a suffragette being arrested in London.

# Where did it all begin?

It all began in 1865, when John Mill was elected to Parliament promising gender equality. Four years later, he published an essay called *The Subjection of Women*.

In May 1867, two petitions had been presented to Parliament saying that women should have the same political rights as men. It had got many signatures.

That same year, John said that something should be changed in the **1867 Reform Act**. He said that the act should be edited so that women could have the same political rights as men did (being able to vote, run for **MP**, etc.)

Sadly, John lost with 196 people in Parliament voting against the change. But the women involved

didn't stop there.

A year later, the first public meeting about women getting the vote was held inside the **Free Trade Hall** at Manchester.

Many women who would become famous for their campaigning for the vote went there, either to speak or to listen.

In the audience was 15-year-old Emmeline Pankhurst, although her name at the time was Emmeline Goulden. (She later married.)

## The first victory

During the summer of 1880, Lydia Becker, a biological scientist, visited the **Isle of Man** to go to 5 meetings about women getting the vote. Her speeches made the

local women determined to secure the vote.

On the 31st January 1881, women who owned property on the island got the vote.

# Women's roles in Victorian society

There was a significant difference between male and female roles in Victorian society. The suffragists didn't like this, but in order to understand what they did about it, we need to understand how women were disadvantaged against men.

A middle-class girl would be educated on how to impress a man through accomplishments - drawing, **embroidering**, singing, music, dancing.

Those who spent their time doing what were considered to be male-only professions were called blue-stockings.

Women who were "blue-stockings" were "**unfeminine**" and offputting to men.

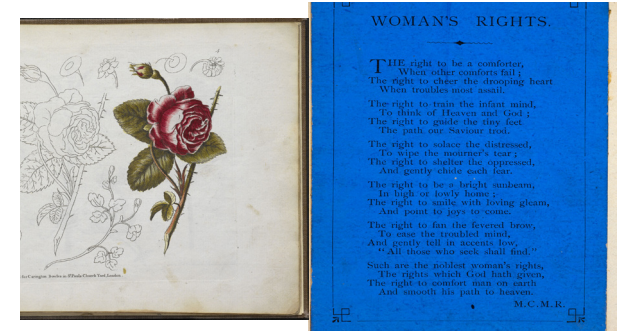
When Oxford and Cambridge started accepting women to study there in the late 19th century, families of clever daughters wouldn't send them there for fear that it would make them "unmarriageable".

Young women would usually marry in their mid-20s to a man usually 5 years older than her. They did this to reinforce the fact that men are higher in society than women.

It was also because a young man would need to prove that they could earn enough money to support a wife and future children.

But until they did marry, they weren't allowed to speak to a man unless they were supervised by a married woman.

Young Florence Nightingale wanted to do something good for the world, but was expected to stay with her mother and sister, supervising the servants. As a teenager, she, understandably, had many outbursts because of this.



Top left: A drawing book. Drawing and **embroidering** was a big part of a 19th century female education.

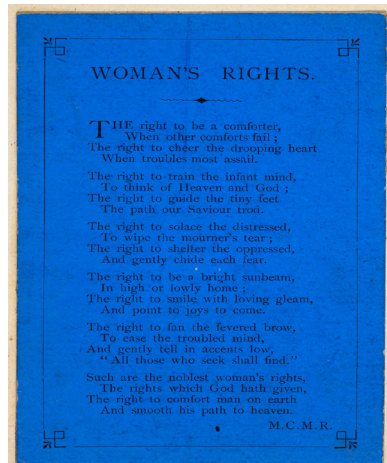
Top right: A poem stating what rights women have. (See quote below:) Note: This poem wasn't actual law, but rather a guide.

**"The right to be a comforter, when other comforts fail"**

An extract from Women's Rights



# Gender inequality in Britain



Above: A card containing traditional ideas on women and their roles, compared to husbands, fathers and sons. A larger version of it is on the right.

