*STUDENTS INVESTIGATING PRIMARY SOURCES*

**Suffering Through Suffrage: Arguing Women’s Right to Vote**

Why do the authors oppose woman suffrage?

*A Short Activity for High School U.S. History Courses*

***Benchmark Correlations***

**SS.912.A.5.10** – Analyze support for and resistance to civil rights for women, African Americans, Native Americans, and other minorities

**Benchmark Clarification**: Students will recognize and/or examine varying points of view related to the desire to expand and restrict civic rights for women and political, social, economic, religious, and ethnic minorities.

**ELA.R.2 –** Reading Informational Text

**ELA.R.3 –** Reading Across Genres

***Activity Document***

* Memorial of Alice Wadsworth of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage

***Full Document Citation***

[Memorial of Alice Wadsworth of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage](https://catalog.archives.gov/id/595295), 12/11/1917; Petitions and Memorials, 1813-1968; Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group 233; Center for Legislative Archives. National Archives Identifier: 595295.

[https://catalog.archives.gov/id/595295]

[https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/memorial-of-alice-wadsworth]

***Activity Vocabulary***

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| **amendment** – a change to a constitution  **cajolery** – persuasion by flattery  **feminism** – the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities  **futile** - pointless  **impotent** – lacking power or ability  **pickets** – a person engaged in a demonstration or strike  **ratification** – the process of formally approving something  **repudiate** – to reject or cast off  **Socialist** – a person who believes in a form of government where major industries are owned and controlled by the government rather than by individual people and companies  **suffrage** – the right to vote |

***Teacher Note:*** *This activity serves as a connection between SS.912.A.3.2: Examine the social, political, and economic causes, course, and consequences of the Second Industrial Revolution that began in the late 19th century; Benchmark Clarification: Students will explain the impact of social change and reform movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and SS.912.A.5.10; Benchmark Clarification 1.*

1. Project and distribute a copy of “Memorial of Alice Wadsworth of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage Letter.” Remind students of the definition of suffrage (the right to vote) and that suffrage is a civil rights issue.
2. Direct students to visually scan both pages of the document and identify three items that stand out to them in the document. (Examples could include: underlined words, column of names, letter, use of one’s husband’s name, date, location, signature, printed on letterhead.)
3. Have a few students share out.
4. Explain to students the following points about the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage: the name of the organization states their view on woman suffrage, all of the names on the letter are women’s names, it was a national organization, and the letter has underlined text to emphasize points. Explain to students that the top paragraph of the letter is background information on the platform of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage.
5. Introduce the guiding question: Why do the authors oppose woman suffrage?
6. Explain to students that they will listen and follow along while the first page of the letter is read aloud. They will underline or mark the text to show evidence they hear that argues against woman suffrage. **Teacher Note**: Choose a read aloud strategy that works for your students; for additional assistance visit the [ReadWriteThink Strategy Guide](http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/teacher-read-aloud-that-30799.html) for ideas. Use the Activity Vocabulary table to address any unfamiliar terms.
7. Have a few students share out some of the evidence they marked to identify the argument. Some examples could include:
   1. *destroys the right of the people to vote on the question of woman suffrage;*
   2. *allows woman suffrage to be forced on unwilling States by the Legislatures of other States;*
   3. *This proposal is a violation of the present Constitution of the United States*
8. Direct students to respond to the guiding question in writing, using the evidence they have already identified from the text: Why do the authors oppose woman suffrage? Remind students to state their position on the guiding question then provide evidence from the letter to support their response.

**Enrichment Suggestion** – Complete the same process for a pro woman suffrage source, then compare and contrast the views in both the pro and anti woman suffrage sources. Evaluate each author’s point of view based on his or her claims, reasoning and evidence. An example pro-suffrage document is listed below:

* [Petition from Carrie Chapman Catt of the National American Woman Suffrage Association asking that a Committee on Woman Suffrage be appointed in the House of Representatives as in the Senate](https://catalog.archives.gov/id/306662), 4/10/1917; Petitions and Memorials, 1813-1968; Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group 233; Center for Legislative Archives. National Archives Identifier: 306662 [https://catalog.archives.gov/id/306662]