**“Women have been greatly neglected, physically and educationally.”**

Sarah Grand (1894)

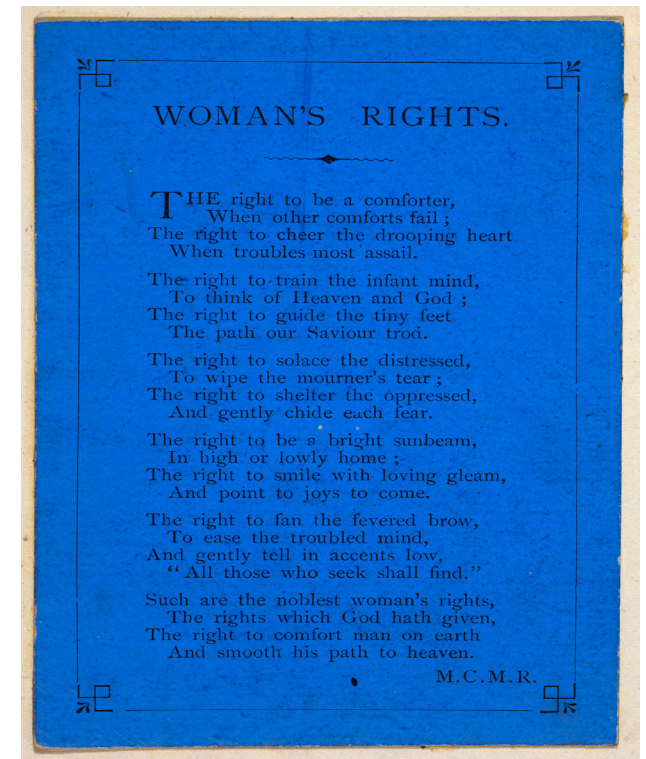
It wasn't just the vote that the suffragists wanted: they wanted complete gender equality in Britain. In 1871, Lady Amberley introduced a ten-point plan demanding that women have exactly the same rights as men.

It demanded equal access to university degrees, access to all professions, married women's property rights, widows' legal recognition as sole guardians of their children, equal access to political and social work (becoming a politician, for example), an end to legal subordination in marriage and equal pay for doing equal work as men.

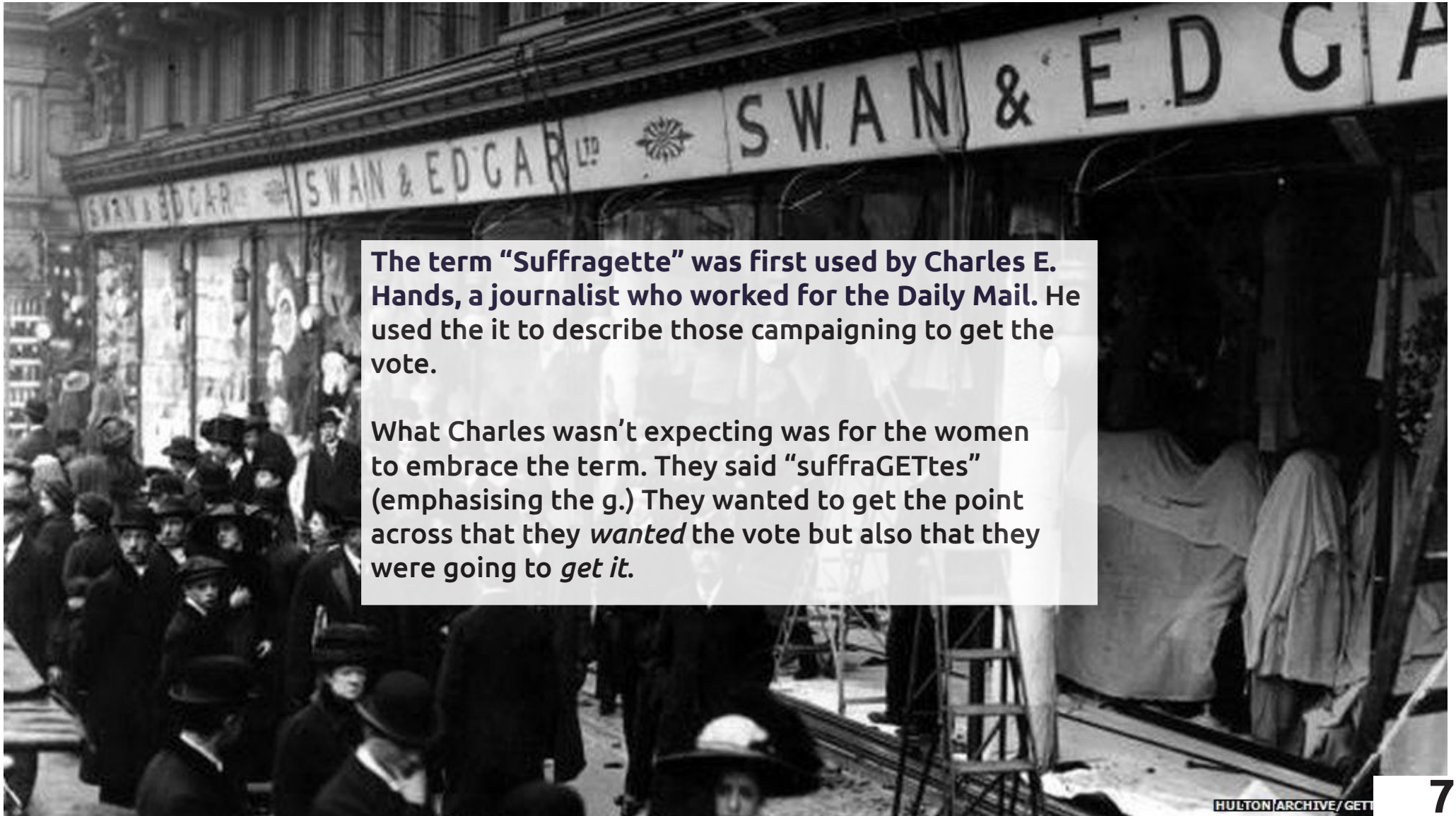
The peaceful debate about whether women should get the vote had been going on for 30 years. The suffragists used pamphlets, petitions and speeches to get their point across about gender equality.

However, not much changed under the suffragists. Despite all their campaigning, not much was achieved in Britain.

And this is what the Suffragettes were determined to change, as you'll find out throughout this book.



# Where did the term “Suffragette” come from?



The term “Suffragette” was first used by Charles E. Hands, a journalist who worked for the Daily Mail. He used the it to describe those campaigning to get the vote.

What Charles wasn't expecting was for the women to embrace the term. They said “suffraGETtes” (emphasising the g.) They wanted to get the point across that they *wanted* the vote but also that they were going to *get it*.

# The WSPU campaign

The WSPU (Women's Social and Political Union) was set up in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst. Its aim? To make sure women got the vote. Two years after the organisation was set up, Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested for annoying **Sir Edward Grey**.

The campaign attracted a lot of attention from the public, most of which was negative. Members of the WSPU would hold large marches and demonstrations, interrupt political meetings, chained themselves to the railings outside of Parliament and battled with the police.

## The violence begins

In 1908, members of the WSPU began a campaign which aimed at disrupting the public's lives. They did things such as pouring acid in mailboxes, breaking windows, tearing up golf courses and even as far as vandalizing the prime minister's car.

Between 1908 and 1913, over 1000 suffragette campaigners were arrested.

And when they were, they usually went on hunger strikes, meaning they went without food or water for days on end. (More on that later.)



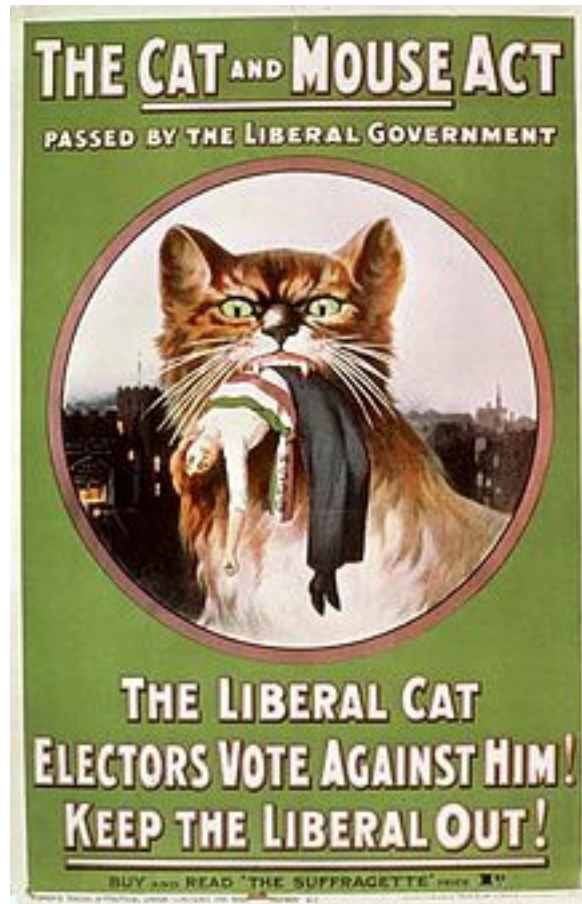
Above: members of the public look at the shop windows smashed by Suffragette campaigners.



## The government strike back

Because of this, in 1913, the Government passed a law called the Prisoners' Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act, meaning that if a prisoner was extremely weak, then they would be sent home until they felt better where they would then return to prison to finish serving their sentences.

The law was quickly called the "Cat and Mouse Act" and was unpopular with the vast majority of the British public. The suffragettes said to vote against the current government (which was a **liberal** one) so they could not pass any more similar laws.



Top - Annie Kenney



Above - Dame Christabel Pankhurst

Above left - The poster put out by the WSPU after the "Cat and Mouse act" was released saying to vote against the government.

# Anti-Suffrage campaigners

Some women surprisingly didn't want the vote, and it had nothing to do with the suffragettes and their violent ways. The women that didn't want the votes tended to say that women should focus on their "duties" (housework etc.) rather than their rights.

The women that supported the anti-suffrage movement tended to be rich and were usually **duchesses**. The pro and anti-suffrage campaigners clashed on one occasion on the 21st June 1910, when both sides were going to see the prime

minister at the time in Downing Street. An anti-suffrage woman called Lady Jersey argued that:

**"The opponents of woman suffrage did not think that women were more stupid than men, but they knew that their hands were overfull**

**already."**

Those who were against women getting the vote said that a woman's place was in the home and that their husband could represent them on their behalf, so they therefore didn't need a vote.

This was obviously not true, as women proved during the First World War, when they took over most of the jobs that were previously done by men.



Top: A poster from the anti-suffrage movement.

# Suffragettes and terrorism

If the Suffragettes were around today, would they be considered terrorists? Here is the official definition of terrorism:

**“The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons.”**

So, if the Suffragettes were around today, they would be considered as terrorists. Why? They planted bombs in libraries, churches, railways and bridges, attacked private property (shop windows) and

held violent mass protests. The government were very concerned about this (as they would be) and set very long prison sentences for those involved.

The actions that the suffragettes did would definitely fit under the **2000 Terrorism Act**.

So, today, the suffragettes would be classed as terrorists. In one poster, there was one poster where a woman was holding a bomb, wearing the suffragette colours (green, white and purple), with the caption, **“Not all men are angels, but some soon will be.”**

**“Not all men are angels, but some soon will be.”**



Above: A house that was burnt down by the Suffragettes.



# Force-feeding

**Protesting for the vote didn't stop in prison.** Many suffragettes who were put in prison protested by refusing to eat or drink whilst in prison.

The person would then become so weak that they had to be released from prison.

## Force-feeding begins

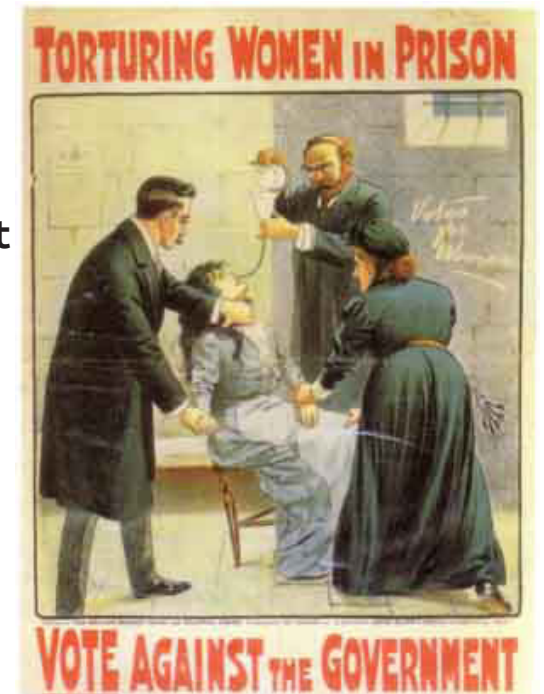
In 1909, the government realised that they were being too soft with the suffragettes. So they decided to force-feed the prisoners using a tube and liquid (picture on the right shows how it was done.)

Emmeline Pankhurst, a leading suffragette, went through force-feeding during her time in prison. On the next page, she describes her experience of force-feeding.

It describes how she was held down by many people, how a tube was shoved

down her mouth and how they sent liquid down the tube. It was not a pleasant experience.

She also said that it was very rushed and she struggled to breathe while the "operation" as she called it. The full account of the experience is on the next page - and is not for the faint-hearted.



**Above:** A poster showing how they force-fed the Suffragette prisoners.



# Emmeline Pankhurst on force-feeding

## This article contains disturbing imagery

“They pinched and clutched my nose unmercifully, and at the end of the assault, when I did not rise quickly from the chair because of my helpless and breathless condition, they snatched my chair from under me and flung me on the floor.

“The whole of the work is done in the greatest rush and hurry. There is no doubt whatsoever about the attacks being made with the object [aim] of breaking us down. During the strike the wardresses were transformed into inhuman brutes and fiends, and one could not but feel that, like the police on Black Friday, they were being made use of by the Government for

this dastardly purpose. My heart and circulation were in an alarming condition during these operations; but never through either hunger strike was my pulse noted. On Wednesday June 26th, they twisted my neck, jerked my head back, closing my throat, held all the time as if in a vice.

“I gasped for breath, and suffered tortures mentally lest the food which they were trying to pour down my throat should go into my lungs. They do not expect, or intend, one to swallow the food, but pour it into one’s stomach as through an open water pipe. They expect, and try, to perform the whole operation in two minutes.

There were always six or seven [people] to one [prisoner], so that there was really no possibility of the victim doing much in the way of protesting, excepting verbally, to express one’s horror of it.”

# Black Friday

**Black Friday was the biggest outcry concerning women's suffrage since the WSPU started violently campaigning in 1905.**

It was when 300 women were marching towards Parliament on the 18th November 1910 to demand that the politicians give them the vote like they had promised. But the plan didn't go very well.

Police were guarding the outside of the Houses of Parliament, and as the women got closer to Parliament, the police and male bystanders started to assault the women, even though they had done nothing wrong.

Previous demonstrations outside Parliament were carried out by the A Division, who knew what the WSPU's aims were and how to stop the protest without using violence

and instead, according to Sylvia Pankhurst, said that the A Division treated them "with courtsey and consideration."

However, on that particular day, police had been sent from other areas of London to Parliament. These policemen didn't have much experience in policing suffragettes.

The next day, the newspapers didn't report on how the women were treated by the police, but instead focused on how horribly the Suffragettes behaved. Some newspapers were saying that they felt sorry for the police. Below is a quote from the Times, one of these newspapers:

**"One [policeman] was disabled by a kick in the ankle, one was cut on the face by a belt and one had his hand cut."**



## The Daily Mirror

THE MORNING JOURNAL WITH THE SECOND LARGEST NET SALE  
No. 2,205. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1910. One Halfpenny.  
VIOLENT SCENES AT WESTMINSTER, WHERE MANY SUFFRAGETTES WERE ARRESTED WHILE TRYING TO FORCE THEIR WAY INTO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.



**Top: A policeman grabs a woman. Above: The front page of The Mirror after Black Friday.**

# Getting the right to vote: South Africa

It all started with the founding of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1899. It's goal? To campaign for the right to vote for women in South Africa.

In 1930, white women in South Africa had the ability to vote. But black people living there didn't have a vote at all, regardless of gender.

Nelson Mandela was a person who wanted this to change. He wanted both black and white people to have the same rights.

## Campaigning peacefully

At first, Nelson Mandela and

the ANC (African National Congress) campaigned peacefully using protests. But the government at the time in South Africa then shot dozens and dozens of unarmed men, women and children.

This was when Nelson and ANC turned to violence. After that, he was then sent to prison "for life" - but he was released after many protests in 1990. A few months later, he was the leader of the country and gave black people exactly the same rights as white people.

Four years later, he stepped down from being president and retired from political life.



**Top:** Nelson Mandela with his fellow people in South Africa.

You can find out more about Nelson Mandela at [homeworkhelpforkids.co.uk/mandela](https://homeworkhelpforkids.co.uk/mandela)

# Ceasefire

When war was declared in August 1914, the WSPU stopped protesting and started helping with the war effort. With most of the workers fighting for their country, there were many jobs to be filled. Ones that were filled by women.

This was a chance for women to prove that they could do exactly the same work as men.

The number of women working in factories and similar jobs rose from 3.25 million in July 1914 to 4.8 million in January 1918.

Most leading suffragettes agreed with the war. A leader of another major suffragette group, Millicent Fawcett, said 'I believe it is akin to talk of peace' (Of similar character.)

The First World War had changed

the minds of many men in terms of suffrage. But, after proving that they could work just as well as men in the factories, not everyone wanted women to get the vote.

Rudyard Kipling - the author of *The Jungle Book*, along with many other men and women who didn't want women to get the vote, wrote a letter in November 1916 to *The Times* saying that the government in the middle of a war had 'no moral right' to give women the vote.



**'I believe it is  
akin to talk  
of peace'**

Top: Women work in a gun factory in Woolwich.



# Why men didn't give them the vote sooner

As late as 1917, men still thought that women shouldn't have the vote. And here's some of their arguments...

**“We are controlled and worried enough by women”**

Sir James Grant

**“The birth and marriage rate are already decreasing”**

Sir Charles Hobhouse

**“Women will wear enormous hats”**

**Rowland Hunt**

**“Men have a responsibility towards women”**

**Sir Charles Henry**

**“The feminine mind’s deadly logic is destructive”**

**Arthur Beck 18**

# When women finally got the vote

Women got the vote in the UK in late 1918, and it was a huge step for women's rights around the world. The UK wasn't the first country to give women the vote, though. And it certainly wasn't the last.

On the next page is a list of countries and when they gave women the vote. The first country to give women the vote was New Zealand.

However, in some countries, not all women could instantly vote in the countries with asterisks (\*.) At the end, it will tell you the restrictions that women had in these certain

countries and why. In the same year as Britain, other countries also gave women the vote such as Austria, Germany (who had just overthrown their King in favour for a new republic), Poland and Russia (who were currently in the middle of a civil war: **Monarchists** vs the **Communists**.)

Some people weren't so happy. Only women over 30 who met certain property conditions and were married could vote whilst all men over 21 years old could vote. In 1928, though, all women over 21 years old could vote.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, women were given the vote in 1930. But this only applied to white women. Black men and women still had a 70-year battle to get equal voting rights in 1990.

On page 15, you'll find out the struggle of how women tried to get the vote in South Africa.



Top: People in South Africa protest against black and white people being treated differently.

Above: Women protest for suffrage in New York.

# When women got the right to vote around the world

**1893** - New Zealand

**1902** - Australia\*

**1906** - Finland

**1913** - Norway

**1915** - Denmark

**1917** - Canada\*\*

**1918** - Austria, Germany, Poland, Russia, Britain\*\*\*

**1919** - Netherlands

**1920** - United States

**1921** - Sweden

**1928** - Ireland

**1930** - South Africa\*\*\*\*

**1931** - Spain

**1934** - Turkey

**1944** - France

**1945** - Italy

**1947** - Argentina, Japan, Mexico, Pakistan

**1949** - China

**1950** - India

**1954** - Colombia

**1957** - Malaysia, Zimbabwe

**1962** - Algeria

**1963** - Iran, Morocco

**1964** - Libya

**1967** - Ecuador

**1971** - Switzerland

**1972** - Bangladesh

**1974** - Jordan

**1976** - Portugal

**1989** - Namibia

**1990** - Western Samoa

**1993** - Kazakhstan,

Moldova

**2005** - Kuwait

**2006** - United Arab Emirates

**2011** - Saudi Arabia\*\*\*\*\*

\*Only Australian women won the right to vote in 1902. Other women didn't win the vote until 60 years later.

\*\*Canadian women won the vote in 1917. Indians who lived in Canada didn't win it until 1960.

\*\*\*Only women who were over 30, married and met certain property conditions could vote in 1918. 10 years later, all women over 21 could vote.

\*\*\*\*White South African women won the vote in 1930, but black women could not vote until 1990.

\*\*\*\*\*Women didn't get an opportunity to vote until December 2015.



# Glossary

**MP** - abbreviation for Member of Parliament.

**1867 Reform Act** - a law allowing working class men to vote for their local Member of Parliament.

**Free Trade Hall** - a public hall which opened in 1856. It's now a hotel (for those who want to know.)

**Isle of Man** - an island off the coast of the west of England.

**Monarchists** - Those who support the monarchy.

**Communists** - Those who support communism, a theory where everything is shared equally throughout society and benefits the workers. However, in countries where it has been introduced, it hasn't worked out that way.

**Duchess** (plural "Duchesses") - women whose wife was a Duke.

**2000 Terrorism Act** - A law that was passed in 2000 allowing the government to prevent terrorism. There were some parts of the law that angered some people. The European Court of Human Rights ruled the part of the law where police have the right to "stop and search" illegal.

**Embroidering** - The craft of decorating fabric using a needle.

**Unfeminine** - acting or doing things that a woman is not traditionally expected to do.

**Liberal** - Views that favour liberty and equality.

**Sir Edward Grey** - the foreign secretary from 1905 until 1916.

# Legal stuff

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